

Sámi Traditional Knowledge (árbediehtu) within Reindeer Herding and its Relevance in “Green Transition”

NORSIL-NKJ Seminar 2026
16–17 June 2026, Tromsø



Figure 1: A group picture that shows part of the participants of the seminar. Photo: Erlend S. Fandrem.

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1. Abstract

The second NORSIL-NKJ seminar, held from 16-17 June 2026 in Tromsø, examined the role of Sámi traditional knowledge (árbediehtu), Sámi law, and reindeer-herding governance in the context of a just green transition across Norway, Sweden, and Finland. Bringing together more than thirty researchers, students, Sámi representatives, and stakeholders, the seminar explored how industrial development, renewable-energy projects, mining, and infrastructure affect Sámi lands, livelihoods, culture, and self-determination. Discussions emphasized that árbediehtu is a living, relational body of knowledge transmitted through practice, language, and community institutions, rather than a collection of information easily documented within Western legal frameworks. Participants identified persistent barriers to its meaningful recognition in courts, planning processes, and environmental assessments, including fragmented governance, inadequate consultation, and limited consideration of cumulative and intergenerational impacts. Presentations considered Nordic case law, UN treaty-body decisions, compensation systems, free, prior and informed consent, and comparative experiences from Canada and Bangladesh. The seminar highlighted the need to move beyond project-by-project decision-making towards holistic, landscape-based approaches that recognize Sámi governance systems, cultural continuity, and Indigenous self-determination. It also underlined the value of decolonial, collaborative research methods grounded in care, storytelling, and co-creation. The findings will inform a future special issue and policy recommendations for the project's final seminar in Rovaniemi in May 2027.

2. Introduction

The Nordic Research Network for Sámi and Indigenous Peoples Law (NORSIL) is an informal and transdisciplinary Nordic research network, which consists of Nordic, Sámi and international scholars. A core question for NORSIL has always been Sámi reindeer herding, and the protection of the reindeer herding right, both as a property right and as fundamental to sustaining and developing Sámi culture, languages and traditional knowledge (árbediehtu).

The Nordic Joint Committee for Agriculture and Food Research (NKJ) funded the NORSIL project for 2025-2027. The NORSIL-NKJ project investigates pressing sustainable development and climate change questions in law and policy of importance to the Sámi people. It focuses on addressing three important aspects: (i) comparing laws and policies across Norwegian, Swedish and Finnish Sápmi, i.e. within the reindeer herding areas, to enhance national cooperation at the Nordic level and transnational learning, (ii) focusing on the Sámi traditional knowledge (árbediehtu) within reindeer herding and analyze if and how it may offer solutions for a sustainable land use in times of rapid change, and (iii) supporting an understanding, development and implementation of law and policy that advance a just sustainable development in the Scandinavian North concerning the planned and ongoing industrialization projects. The first aspect of the project was explored last year in a seminar held at Luleå University of Technology (from 19-20 November 2025), and key findings will be published in a Special Issue of the International Journal of Minorities and Group Rights. The second seminar of NORSIL was held at UiT The Arctic University of Norway, Tromsø, from 16-17 June 2026.

3. The organization, focus, and content of the seminar

The second seminar for the NORSIL-NKJ project explored the role of Sámi institutions and traditional knowledge within reindeer herding (árbediehtu) within the context of the “green transition” in Norway, Sweden, and Finland. Discussions explored how Indigenous knowledge contributes to sustainability governance and how national and international legal frameworks, domestic courts, and human rights bodies recognize and engage with Sámi traditional knowledge as a source of law. In so doing, it fosters interdisciplinary dialogue, transnational learning and collaboration across the Nordic region. As such, NORSIL provides an important forum for the co-creation and exchange of knowledge on critical issues affecting the Sámi people across the Nordic countries. This is reflected in the level and diversity of participation in the seminar. More than thirty researchers, PhD candidates, and early-career scholars from Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Iceland presented their research and discussed the relevance of Sámi traditional knowledge (árbediehtu) within the discourse on the “green energy transition”. The secretariat of the NKJ, the secretariat of the Barents Euro-Arctic Cooperation Working Group on Indigenous Peoples (WGIP) and the Barents Youth Council (BYC), as well as a representative of the Saami Council attended the seminar and contributed their perspectives.

