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Despite a year of rollercoaster financial news and the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression, the study of Sámi, Finnish, Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian at the University of Wisconsin-Madison continued to thrive. This issue chronicles the year's events and reminds us all of the power and value of concerted study to make a better world. In times like these more than ever,

small countries and cultures depend on the dissemination of good, solid information so that people can learn about the opportunities, struggles, and achievements of these often forgotten societies on Europe's northern periphery. We're glad to be a part of that work here at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and we hope that you, too, will join with us in this endeavor. Come study with us, participate in our programs, or simply read about what we've been doing!❄

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## Scandinavian Studies hosts SASS

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The Department of Scandinavian Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison is the nation's oldest department devoted to the study of the languages and cultures of Europe's north. So it was especially appropriate that the **ninety-ninth annual conference** of the **Society for the Advancement of Scandinavian Study** (SASS) was held here in Madison at the **Monona Terrace Conference Center**, April 30-May 2, 2009. The Society's president, UW Scandinavian Studies professor and former chair **Susan Brantly** oversaw a conference that attracted more participants than ever, despite a

strained economy and worries about H1N1 ("Swine") Flu. The conference featured three days of paper sessions, including a great many papers and panels on topics related to the eastern Baltic region. The coming year's conference will be held in **Seattle**, Washington, April 22-24, 2010 and will meet jointly with AABS, the **Association for the Advancement of Baltic Studies**.❄

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## Sámi pre-conference brings together Sámi and Native American scholars

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Students and faculty at the Department of Scandinavian Studies decided to take advantage of SASS to host a special pre-conference to bring together scholars of Sámi studies with UW scholars of **American Indian Studies**. The conference took place at the University of Wisconsin's **Pyle Center** on the Wednesday and Thursday preceding the beginning of SASS (April 29 and 30, 2009) and was free and open to the public. The program, assembled and orchestrated by a team that included **Tim Frandy**, **Kari-Synnøve Morset**,



*Some of the SASS Sámi Studies contingent at Monona Terrace Conference Center: Tom DuBois, Mikael Svonni, Christina L.P.W. Johnson, Kari Synnøve Morset, Harald Gaski, Michael Maestri, Nils Gaup, Krister Stoor.*

**Hilary Virtanen, Christina Johnson, and Tom DuBois**, consisted of an evening potluck dinner and “sharing of traditions” featuring the Sámi joik performer **Krister Stoor** as well as the University of Wisconsin’s **Wunk Sheek Singers**. Thursday’s program included presentations by UW faculty **Larry Nesper, Rand Valentine, and Tracy Peterson**, as well as Sámi scholars **Troy Storfjell** (Pacific Lutheran University—a UW alum), **Krister Stoor** (Umeå University) and **Harald Gaski** (Tromsø University). Members of the **North American Sámi Siida**, including **Eric and Penny Seaberg, Faith Fjeld, Marlene Wisuri** and **Ruthann Cecil** took an active part in the conference discussions and exchanges of

ideas, as did undergraduate and graduate students from the UW’s **Wunk Sheek Student Organization**.❄

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### **Nils Gaup and *Kautokeino Rebellion 1852***

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**Nils Gaup** delivered the keynote address at this year’s SASS conference. As a part of the conference program, the participants also had a chance to see Gaup’s latest film *The Kautokeino Rebellion 1852* at the **Orpheum Theatre** on State Street. During its premiere at the International Film Festival in Tromsø in 2008, this movie was described as Norway’s most important film ever, a film under the sign of reconciliation. It has proven very popular among audiences in Scandinavia and won several Amanda prizes in 2008, including the coveted

People’s Prize. The staff at the Orpheum reported that as many as 700 people made use of this great opportunity to see the film during the four screenings that were held during the conference.

The **Wunk Sheek Singers** from UW – Madison welcomed the film to the area with a song before the first screening, and Nils Gaup was on hand to introduce the film and answer questions after the first screening. Many spectators in Madison found the film profoundly moving. It will shortly be available on DVD in US format, and also on Blue Ray.

