

## **Proposal by the Finnish Heritage Agency to the Ministry of Education and Culture on elements to be inscribed on the National Inventory of Living Heritage**

The UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage was adopted in 2003 at the UNESCO General Conference. Finland adopted the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2013. The Finnish Heritage Agency is responsible for the implementation of the Convention in Finland.

The aim of the Convention is to promote the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage, ensure respect for the intangible cultural heritage of communities, groups and individuals and raise awareness of the importance of intangible cultural heritage. The Convention emphasises the importance of passing on traditions, promoting cultural diversity, and people's participation in cultural heritage.

The UNESCO Convention also includes creating an inventory or inventories of intangible cultural heritage at both the national and international levels. The resulting inventory is a tool that can be used to identify, describe and convey knowledge and information about living heritage. In Finland, the compilation of the inventory was started in 2016 with the launch of the Wiki-inventory of Living Heritage, where communities can freely enter submissions on living heritage that is meaningful to them. So far, the platform has attracted roughly 175 submissions written by 240 communities in five different languages. The Wiki-inventory is a continuously updated information resource on living heritage in Finland. The platform is moderated by the Finnish Heritage Agency.

From the Wiki-inventory, it is possible to apply for elements to be inscribed on the National Inventory of Living Heritage every other year. During the first round of applications in 2017, the Ministry of Education and Culture inscribed 52 elements on the inventory. The second round of applications was open from 4 November to 5 December 2019. A total of 24 applications were received by the deadline, of which 21 passed the technical inspection carried out by the Finnish Heritage Agency. An open round of comments was organised for communities and experts in the field of living heritage from 13 to 30 January 2020. The wiki platform received a total of 28 electronic comments from 10 communities and individuals.

The advisory group on intangible cultural heritage processed the applications at its meeting on 12 February 2020. The applications were assessed in accordance with the criteria of the UNESCO Lists of Intangible Cultural Heritage and the specific national criteria. The proposal of the Finnish Heritage Agency is based on the advisory group's recommendations.

The National Inventory will be updated regularly, and the next opportunity to submit applications will be in 2021 at the earliest. It is possible for elements listed in the National Inventory to be nominated later for inscription on UNESCO's international Lists of Intangible Cultural Heritage. The communities backing the elements can express their interest in this to the Finnish Heritage Agency through a separate call for applications. This call for applications was last held in 2018, and the decision on the next call has not yet been made. The decisions on the elements to be nominated for inscription on UNESCO's lists are made by the Ministry of Education and Culture, based on a proposal by the Finnish Heritage Agency and the advisory group on intangible cultural heritage.

The Finnish Heritage Agency proposes the inscription of the 12 elements listed below on the National Inventory of Living Heritage.

Elina Anttila, Acting Director General

## **Festivities and practices**

### **Living Christmas calendar in Käpylä**

The living Christmas calendar of Käpylä is a communal event that is held in the Käpylä district of Helsinki in December. Each day, lanterns are lit, and a new door of the calendar is opened. The event invites people to read, sing, play and becoming familiar with the area and its people. The events included in the calendar are held around Käpylä. They are open to all, free of charge. The motives behind the calendar range from learning to know inhabitants' activities and the history of old buildings and retaining the area's vitality to strengthening the community spirit and preserving the continuity of cultural heritage. The application was submitted by a total of 15 associations, NGOs and City operators.

## **Music, dance and performing arts**

### **Demoscene**

Demoscene is an international community that focuses on making *demos* – real-time audiovisual presentations that creatively combine programming, graphics and audio. It also produces many other types of digital content: small demos (known as *intros*), music, graphics, videos, disk magazines and games. These artworks are shared free of charge, originally on disks and later through various online services. The community has been growing since the 1980s, and it currently comprises hundreds of demo groups around Finland, each of which has members ranging from a few people to several dozen. The groups meet each other at various events throughout the year. The subculture is empowering for its members and an important part of their identity. The application was submitted by a total of 13 actors in the field.

### **Playing and building Jouhikantele (Bowed Lyre)**

Jouhikantele or jouhikko is a Bowed Lyre. The Karelian and Savonian tradition of playing the instrument dates back to the middle ages. In addition to the playing of jouhikantele, the building of the instrument is another important part of this living tradition. The almost forgotten skill of playing and building jouhikantele has been revived over the last few decades. Today, the tradition is practised by thousands of enthusiasts and professionals. Jouhikantele playing can be studied at many educational institutions, and it also has a strong foothold online. The application was submitted by 32 players as well as Kanteleliitto ry (Kantele Union), the Finnish Folk Music Institute, the Finnish Folk Music Association, Pro Sommelo ry and the Folk Music Department of Sibelius Academy.

### **Playing and building kantele**

Kantele is a well-known instrument among Finns, above all thanks to the national epic The Kalevala. The 5-string instrument mentioned in the epic has evolved into a 40-string instrument over time. Kantele can be considered a national symbol, but it also has an active group of players and builders around Finland. Kantele can be played solo, as accompaniment to songs and in kantele ensembles and all other types of ensembles. The phenomenon is an essential part of the living heritage of the individuals, groups and communities that practice it, and it is passed on in many ways. The phenomenon is continuously being recreated and its practitioners feel that it is meaningful to their identity. The application was submitted by Kanteleliitto ry (Kantele Union), Kanteleensoiton Opettajat ry (Association of Kantele Teachers), the Folk Music Department of Sibelius Academy and the Finnish Kantele Museum.