In terms of organization, the seminar was undertaken over two days and consisted of opening and introductory presentations, presentations in five thematically organized sessions, masters’ students’ presentations, and a concluding plenary session. The following sub-sections provide the core points of each session.

3.1. Opening of the seminar and introductory presentations

The seminar was officially opened by Professor Magne Frostad, vice dean for research at the faculty of Law of UiT, followed by a welcome note by Associate Professor Endalew Lijalem Enyew, the leader of the Research Group for Sami and Indigenous Peoples Law and organizer of the seminar. The leader of the NORSIL-NKJ project, Professor Christina Allard, and the two partners, Professor Kamrul Hossain, and Associate Professor Endalew Lijalem Enyew, presented on the current status and plans of the NORSIL-NKJ Project, as well as presented on the new GRIP-Bear project (Research Collaboration on Climate Change, Green Energy Transition, and Rights of Indigenous Peoples in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region), funded by the Barents Euro-Arctic Council through its Barents Financial Mechanism. Sofie Andersson, the secretariat of the NKJ, provided information on NKJ and NKJ network projects. Finally, Jens Kristian Øvstebø, secretariat of WGIP and BYC, gave a presentation on “the work of the Barents Cooperation WGIP and BYC”. After this the seminar transitioned to thematically organized sessions.



Figure 2: Sofie Andersson, the secretariat of the NKJ, informing the participants about the NKJ network projects. Photo: Erlend S. Fandrem.

3.2. Theme 1: The Sámi traditional knowledge (árbediehtu) within reindeer herding and its relevance in the “green transition”

This session featured a presentation by Associate Professor Aila Biret Henriksen Selfors (UiT), followed by a panel discussion. Selfors’ presentation titled “Árbediehtu as a legal source in Sámi law”. Sámi law is grounded in traditional knowledge, customs, worldview and values – these constitute sources of Sami law. Selfors argued for treating Sami law on its own terms and illustrated practical problems that arise when Sami concepts are translated into Western legal categories. The motivation and broader aim of Selfors’ research is to revitalize Sami law as a foundation for Sami self-determination and to strengthen local community institutions such as *Verddevuohta* – a Sami social-traditional-sharing institution. *Verddevuohta*, often translated as “friendship”, embodies sharing, cooperation, solidarity and kinship. While *Verddevuohta* underpins Sámi traditional community life, it has been weakened by legal challenges and modernization.

Further, Selfors situates Sámi law within legal pluralism: Sámi law coexists within national (Norwegian) law and international law. Additionally, there is ontological and epistemological pluralism – different ways of knowing and validating truth. She rejects the view that Sámi law is merely a subset of state or international law, arguing instead that Sámi law is rooted and validated within Sami society itself. Selfors also presents that practical conflicts arise when Norwegian law ignores or misinterprets Sami customs. She exemplified it with spring duck

hunting in Sami area and when translation/terminology mismatches, example Sami *meahcce* vs. Norwegian *utmark*, who has a divergent meaning and legal recognition.

Selfors' presentation was followed by a panel discussion on the content and relevance of *Árbediehtu* (Sami traditional knowledge) and Sami law in the context of the so-called green transition. The panel was composed of Aila Biret Henriksen Selfors, Kristina Labba (UiT), and Anne-Marie Magga (University of Lappland), and moderated by Professor Christina Allard. Allard asked the question: what are the challenges in making *árbediehtu* or Indigenous knowledge visible and meaningful in decision-making processes. The panelists emphasized that *árbediehtu* is not a set of facts that can be found in books. Rather, it is passed on orally and through practice. There is no established methodology for documenting and communicating *árbediehtu*, in the way that external actors require.

However, this doesn't mean that *árbediehtu* does not exist and should not be considered. They emphasized that, even when knowledge is documented and communicated clearly, equal weight is not always given to *árbediehtu* in decision making processes. Structural barriers, such as the legal framework, economic priorities, and political influence, limit the visibility and influence of *árbediehtu*. When decisions are driven by external political and economic interests, the knowledge of Sami communities tends not to be recognized in the same way as, for instance, a researcher who has been in the field for two days and writes a report on industrial projects in reindeer herders' areas.