Viewers at the Orpheum were able to see the film as Gaup intended: with the full range of colors and tones that film on a large screen affords, capturing the beauty of the northern landscape, the expressions and emotions of the film’s cast, and the character of the three thousand reindeer that share the



*Elen (Anna-Kristiina Juuso), Merchant Ruth (Mikael Persbrandt), and Rev. Stockfleth, (Bjørn Sundquist). Photo/Copyright : Erik Aavatsmark, for Rubicon/Sandrew Metronome Norge.*

screen with the human cast during the film.

Nils Gaup emerged as one of the leading storytellers of Scandinavia in 1987 with his first film *Ofelaš* or *Pathfinder*. This Sámi film was the first feature film in the world written and performed in an indigenous language and in an indigenous setting. Moreover, this successful film has strong shamanic components, which has created possibilities for peoples all over the world to feel pride of shamanic heritage as well as indigenous heritage. Many films

have since then followed *Pathfinder's* lead.

Before the plot of *Ofelaš* starts, there is a sign planted pointing to the future, an axe cutting through air. It is a symbol of what happened in Alta October 1854, when two young Sámi reindeer herders who had taken part in the Kautokeino Rebellion two years earlier were beheaded by the Norwegian government. After years of repression, lawless imprisonment and under the threat of losing their herds and thus their livelihoods, an outraged group of young, religiously agitated reindeer herding Sámi staged a rebellion in Kautokeino, killing the sheriff and the liquor merchant. These tragic events form the theme of Gaup's film, which explores a

mostly unknown side to Sámi – Norwegian history. Empathy is focused on the Sámi and is told from the perspective of a strong Sámi foremother. Since its premiere in 2008, the movie has proven to carry a potential of that of *Pathfinder* for its ability to renegotiate Sámi history using “the Master's tools”. The film provides a powerful example for the world's indigenous populations for its ability to break the silence of oppression. ❄️

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A Year of Baltic Films

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This year's Wisconsin Film Festival, April 2-5, 2009 again included Baltic films, thanks to an anonymous donation administered by the **Center for the Study of Upper Midwest Cultures** (CSUMC). Each film was screened twice to large audiences.

**Meelis Veeremets's** 2008 Estonian film *Kinnunen* explores humorously the complex relation of Finns and Estonians in the twenty-first century. When a stereotypically self-conscious and tongue-tied working class Finn sets off to Tallinn to find himself a willing bride, hilarious events ensue, ones which poke fun at both Finnish and Estonian self images and the difficulties of finding love in cultures marked by shyness, enduring loneliness, and endless philosophizing. Against all odds, *Kinnunen* has a happy ending, but not before many ups and downs.

**Janis Putnins's** lyrical film *Vogelfrei* represented the Latvian addition to this year's film festival. *Vogelfrei* presents snapshot moments from the life of a single man, capturing his boyhood, adolescence, young adulthood and old age in powerful and evocative images. In each moment, we glimpse the film's protagonist in a desperate struggle to find love and maintain personal autonomy in a world too given over to crass profiteering and cynicism. The film won both the Best Film and Best Screenplay awards at the 2007 Latvian National Film Festival.

Classic and contemporary Baltic films were also featured in the cultural program of **BALSSI 2009** (see related story). The program's supplemental lectures

and film series was opened with a screening of **James and Maureen Tusty's** 2008 documentary *The Singing Revolution*, which chronicles the remarkable events leading up to the reestablishment of Estonian independence. The inspiring film celebrates the nonviolent approach to political change put forward by activists in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania in the late 1980s and their reliance on the transformative power of song and singing to reestablish a national identity all but destroyed by half a century of Soviet rule.

