



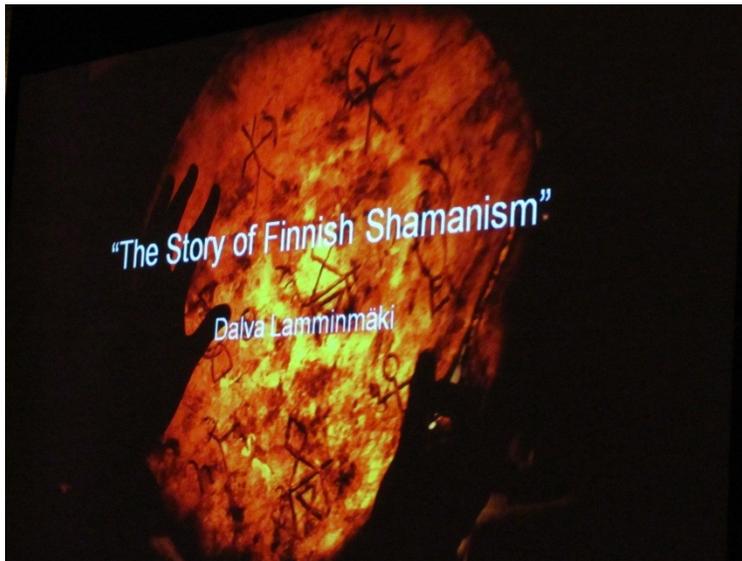
Nordic News

240 Sparks Street, PO Box 55023, Ottawa, ON K1P 1A1

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Report on May Speakers' Event

Finno-Ugric Shamanism



They exist in the trees ahead, the air above, the stones beneath, the lakes around – the spirits. Dalva Lamminmäki explained Traditions in Finno-Ugric Shamanism at the Canadian Nordic Society's Speakers' Series event on May 1st. Dalva's roots are in a community in Karelia where the spirits were omnipresent, a part of everyday life.

It's not possible to define just a pure Finnish shamanism as there is widespread evidence of the culture throughout the Finno-Ugric regions that Dalva showed us on a map. And

during the question and answer session after her talk, it seemed members knew of similar practices throughout the world.

Rock paintings are some of the evidence that has been passed down over the millennia of the existence of spirituality. Dalva showed one rock painting containing numerous animals (elk, for instance, but likely an old world animal much larger than Canadian elk roaming freely in Banff, Alberta) and one bird taking flight with the spirit of some departed one to carry the spirit into the upperworld. The interpretation of another painting from Kouvola is that the shaman is moving inside an animal.

As well as elk, the bear is an important animal, described as the golden king of the forest, too sacred to be recorded on stone. She said that it used to be a standard ritual to put the skull of a bear in a tree to help it rise into the sky.

Tree worship is important – it is a belief that a human’s spirit flows back into a tree. There was a special tree when she was young that held the spirit of her great grandmother. Every house would have a miniature wood tree in front. When couples married, they planted a tree together; when a child was born, it was introduced to a tree that would hold its spirit.

Dalva talked about the old poems of the Finnish people – a collection of oral poetry compiled by Elias Lönnrot during the 19th century representing the largest folklore archive in the world: some 100 000 individual poems and containing 35 000 spells. He created the Finnish Kalevala from the collection.

Saunas, as is well known, are an important element in Finnish culture, and were used for rites of passage, birth, purification rituals, and the old would retreat there to die. The warm, moist and dark sauna was a symbol of a womb.



In closing, Dalva brought out her drum, beating it for the members and guests, humming along in a ceremony she called Raising Up Nature, the awakening of spring. On the drum head, the upper third represents the upper world, the middle this world, and the bottom is the underworld.

Dalva is a teacher with the Center for Finno-Ugric Shamanism, Helsinki. She has lived in Finland all her life. Dalva visited Thunder Bay, Toronto, Montreal as well as Ottawa during her Spring 2013 trip to Canada.

Peter Macnaughton
Newsletter Editor
Canadian Nordic Society

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