Figure 3: Panelists, Aila Selfors, Anne-Marie Magga, and Kristina Labba (from left to right). Photo: Erlend S. Fandrem.

Panelists underscored that authorities, companies, and consultants should genuinely take árbediehtu into account when planning in Sami areas. Árbediehtu and Sami law should be recognized alongside Western knowledge systems and methodologies. To do so, we need reforms, institutional changes of various sorts, methodological developments, and a shift in the Western attitude to Indigenous knowledge and law. Indigenous self-governance and self-determination should be strengthened.

3.3. Theme 2: Relevance of Sámi traditional knowledge in domestic courts and practices of UN treaty monitoring bodies

This session focused on the relevance and recognition of Sámi traditional knowledge systems in litigation practices. The presenters spotlighted the recent developments in the practices of UN human rights treaty monitoring bodies and Nordic court practices, particularly in relation to reindeer herding, mining activities, and land-use conflicts.

The first presentation, given by Camille Parguel, examined how Sámi traditional knowledge is treated within different judicial settings. Drawing on cases before Swedish administrative, general, and special courts concerning predator management, hunting and fishing rights, and wind energy development, the presentation highlighted courts as arenas of knowledge production where competing forms of expertise are evaluated and legitimized. The presentation showed that courts often adopt a narrow framing of legal issues, focusing on concepts such as "particular interest," "competitive land use," or "sustainable development," while privileging knowledge produced within state institutions, including procedural, historical, and industrial forms of expertise. Although the traditional knowledge of the Sámi, árbediehtu, is often intertwined with scientific knowledge, it is frequently overlooked or given only limited consideration in court decisions, reflecting the broader challenges in recognizing Indigenous knowledge systems in legal proceedings.

The second presentation, given by Leena Hansen and Anne-Maria Magga, entitled "Sámi Siida Cases v. Finland before UN Treaty Bodies: Paving the Way for Recognizing Traditional Reindeer Herding Governance?". The presentation dedicated to the recent cases concerning mineral exploration in the Käsivarsi region of Finland and have highlighted the importance of Sámi participation in decision-making processes and the general importance of recognizing human rights treaties as living and evolving instruments. International human rights bodies, such as the UN Committees on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) have increasingly emphasized that Indigenous peoples' cultural rights are closely connected to self-determination and access to traditional lands. The decisions the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) in *J.T. and others v. Finland* concerned Sámi reindeer herders belonging to the Gova-Labba siida and their semi-nomadic way of living. The CESCR found that inadequate consideration was given to the impact of mining projects on Sámi culture and their traditional livelihood and found a violation of Article 15(1)(a) (right to take part in cultural rights), read alone and in conjunction with Articles 1 (peoples' right to self-determination), 2(2) (prohibition of discrimination), and 11 (right to adequate standard of living) of the Covenant. The Committee emphasized that equality requires more than treating

everyone the same. Indigenous peoples require special protection mechanisms to ensure genuine equality and the effective enjoyment of their rights, particularly in terms of self-determination. The Committee further cross-referenced to other international human rights bodies, such as the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, to demonstrate stronger approaches in recognizing these rights. Particular attention was given to the traditional Siida system of reindeer herding. The siida is based on inherited land use, collective governance, and intergenerational knowledge systems. However, traditional Sámi governance systems remain largely unrecognized within existing legal frameworks, which continue to place decision-making power in the hands of state authorities and administrative institutions, which ultimately leads to tensions between indigenous land use practices and modern regulatory frameworks. The presenters underscore that the case sets clear guidance for the authorities to develop proper methods for assessing cumulative impacts on the Sámi culture. They argued that authorities should assess projects not only in relation to international law but also siida laws, which set out procedures for legitimate decision making. Therefore, since siidas are FPIC communities with whom the authorities need to negotiate, the negotiations should be done in accordance with siida procedures. Moreover, since FPIC means an interactive and continuous dialogue through Indigenous peoples' own representative institutions through culturally appropriate procedures, the negotiations should be carried out according to each siida's decision-making procedure.