Two additional Estonian films helped sketch the tentative, often covert ways Baltic filmmakers explored national themes during the Soviet era. **Eri Klas's** 1969 film *Kevade* [The Spring] brought the late nineteenth-century **Oskar Luts's** classic Bildungsroman *Kevade* to an Estonian audience at the height of the Soviet era. The film's subtle images of cultural traditions and Christmas were powerful messages in the context of the late 1960s. So, too, the film maker **Lennart Meri's** Finno-Ugric documentaries from the 1970s *Linnutee tuuled* and *Veelinnurarahvas* offered audiences a means of exploring Estonian roots as an enduring ethnographic reality. Meri went on to become president of Estonia from 1992 to 2001, an achievement that reflects the consciousness raising effects of his artful films of the 1970s.

Two further Baltic films from the era after the reestablishment of independence look back with humor and poignancy at the harsh years of the Soviet past. **Laila Pakalniņa's** 1998 film *Kurpe* [Shoe] explores the absurdities of Soviet Liepāja in the 1950s. A mysterious footprint in the sand of a local

beach sets off a paranoid search for an infiltrator, as the film adapts the Cinderella story to a new and ironic setting. Lithuanian film maker **Giedrė Beinoriūtė** depicts life in small-town Soviet Lithuania during the 1960s. Even amid ugly concrete housing, young love blooms in this tale that captures the daily rhythms and material culture of the Soviet past.

Film represents a unique means of depicting and shaping modern cultures, and students, faculty, and the general public gained great insights into the societies and ideals of eastern Baltic nations through the films screened in Madison this year.❄

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## BALSSI 2009

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The **Center for Russian, East European and Central Asian (CRÉECA)** was proud to team with the **Scandinavian Studies Department** in the summer of 2009 to bring the sixteenth annual **Baltic Studies Summer Institute (BALSSI)** to Madison. BALSSI is a nationally acclaimed summer institute designed to train undergraduate and graduate students in Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian languages in an intensive summer study format. Funding for the program comes from a consortium of US research universities, including the **University of Wisconsin-Madison**, as well as the **American Council of Learned Societies**, the **Association for the Advancement of Baltic Studies**, and the **Lithuanian Foundation**.

Fourteen students enrolled in the three intensive language courses offered under the title **Scandinavian 404: Languages of Northern Europe**. Three students completed the course in Latvian, taught by Dr. **Dzidra Rodins** of **DePaul University**. Seven students completed the Lithuanian course, taught by **Daiva Litvinskaitė** of the **University of Illinois-Chicago**. Four students completed the Estonian course, taught by **Piibi-Kai Kivik** of **Indiana University**.

supplemented by a dynamic lecture series and cultural program that included a picnic hosted by the **Madison-Vilnius Sister Cities Organization**, an evening of folk dancing hosted by the **Žaibas** dancers of Madison, and a final picnic hosted by Tom DuBois. Field trips were organized to key **Chicago** sites: **Eesti Maja** (Estonia House) in Riverwoods IL, the **Balzekas Museum** in Summit, IL, and the nearby and always popular **Grand Duke's Lithuanian Restaurant**.

director **Jennifer Tishler** and CREECA outreach coordinator **Nancy Heingartner** are already hard at work planning **BALSSI 2010**. We hope to offer instruction in all three languages at both the elementary and intermediate levels. Want to learn a Baltic language? **Join us next summer!** ❄️

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The language courses were **DuBois**, CREECA associate



BALSSI 2009 Staff and Students. Photo by Carrie Roy.

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## An Engaging Speakers Program

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BALSSI 2009 brought to campus a variety of speakers and topics of great interest to students and scholars working on the cultures of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

On June 23, UW Geography Prof. **Robert Kaiser** spoke on “Post-Soviet Borderlands as Diaspora Spaces: the Case of Setomaa.” How does modern Estonia deal with its Russian border, and what happens to Seto people living on either side of the border? Kaiser discussed the Estonian situation in the context of “post-Soviet geographies.”

On July 7, UW History Professor emeritus **Alfred E. Senn** spoke on “What is Lithuania?” Senn, a longtime UW teacher and researcher, shared his insights on past and modern Lithuania with an audience of students and community members.