### **National Culture Days of the Deaf**

The Finnish Association of the Deaf organises the National Culture Days of the Deaf every other year and the Cultural Event for Deaf Seniors on alternate years. A large number of art enthusiasts who use sign language perform and compete amongst themselves during the Culture Days. The performing arts featured are stage performance, visual arts, crafts, photography and digital art. Separate competitions are held for individuals and groups in each category. The estimated number of members in the Finnish Sign Language community is 5,500, and it is estimated that roughly one in three of them attend the Culture Days. The community feels that the event is part of their living heritage and supports its practitioners' identity. The Culture Days have also developed new forms of presentation and performance within the community. The application was submitted by the Finnish Association of the Deaf, the Finnish Labour Museum Werstas and the Finnish Museum of the Deaf.

### **Puppet theatre**

The puppet theatre community in Finland is extensive, with hundreds of professionals and enthusiasts who perform puppet theatre with a huge variety of techniques and themes. Traditional and new puppet theatre operate side by side, and both national and international festivals in this field are held around Finland throughout the year. The more than 3,500 performances staged around Finland are attended by more than 250,000 visitors annually. Performances are given by professional theatres, dozens of independent puppet theatre groups and solo artists as well as numerous amateur groups. The tradition is alive and constantly evolving. The application was submitted by Unima Finland, Lapin nukketheateriyhdistys (Puppet Theatre Association of Lapland), Nukketatteri Ofelia (Puppet Theatre Ofelia), Aura of Puppets, Pieksämäen Nukkekotit (Puppet House of Pieksämäki) and the Hevosenkä Theatre.

### **Playing the musical saw**

Playing the musical saw is a living tradition that requires virtuosity and a good ear for music. Players of the instrument usually use a musical saw made for playing, but serrated wood-cutting saws can also be played. There are a total of a little over a hundred players around Finland. The musical saw is played at various celebrations and events, in addition to which camps, courses, concerts and competitions are organised. These activities are carried out on a small scale, but the tradition is important living heritage to its practitioners and their identity. The application was submitted by Suomen Sahansoittajat ry (Musical Saw Players of Finland).

### **Oral traditions**

#### **Bedtime story**

Bedtime stories are read out loud or told freely in Finnish families before the children go to sleep. Stories are mainly read and told to children under school age but also to schoolchildren who have already learned to read. The reading of bedtime stories is supported by maternity and child health clinics, libraries and many NGOs that work with reading and literature. The significance of the phenomenon has also been recognised at the national level. The bedtime story tradition is an interesting example of how tradition simultaneously changes and remains the same as the times and technology change.

The application was submitted by the Finnish Institute for Children's Literature, the Finnish Reading Center and Suomen sanataideopetuksen seura (Literary Art Teaching Society of Finland).

### **Crafts**

#### **Ryijy tradition**

Traditionally, ryijys, which are knotted-pile textiles, have been used as large blankets, wall hangings or seat covers. Ryijys have traditionally been woven on a loom or sewn on a base fabric. Today, ryijys are made in all sizes for different purposes of use, using a wide variety of materials. The tradition is passed on by several

parties that organise teaching as well as thousands of enthusiasts. Ryijy making can also be learned on social media, where photos of them are shared. The tradition can be seen as part of a continuum, and it changes with the times. The application was submitted by the Finnish Crafts Organization Taito, the Craft Museum of Finland, the Friends of Finnish Handicraft and Käsityö verkossa ry (Crafts Online).

### **Making of Tommi knives**

Tommi knives have been forged in Hyrynsalmi since the late 19th century, and the tradition is particularly strong in Kainuu and Koillismaa. The method of making Tommi knives is taught at comprehensive schools and local community colleges. There are dozens of active makers in Hyrynsalmi. From the forging of the blade to the sewing of the sheath, each and every knife is handmade by a single person. Making a knife is a personal demonstration of craftsmanship, and a part of self-expression. The tradition is of key importance to the area and the identity of its practitioners. The application was submitted by Tommi-puukon Perinneyhdistys ry (Tommi Knife Heritage Association).

### **Nature and the universe**

#### **Kalevala bone setting as a traditional healing method**

Kalevala bone setting is a method of manipulating the body's tissues softly by utilising the movement of the joints. The tradition upholds a culture of working with the hands, in which touch and interaction are important. Kalevala bone setting has far-reaching roots in Finnish folklore. The tradition is practised by roughly 800 trained 'kalevalainen jäsenkorjaaja' (Kalevala bonesetter), which is a title protected by the EU. The tradition is actively passed on with the help of training, seminars and publications. The tradition has a strong continuity and is a part of its practitioners' identity. The application was submitted by Kansanlääkintäseura ry (Folk Medicine Society), Kalevalainen kansanparannus -säätiö (Kalevala Folk Medicine Foundation) and Perinnehoitojen neuvottelukunta (Advisory Committee for Traditional Healing).

#### **Horsemanship of the Roma**

Horsemanship is a part of the living tradition of the Finnish Roma people, and it unites the community. Horsemanship and good horse keeping are a matter of honour for the Roma, and owning horses has often been the source of livelihood for the whole family. The horsemanship tradition has changed over the last century, from the use of horses as farm animals to using horses in recreational activities and a sport. Many people earn their living as horse keepers, breeders, farriers, trainers and jockeys. Horses are also present in Roma songs, oral tradition and jewellery, among other things. The tradition has a strong significance to the community, and it changes with the times. The application was submitted by the Finnish Roma Association.



**Finnish Heritage Agency**

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