The third presentation, given by Gilbert A. Akame and Sade Hammami (Mäntylä), was entitled "Can Courts Understand Árbediehtu? Fragmentation and Sámi Land Rights in Land Use Litigation". It emphasized that, although legal systems increasingly recognize aspects of Sámi land use under Art. 27 ICCPR, judicial reasoning often translates interconnected Sami land relations into separate legal categories including, culture, land use, environmental management, and governance. This fragmented approach contrasts with Sámi understandings of land, where culture, livelihood, ecology, and community governance are closely interconnected through árbediehtu. Drawing on comparative examples from Norwegian and Finnish case law, including the Fosen judgment in Norway and KHO 2023:55, concerning Sámi reindeer herding governance and the *siida* system, in Finland, the presentation illustrated how different doctrinal pathways may nevertheless produce similar forms of fragmentation. It also highlighted the growing importance of cumulative and intergenerational impact assessments. Rather than evaluating individual projects in isolation, international human rights bodies, including the CESCR and CRC Committees, increasingly call for assessments that consider the combined effects of multiple land-use activities over time and adopt more holistic approaches to Indigenous land governance. Such approaches are essential for safeguarding long-term cultural continuity and the transmission of árbediehtu to future generations.

Overall, the discussions demonstrated that international human rights bodies increasingly move towards a holistic understanding of Indigenous rights. An approach that acknowledges the links between culture, land, governance, and sustainability. Domestic legal systems on the other hand, still struggle to incorporate these principles into legislation and decision-making processes. Strengthening the recognition of Sámi governance, traditional knowledge, and long-term cumulative impacts remains an important task for the future.

3.4. Theme 3: Sámi law in reindeer herding legislations and governance in Nordic countries

The presentations under Theme 3 explored how legal frameworks governing reindeer husbandry interact with broader questions of land use, compensation, planning, and Indigenous knowledge.

Berit Söderfalk's presentation examined compensation law in the Swedish context and raised fundamental questions concerning what counts as “damage” in reindeer herding. The presentation highlighted the difficulties of fitting reindeer herding practices and losses into legal frameworks originally designed around ownership-based assumptions and bounded land interests, despite being applied to right-holders engaged in reindeer herding. Particular attention was paid to how development projects disrupt functional relationships between reindeer and landscapes, producing not only areal losses but also structural, functional, and relational harms. The presentation further demonstrated the limited capacity of existing compensation systems to encompass such losses and raised important questions regarding how árbediehtu and Sámi normative understandings of land use might be made legally relevant in the context of the green transition.

Christina Allard's presentation shifted attention to the accelerating pace of the green transition across Sápmi and the growing pressure that this places on reindeer herding landscapes. Her presentation emphasized the importance of strengthened landscape-scale planning and the integration of Sámi traditional knowledge (árbediehtu) in decision-making processes. She discussed how cumulative impacts from renewable energy projects, infrastructure development, and extractive industries increasingly challenge traditional reindeer herding practices and long-term cultural sustainability. The discussion also highlighted the growing influence of EU instruments, including the Critical Raw Materials Act (CRMA) and the revised Renewable Energy Directive (RED III), which introduce a supranational layer to land-use governance and may further accelerate decision-making processes in Sámi areas.

During the comparative discussion session, participants reflected on similarities and differences between Nordic countries. A key point was that although the legal frameworks differ, many of the practical challenges remain remarkably similar: fragmented governance systems, insufficient consideration of cumulative impacts, and difficulties in translating Sámi knowledge into legal and administrative decision-making processes. The discussion reinforced the importance of moving beyond project-by-project assessments towards more holistic and landscape-based approaches to land governance.

3.5. Theme 4: (Human) rights-based approach to recognition of Sámi rights in the ‘green transition’ narrative

This session featured three presentations. Johanna Ohlsson and Carola Lingaas presented on “Framing Indigenous Struggles in Terms of Human Rights: Sámi Resistance in Times of Reconciliation”. They presented findings from a systematic literature review examining how Sámi activists frame their struggles and resistance movements through the language of human

rights. The presentation situated contemporary Sámi resistance within a broader historical trajectory, beginning with the period before and after the Alta conflict and extending through recent disputes such as Fosen case in Norway and Girjas case in Sweden. The authors noted how these conflicts illustrate an increasing "human rights turn" in Sámi activism and advocacy. Human rights language has become a common framework through which Indigenous claims are communicated both nationally and internationally. The authors identified a range of framing strategies organized around questions of what is being framed, how it is framed, and why such framing is used. Particularly interesting was the discussion of human rights as a lingua franca that enables Sámi struggles to connect with broader international human rights movements while simultaneously serving as a political and legal tool for challenging state action.