On July 24, **Rudra Vilus Dundzila** Professor of Humanities and Comparative Religion at **Harry S. Truman College** spoke on “A Poplar Stood by the Roadside: A Sojourn with Baltic Myths, Songs, and Spirituality.” Dundzila explored the meanings of traditional Lithuanian songs and the ancient worldview and mythology they depict. Dundzila is a UW-Madison alumnus.

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On July 28, **UW-Eau Claire** Professor of History **Paulis Lazda** spoke on “The Museum of the Occupation of Latvia.” Lazda detailed the challenges and achievements of his work to create a museum that tells the story of Latvia’s various occupations. Lazda is also a UW-Madison alumnus.

Students at BALSSI benefitted from the expertise and wisdom of these various presenters whom we thank heartily for their generous contributions to the summer’s program.

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## Kari Synnøve Morset completes doctorate

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Kari Synnøve Morset and Tom DuBois, May, 2009. Photo by Celeste Robins.

**Kari Synnøve Morset** produced an exciting and very welcome new dissertation on Sámi literature in the spring of 2009. Kari Synnøve’s study explores the contemporary Sámi revitalization in a historical perspective, with a focus on the Sámi artists’ call for recognition of Sámi existence and right to exist in the future.

The dissertation *Voices of the North - Sámi Revitalization: The Artistic Struggle that Revived a Threatened Sámi Culture* illuminates assimilative pressures regarding language, religion and music that Sámi people have experienced from four different governments.

Morset argues that due to the tireless acting out of moral courage from a choir of Sámi artists, a successful and important



revitalization of language, culture and philosophy has occurred within Sápmi, the land of the Sámi.

In reverse chronology, a journey from artist to artist begins by accounting for contemporary musician **Mari Boine's** realization of the suppression of the Sámi, and the transformation of her initial anger. **Nils Gaup's** successes with his films *Pathfinder* (1988) and *The Kautokeino Rebellion 1852* (2008) are further discussed as well as the content of *The Kautokeino Rebellion 1852* and forces that threatened Sámi livelihoods during the time of this first Sámi uprising. A whole chapter is devoted to **Nils-Aslak Valkeapää's** important popularization of Sámi culture. His poetry relates, for example, how settlers with "dingy fat books" replaced ancient Sámi rights with law, thus stealing the land. **Paulus Utsi's** poems from the 1970s show similarly that conveniences achieved in the name of the progress the settlers' livelihoods brought cannot keep our human hearts warm:

Painful is the walk  
on hard stone roads  
Silent cry the people  
of the mountains

This quote, which opens the dissertation, is taken from Utsi's poem "As long", which encourages humankind to wake up to the fact that only "as long as we have water where the fish can swim (...) are we safe on this earth."

first secular book in a Sámi language. In his *Muittalus Sámid Birra* (Story of the Sámi people), the narrator points to the Sámi people's need for being in nature, preferably on top of mountains, when making important choices, and not in murky rooms. His book ends on a sad note, showing how the Sámi under the settlers' rule have become the unknown and unwanted animals in Sápmi, their own homeland. The journey from artist to artist ends with the nineteenth-century Sámi poet **Anders Fjellner** who collected material for creating a Sámi epic, producing mythical texts that have influenced later Sámi authors. These and other courageous Sámi voices have together over the last hundred years used the "master's tools," providing artworks performed within the majority culture's framework.

These Sámi works have achieved victory in reviving the Sámi culture and are shining forth as strong counter-voices to the majority mindset, which developed during hundreds of years of colonization and oppression of indigenous peoples and

In 1910 **Johan Turi** wrote the natural life. Just because the Sámi also gave in, as so many people have, to the progress of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, that does not mean that the traditional Sámi did not have an apt perception of how to handle nature. "Leave no trace behind", sums up the Sami philosophy about nature, which has parallels in indigenous cultures throughout the eastern

Baltic. "Leave no trace behind" sounds like a needed slogan today when the original Sámi view might in fact be as valid and important as ever, writes Morset in her inspiring and substantive dissertation. ❄️

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### Special Issue Planned for the *Journal of Finnish Studies*

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**Jim Leary** and **Hilary Virtanen** are coordinating a special issue of the *Journal of Finnish Studies* on rebellious and bawdy themes in Finnish-American music. Based on ongoing research of several scholars in Finnish-American folklife, the issue will center largely on musical performances from the 1920s and 30s, many of which were documented by folklorist **Alan Lomax** during his 1938 field recording trip in **Michigan's Upper Peninsula** for the **Archives of Folk Song at the Library of Congress**.

