



Figure 1. Finding a place for the art installation at Aspa-koti Goahti. Photo: Mirja Hiltunen, 2024.

Intergenerational Encounters – Exploring Ándaras Kitti’s Heritage in Utsjoki

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*In the **Footsteps of Andaras Kitti** project, dialogical and participatory art-based methods were implemented, with the core idea of ‘knowing the past and acting proactively today’ driving the initiative. Our aim was to foster intergenerational encounters, knowledge creation, and exchange in the experiment carried out in Sápmi, Utsjoki, Finland, with local kindergarten and elderly care home residents. Together we commemorated and celebrated the 180th birthday of Tenon’s star navigator Ándaras Kitti, exploring themes of the starry sky through art, studying constellations and the stories hidden in the celestial canopy.*



Figures 2–3. Art installation *Be the comet of your own life* in daycare. The comets were left at the kindergarten hanging from the ceiling and later for the kids to take home. Photos: Heidi Lähtevänoja (left) and Mirja Hiltunen (right), 2024.

Ándaras Kitti (1844–1926) was a Sámi knowledge owner who specialized in the fishing culture, oral traditions of the Teno River, and astronomy in Utsjoki. He combined traditional knowledge with his own experiences to gain new insights. Our project in Utsjoki 2024 discusses the nature and role of critically and socially engaged approaches in art education in the Arctic.

The theme of our workshops in Utsjoki was the starry sky and the constellations found there, in honour of Ándaras Kitti’s memory. We got to create a joint art installation ‘Ursa Major’ with the residents at the elderly care home, Aspa-koti Goahti, and the children in the Utsjoki daycare centre.

At the daycare, the purpose of the workshops was to awaken the children’s own internal com-

et. The children got to know about Kitti, stars, and comets through storytelling and play. Our workshop topic was ‘*Be the comet of your own life*’. Together, we made comet mobiles, using wooden frames, colourful yarn, and stars felted by the children themselves. In the wooden frames, the children drew self-portraits on a transparent film attached with yarn.

At Aspa-koti Goahti, we focused on the Ursa Major constellation because it was familiar to many of the residents due to Otava found within the constellation. Along with the workshops, the life of the residents at Utsjoki and Teno was remembered and discussed. We also talked about Kitti’s life – who he was and what he did.

We built the Ursa Major installation together with the residents. We used thick sticks, iron



"Thank you, it was really valuable to be able to meet and do something this great and unique together."

– Jenni

Figure 4. In Aspa-Koti Goahti, residents together created the constellation of Ursa Major and integrated their own stars into the pattern. Photo: Mirja Hiltunen, 2024.

wire, colourful wool and leather yarn, as well as various decorative elements, small circular frames, and fishing lines. From these materials, we built an installation where every resident of Aspa-koti Goahti could bring themselves into the installation with their own pictures and words and statements that were important to them. We also attached some felted stars made by the children for the installation.

Creating a collaborative artwork between the daycare centre and Aspa-koti Goahti went well.

At the daycare, the children eagerly started crafting comet stars, and the wet felting of stars the following day was also a meaningful activity. At Aspa-koti Goahti, getting into the theme of Ándaras Kittí took a little more time. Through calm introductions and work, everyone eventually got into the spirit of creating. The Ursa Major installation gradually took shape with each participant's contribution. However, we value encounters more than the completion of the artwork, both at the daycare and at Aspa-koti Goahti.

The University of Lapland's applied visual art students group, led by lecturer Antti Stöckell, also participated by sculpting snow. Their workshop produced a big snow sculpture installation in the spirit of Ándaras Kittí in the yard of Utsjokisuu Primary School, together with the schoolchildren. The atmosphere was lively during the work, and the completion of the snow sculpture was celebrated with all the schoolchildren and local residents.

In the final workshop of the week at Utsjoki Hotel, the celebrants crafted umbrellas representing the celestial canopy, where each person's star could shine. The workshop at the hotel turned out to be a great activity. Crafting stars and strings of pearls engaged participants midway through the event. Many participants were inspired to craft several stars.

Figure 2. Snow sculptures made by the University of Lapland's applied visual arts group, led by lecturer Antti Stöckell. Photo: Mirja Hiltunen, 2024.



In organizing the workshops, it was especially important to have a good understanding of the basis of the work. In this case, we had read about Ándaras Kittí and his life's work. Along the way, we learned a lot about planning and implementing community projects with various organizations and people. We learned collaborative planning, which inevitably involved making compromises. ●

"Oh, you're from Rovaniemi!"

– Workshop participant

Figure 5. In the final event at the hotel, the 'skies' were set up in the hotel lobby, and guests enjoyed admiring them for the rest of the evening. Photo: Heidi Lähtevänoja, 2024.



INFO

Community art workshops in Utsjoki 14–17.2.2024.

Facilitators: Master Students of Art Education Elli Jokitulppo, Jenni Lehto, Anna-Sofia Nurmela, Heidi Lähtevänoja, and Professor Mirja Hiltunen.

Partners: Aspa-koti Goahti, Utsjoki daycare, Utsjokisuu School / Ochejohnjälmmi skuvla, Ohcejoga Utsjoen Ursa.

Winter art workshop, students of Applied Visual Arts Teresa Pahkala, Linnea Moen, Jesse Hänninen, Paula Ahonen, Anna Pyhtilä, Marika Palomäki, Ines Knaster, and lecturer Antti Stöckell.