The discussion also explored tensions within this approach. Participants reflected on the opportunities and limitations of framing Indigenous struggles primarily through human rights discourse. While human rights language can strengthen visibility and legitimacy, concerns were raised about whether it may also risk simplifying Indigenous claims or translating them into frameworks rooted in Western legal traditions. Questions of decoloniality, collective rights, Indigenous self-determination, and the relationship between Indigenous normative systems and international human rights frameworks featured prominently in this discussion. Another important observation concerned the relationship between resistance movements and ongoing truth and reconciliation processes in the Nordic countries. Participants noted that contemporary rights-based mobilization cannot be understood separately from these broader political and historical developments.

Berit J. Ballari, a PhD student at UiT, presented on the interaction between Sámi rights and Norway's approaches to the green energy transition. Drawing on examples from recent and ongoing disputes, including Fosen, Øyfjellet, and Nussir, the presentation examined the legal challenges emerging at the intersection of climate policy, energy development, and Indigenous rights. The presentation highlighted several central questions: What rights do Sámi communities possess in relation to land, culture, and self-determination? What legal obligations do Norwegian authorities have regarding consultation, participation, and impact assessment? Under what circumstances can Sámi rights be balanced against competing public interests? What legal and institutional models might improve cooperation and reduce conflict? Particularly important was the discussion surrounding consultation, participation, free, prior and informed consent (FPIC), mitigation measures, and compensation. Participants emphasized that the future legitimacy of the green transition may depend on the ability of states to ensure that Indigenous rights are respected throughout planning and implementation processes.

Sara Fusco's presentation, titled "Environmental Restorative Justice and Sámi Norm Systems: Reframing Indigenous Knowledge in the Nordic Green Transition", provided an interdisciplinary contribution by exploring environmental restorative justice and Sámi normative systems. Drawing on constitutional law, environmental constitutionalism, and Indigenous legal perspectives, the presentation examined tensions between majority values and minority cultures, individual and collective rights, state sovereignty and self-determination, and legal universalism versus legal particularism. A central contribution of the presentation was its exploration of Environmental Restorative Justice (ERJ) as an analytical framework centered on distributed environmental management, community participation, and culturally informed impact assessments. Through this lens, the presentation considered whether contemporary legal

and policy structures allow Sámi knowledge systems and árbediehtu to shape environmental decision-making processes in a substantive manner. A particularly engaging part of the presentation concerned the potential role of constitutional law in recognizing Indigenous knowledge systems and normative orders. Fusco argued that constitutional frameworks may possess both direct and indirect transformative potential when it comes to recognizing Indigenous values and normative systems.

The discussion focused heavily on intergenerational justice. Participants were especially interested in the connection between Article 112 of the Norwegian Constitution and the protection of future generations. An important contribution was the distinction between dominant legal understandings of future generations and Sámi understandings of generational continuity, where past, present, and future generations are viewed as interconnected rather than separate categories. This generated rich discussion about how Indigenous perspectives might challenge and enrich prevailing legal understandings of sustainability and environmental governance.

3.6. Master's students' presentation

The afternoon session featured presentations by two master's students who presented the findings of their master's thesis written at the Faculty of law of UiT, as part of the Joint Nordic Master Program in Environmental Law.

Helena Wuehrer presentation titled "Increase in Mineral Extraction as Projects of National Interest in Norway and British Columbia: Lessons that can be learned from one another's systems to strengthen the rights of indigenous peoples in the process". One of the strongest contributions of the presentation was its analysis of how strategic or nationally significant projects are prioritized within legal frameworks. The comparison revealed both strengths and weaknesses in each jurisdiction. On the Norwegian side, strengths include the designation of industrial areas and certain recognition of Sámi territories. Whereas weaknesses included the limited role of Indigenous knowledge within environmental assessments, weak participation mechanisms, and the absence of a legal FPIC requirement. In British Columbia, stronger Indigenous participation through the implementation of UNDRIP via DRIPA, greater incorporation of Indigenous knowledge, more independent environmental assessment mechanisms, and stronger government-to-government engagement are notable strengths. On the other hand, fragmented Indigenous territories and challenges associated with the free-entry mineral claims system are weaknesses. The discussion also highlighted the relevance of Norway's newly amended Mineral Act (2025) and the opportunities it may present for strengthening Indigenous rights protections in future resource governance.