Contributors, including Virtanen and Leary, as well as **Tim Frandy**, **Gary Kaunonen (Michigan Technological University)**, **Paul Niemisto (St. Olaf College)**, **Aaron Goings (Simon Fraser University)**, and **Pekka Gronow (University of Helsinki)**, will relate the cultural world inhabited by working class Finnish-Americans, and how political and personal issues in their lives were reflected in music, "hall" culture, and activism.

This issue will also feature reviews of recent recordings and films pertaining to Finnish-American music and culture, including the recordings of **Jukka Karjalainen** and the documentary films of **Erkki Määttänen**.

The *Journal*, now housed at **Finlandia University** under the editorial offices of **Beth L. Virtanen (editor-in-chief)**, **Hanna Snellman (Co-editor)** and **Hilary Virtanen (Assistant Editor)**, plans to release this issue in the summer of 2010. ❄️

Calumet, 1938. Aho Juhani and “Sonny” walk the railroad tracks. Photo by Alan Lomax.



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## Languages across the Curriculum

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During the 2008–2009 academic year the Department of Scandinavian Studies applied for and received Title VI funding from the **Center for European Studies** to support two **Foreign Languages Across the Curriculum (FLAC)** sections linked to large enrollment lecture courses in the department. Students who enroll in the FLAC sections meet once a week for a foreign-language discussion section intended to supplement and further the materials covered

in the English-language-led lecture. In order to enroll in a FLAC section students must have intermediate or above proficiency in a Scandinavian language, and the weekly meetings focus on developing

students' capacities in oral communication.

The fall 2008 FLAC section was tied to Professor **Julie Allen's Kierkegaard and Scandinavian Literature** course and was led in Danish by Ph.D. candidate in the department **William Banks**. Danish-language readings for the FLAC section considered Kierkegaard and his oeuvre in terms of both its socio-historical context of early nineteenth century Denmark, but also as part of an ongoing dialogue about religion, morality, literature, and society with other great thinkers from the era and beyond.

The spring 2009 FLAC section was connected to Professor **Julie Allen's Scandinavian Heritage in America** course and was led in Swedish by Ph.D. candidate in the department **Kjerstin Moody**. Course material for the section chronologically traced the Scandinavian-American emigrant/immigrant experience by focusing on excerpts from classic works of literature, including **Vilhelm Moberg's Utvandrarerna** (1949), as well as short accounts from and about a sampling of other Scandinavian-American settlers and settlements, among them an excerpt about the Swedish and Finnish settlement of **New Delaware**. These Swedish-, Norwegian-, and Danish-language readings helped shed light on the reasons why Scandinavians came to America and what their life in the New World looked like. Snippets of films, including **Erkki**

**Mäattänen's *Toivola—The Land of Hope***, helped bring to life contemporary reflections of Scandinavian-American culture. During the final three weeks of class students presented on ways Scandinavian-America is still alive a century after the peak of Scandinavian emigration to the United States by discussing Scandinavian-American food

traditions, material culture, museums, organizations and foundations, communities, and annual festivals across the United States. A total of seven (five Swedish-language [including one graduate student who works in both Swedish and Finnish], one Norwegian-language, and one Danish-language) students were enrolled in the FLAC section,

communicating together to explore aspects of Scandinavian America.

The Department of Scandinavian Studies is grateful to the Center for European Studies for its support of these innovative foreign-language-learning opportunities over the past academic year. ❄️

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