

The Firefox (Tulikettu)

A cooperative project involving science, art, education and tourism in Utsjoki.



1. Mask created in workshop.

Photo: Anna Pakkanen

WHAT

The Firefox was an educational and art event carried out by several different people and organisations in Utsjoki, in 2004. It consisted of science and art events, of which the common theme was the Northern lights and their research.

WHO

The main participants in the Firefox Project were the district of Utsjoki and its schools, the University of Lapland's Faculty of Art and Design, the Winter Art Education Project and the Utsjoki village association. The University of Oulu's observatory in Sodankylä, the Department

of Meteorology in Lapland and the Department of Astrology, Ursa Association from the University of Oulu were responsible for the scientific aspect of the project.

The district of Utsjoki and its schools worked under the leadership of teacher and district co-ordinator Juhani Harjunharja. Art education lecturer, Mirja Hiltunen was in charge of the University of Lapland's Faculty of Art and Design's part of the project. Teacher Virpi Valkonen led the Winter Art Education Project, while chairman Esa Karpoff and secretary Minna Saatamoinen led the village association.

Both the Lappish and Finnish language comprehensive schools in Utsjoki participated in the project. Pupils and student groups from the secondary and upper secondary schools also took part. In addition, upper secondary students involved in the Povilus Project from the Suomussalmi and Rautavaara schools, took part in the educational activities. Pia Kostander and Piia Juntunen, students from the University of Lapland's Department of Art Education, along with a student group from the Tila-Aika-Paikka (Space-Time-Place) course participated. In addition to participants from the schools and village association, locals took part through the town hall Giisa and the Magga

Project (Utsjoki Old People's Association's Experimental and Development Project).

WHERE

Utsjoki is located on the northern part of Finland, close to the Norwegian border. Of its 600 residents, two thirds are Sámi. The Firefox Project took place in several locations in Utsjoki: on Lake Mantojärvi, at the church cottages by the shore of Lake Mantojärvi, at the schools, the town hall Giisa, at Fell Ailigas and the activity centre for seniors at Seitakartano, and the premises of the Magga Project.



2. The old church and church cottages.

Photo: Paula Kovalainen

GOALS

The main goal of the project was to educate and to produce events that would touch and unite all of the villagers, from the Finnish to the Sámi and from the children to the elderly. The planning and carrying out of the Sun Celebration, an

annual event in Utsjoki accomplished the goal. The goal to unify the community was challenging since it wasn't clear that all of the groups would participate. Other goals included increasing knowledge and know-how regarding winter art, developing ways in which science and art could support each other, and to carry out a tourist event for Utsjoki.



3. The Sun celebration party.

Photo: Noel Bridegaman

METHODS AND WORKING PRACTICES

The Firefox Project was carried out in three phases:

1. Preliminary planning took place in September 2003, in a joint effort between the Utsjoki comprehensive and secondary schools and the University of Lapland's Department of Art Education.

2. Studying and planning took place from October to February and consisted of four discussions made by videoconference, and involved getting to know many different kinds of educational material. During the video discussions the participants became familiar with the different activity locations, and with winter art. The planning continued, and the plans were presented among many groups.
3. A weeklong main event took place in Utsjoki from March 15th – 20th, 2004. During the Firefox Week the different parts of the program were divided into science and art days. The art program included winter art, community art happenings and installations. Mask, head dress, pennant and lantern making also brought about a carnival atmosphere. The science program consisted of lectures and the observation of celestial phenomena.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Becoming orientated with the Northern lights theme and the Utsjoki location were a central part of the project. The project was planned in many different work groups, and during the videoconference sessions. The plans contained everything

from ideas to learning more about the subject, along with testing and working method preparations. As it can be expected, the plans changed several times during the process. The planning stage was filled with enthusiasm, whereas on the other hand there was uncertainty about carrying out the plans. The uncertainty was caused by the warm spring weather and the fact that the snow seemed to be melting early. In addition, in some cases there was an unwillingness to cooperate and uncertainty about participating.

During the Firefox Week, a willingness to work on the activities came from many directions. Workshops were run simultaneously in many different locations, according to the timetable made by Juhani Harjunharja.



4. Masks for the celebration.

Photo: Anna Pakkanen

An open workshop for all of the villagers was located at the town hall Giisa. There they could make masks, sun helmets and

fox sleds for the Sun Celebration. Lecturer Mirja Hiltunen from the University of Lapland's Department of Art Education, along with a student group from the Tila-Aika-Paikka course led the activities.



5. Winter Art in Schoolyard.

Photo: Pia Kostiander

The Utsjoki schoolyard, which joins the Finnish and Sámi language comprehensive and upper secondary schools was used as the location for snow and ice sculptures. The comprehensive school pupils constructed snow sculptures based on a constellation animal theme. The secondary and upper secondary students made ice sculptures in the schoolyard. The pupils and students, under the leadership of their own teachers had already made plans and miniature models before the Firefox Week. Sculptures and tunnels to play in were built in front of the Sámi School. Bird themed snow sculptures were located on both sides of the school gate and a slide was constructed from snow in the schoolyard.