Figure 4: Helena Wuehrer, master's student at the Faculty of Law, UiT. Photo: Erlend S. Fandrem.

Md Asaf Du Daula presented on “Indigenous Rights in Mining Operations: Comparative Insights from the Nussir Copper Project in Norway and the Phulbari Coal Project in Bangladesh”. The presentation offered valuable insights into how Indigenous rights challenges emerge in very different legal, political, and geographical contexts. By comparing two distinct jurisdictions, the presentation illustrated recurring tensions between economic development objectives, extractive industries, environmental protection, and Indigenous rights. Participants appreciated the broader global perspective introduced by the comparison and noted the importance of learning across jurisdictions when addressing questions of Indigenous participation, consultation, and resource governance.



Figure 5: Md Asaf Du Daula, master's student at the Faculty of Law, UiT. Photo: Erlend S. Fandrem.

3.7. Theme 5: Towards the Future

This session featured presentations by Dorothee Cambou and Margherita Poto.

Cambou's presentation titled "To Reform the Indigenous Peoples' Worlds: The Metamorphosis of Free Prior and Informed Consent at the World Bank", based on her chapter published in *The Oxford Handbook of International Law and Indigenous Peoples' Rights*. She traced the World Bank's transformation from a post-war reconstruction institution into a major development actor whose policies have significantly influenced international standards relating to Indigenous Peoples. Rather than approaching FPIC solely as a human rights norm derived from international legal instruments, the presentation traced its institutional development through the World Bank's safeguard policies. Beginning with early references to "conscionable agreement" in the 1982 Operational Manual Statement (OMS 2.34) concerning tribal peoples, the presentation illustrated how the Bank's approach evolved from a largely managerial response to Indigenous resistance towards the eventual incorporation of FPIC within the current Environmental and Social Standard 7 (ESS7).

An important contribution of the presentation was its critical genealogy of FPIC, which challenged assumptions that consent has always functioned primarily as a rights-based safeguard. Drawing on archival materials, including the work of Robert Goodland, Cambou argued that the origins of FPIC within the World Bank were closely linked to development governance rather than exclusively to Indigenous rights advocacy. She suggested that the Bank's interpretation of FPIC has historically functioned as a mechanism for managing development interventions while maintaining existing economic structures. Closely connected

to this critique was her discussion of participation, consultation and self-determination, arguing that these concepts have often been framed in ways that facilitate Indigenous inclusion within predetermined development processes rather than enabling genuine decision-making authority. She invited the participants to consider how FPIC has simultaneously operated as a procedural mechanism for managing participation, legitimizing development interventions, and reducing institutional risk.

The subsequent discussion focused on the relationship between the World Bank's interpretation of FPIC and developments in international human rights law, particularly within the United Nations and regional human rights systems, as well as highlighted the continuing tension between procedural participation and meaningful Indigenous self-determination within international development governance. Reflecting on the participants' question as to whether FPIC could be reclaimed as a stronger expression of Indigenous self-determination, Cambou emphasized that FPIC should be understood as an important procedural tool as meaningful protection ultimately depends upon the broader realization of Indigenous Peoples' right to self-determination. The discussion also highlighted the historical influence of institutions such as the International Labour Organization and the World Bank in shaping contemporary understandings of Indigenous rights and development governance. Overall, the presentation provided a thought-provoking and historically grounded critique of the evolution of FPIC and its continuing role within international development practice.

Poto's presentation, titled "Reshaping Futures through Care, Storytelling and Co-Creation", provided a forward-looking perspective exploring how legal research itself can be transformed through decolonial and Indigenous approaches centered on care, reciprocity, storytelling, and co-creation. Drawing on experiences from both the Norwegian Arctic and the Brazilian Amazon, she illustrated how research can move beyond extractive models towards more relational and collaborative forms of knowledge production, emphasizing that research is a relational and cyclical process rather than a linear accumulation of knowledge.

The presentation highlighted storytelling, traditional cultural practices, and artistic expression not simply as methods of data collection, but as ways of reshaping legal thinking and creating new forms of engagement between researchers and Indigenous communities. Central to this approach were the interconnected values of positionality, trans-disciplinarity, and co-creation, emphasizing that knowledge is produced collaboratively rather than extracted from communities. Reflecting on her own experiences working with Indigenous communities, Poto emphasized that understanding Indigenous legal epistemologies requires humility, patience and a willingness to unlearn assumptions rooted in Western legal traditions. She illustrated this through personal experiences in Sámi communities, where learning traditional practices became a means of appreciating Indigenous legal knowledge beyond conventional academic frameworks.

A particularly thought-provoking concept was that of "restorying" - the process of re-narrating legal and historical relationships by centering Indigenous perspectives and experiences. Participants reflected on how restorative and relational research approaches may contribute not only to improved participation but also to broader processes of reconciliation, legal reform, and environmental justice. Overall, the presentation offered an innovative and interdisciplinary

perspective on environmental justice, demonstrating how storytelling, Indigenous methodologies and collaborative research can contribute to more inclusive and sustainable futures.

3.8. Plenary session: Comparative reflections – Building blocks for the NKJ policy brief

The seminar was concluded with a plenary session. This provided participants with a final opportunity for open discussion and reflection on any aspects covered in the two-day seminar. The participants were also grouped in pairs to discuss and generate policy recommendations as an outcome of the discussion of the two-day seminar. As such, this seminar laid the ground for the third and final seminar of the NORSIL-NKJ project, whose objective is to draw policy brief with workable recommendations for law and policy makers, which will take place in Rovaniemi in May 2027.



Figure 6: Co-leaders of the NORSIL-NKJ and the GRIP-Bear projects, Christina Allard, Endalew L. Enyew, and Kamrul Hossain; and recipients of the GRIP-Bear project travel and accommodation funding, Jens Kristian Øvstebø (secretariat of WGIP and BYC), Sara Fusco (University of Akureyri), and Sade Hammami (University of Helsinki). Photo: Erlend S. Fandrem.

4. Concluding reflections and next steps

As a transdisciplinary network connecting Nordic, Sámi, and international scholars, NORSIL provides an important platform for strengthening research collaboration, exchanging perspectives across disciplines and borders, and advancing knowledge on legal and societal issues affecting Indigenous peoples. The seminar offered valuable opportunities for participants to share research on key issues and to develop new connections with scholars from other Nordic institutions.

The seminar demonstrated that the “green transition” is not simply an environmental or technological challenge. It is also a legal, political, and normative challenge that raises fundamental questions about reconciliation, Indigenous self-determination, and the future relationship between states and Sámi communities across the Nordic region. The seminar highlighted the role of Sámi traditional knowledge, Sámi law and governance in reindeer herding systems across the Nordic countries, and rights-based approaches to the recognition of Sámi rights within the broader narrative of the “green transition”. The seminar benefitted significantly from comparative perspectives, allowing insights from different jurisdictions to illuminate common challenges and alternative approaches to Indigenous rights protection.

Across all presentations and discussions, several key insights can be distilled. First, the discussions repeatedly highlighted the limitations of existing legal frameworks in accommodating Sámi knowledge systems, cultural practices, and governance traditions. Second, participants emphasized the importance of moving beyond procedural participation towards approaches that genuinely recognize Indigenous knowledge systems, self-determination and intergenerational justice, offering meaningful forms of Indigenous influence in decision-making. Third, many contributions pointed to the need for legal approaches capable of addressing cumulative impacts and long-term intergenerational concerns rather than focusing narrowly on individual cases/projects. Fourth, while the presentations drew on different legal systems and disciplinary perspectives, they collectively highlighted the need for more meaningful engagement with Sámi knowledge systems and governance structures.

Going forward, the findings of the two-day seminar will be published in a special issue (a proposal is sent to the Nordic Journal of Human Rights). Moreover, the third and final seminar of the NORSIL-NKJ will take place in Rovaniemi from 11-13 May 2027. The main goal of this final seminar is to discuss how to best support the development and implementation of law and policy for a *just* and sustainable development in the Scandinavian North. This will be summarized into recommendations for policy and law reform, as well as to discuss future research pathways.

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