Plans to build an observatory had to be cancelled due to the lack of snow.

The snow and ice sculpturing was led by art education student Pia Kostiander along with help from students in the Tila-Aika-Paikka course. In addition to the winter art exhibit, the schools prepared for the Sun Celebration and the Animals of the Galaxy snow sculpture opening, by making masks and lanterns. The University of Lapland's Tila-Aika-Paikka students led the activities.



6. Ice Sculpting in lake Mantojärvi.

Photo. Anna Pakkanen

A snow and ice sculpture workshop, run by Virpi Valkonen from the Winter Art Education Project, operated at the church cottages by Lake Mantojärvi. Upper secondary students and teachers involved in the Povilus Project from both Rautavaara and Suomussalmi participated, as well as people from the village association and other locals. The theme for

the works came from the phenomena of the starry sky, and from the history of the church cottages.



7. Workshop in Seitakartano.

Photo: Anna Pakkanen

The Magga Project, which is development project of Utsjoki Old People's Association, operated at the activity centre for seniors at Seitakartano. Its central idea is that the elderly are also valuable to society. The project looks for methods to revive the unity of the community, and calls for humanity within the local lifestyle. A goal is also to increase the interaction between the different generations.

At Seitakartano, people looked at photos of the Northern lights, sang about the Northern lights and recalled related tales and beliefs. The Revontuli (Northern lights) work was born as a result of the cooperation. It was made by weaving carpet rags and willow branches onto a

wooden frame. Art education student, Pia Juntunen and Anna-Maija Hilliaho from the Magga Project, led the activities. Tila-Aika-Paikka workshop students, Sari Vierimaa and Mirjami Tuomikoski also took part.



8. Firefox work in Fell Ailigas.

Photo: Jussi Juntunen

A Lapp shelter shaped Firefox work lit up the top of Tunturi Ailigas for the entire week. The work was designed and carried out by media artist Helinä Konttinen, along with local artists Jouni Lamminen and Hillevi Lamminen.

The science portion of the week consisted of presentations on the Northern lights and other phenomena of the starry sky, and

their research. Introductory speakers were Tauno Turunen (Ph.D.) from the Sodankylä observatory, Marko Aittola (Ph.D) from the University of Oulu, Juha Karhu from Lapland's Department of Meteorology and Tuukka Perhoniemi from the URSA planetarium. In addition, ozone measurements were taken.



9. The Sun Celebration.

Photo: Jussi Juntunen

The highlight of the Firefox Week was the Sun Celebration, held March 20, the vernal equinox. The celebration included many activities and had many participants. The celebration consisted of both day and evening events in different locations. The traditional Sun Celebration was held at the church cottages. The program included Lake Mantojärvi's winter artwork opening, and the gathering of sleds. The sunniest creation and most fox-like sled were rewarded. For the Sun Celebration, the old market place and especially the old courtroom came to life and lived for a

moment in the past. People gathered there to be together, visit, drink coffee and sing hymns.

In the evening program, the schools presented the Animals of the Galaxy sculptures, and the Tila-Aika-Paikka students along with the school children, held a performance. The performance moved from the art students' contact improvisation to a performance involving the pupils. In the end, the whole audience was able to join into the performance. Other programmes in the lantern lit schoolyard, were Sámi singing by the Sámi language comprehensive school pupils and a video installation by Helinä Konttinen. The evening program continued at the Pohjan Tuuli hotel where local band, Jiella and community art student Noel Bridgeman from Scotland held performances.



10. Evening party in Sun Celebration

Photo: Anna Pakkanen

Following the Firefox Week, the project continued with evaluating the event in videoconference session and through Internet web pages. When the last of the evaluation discussions had been held, plans for a new Firefox Project began.

RESULTS AND EFFECTS

Firefox succeeded in bringing about community-based art education programmes for the Sun Celebration. The artistic working methods were experimental and performance-like. For example, the Firefox work was created using people on Lake Mantojärvi as part of the work itself. People from many different groups participated in the educational activities and the Sun Celebration. For example, the participation of the elderly was clearly visible, when their Revontuli work was on display at the town hall Giisa.



11. Making lanterns at school lessons.
Photo: Noel Bridgeman

Of the 600 residents in Utsjoki, 200 people participated in the project. Of those, about 120 were pupils and 20 were teachers. Thirty others from outside of the Utsjoki district also participated.

The Firefox Project was an excellent example of collaboration, since many organisations from different localities were involved. This project activated the locals, for example Alma, the local print shop that made fox themed T-shirts.

The Firefox winter art project was successful in exciting the locals about snow and ice sculpture. For example the teachers and pupils and other locals learned how to make snow-sculpting tools. The problem was that the teachers were quite timid in leading the pupils, and as a result much of the responsibility to teach fell upon Pia Kostander. The structure of the snow and its limited amount also brought about difficulties. For these reasons, in the future it would be wise to organize Firefox Event earlier in the spring. In the next project, the teachers will also have more know-how to lead the pupils.

After an unforgettable and experience filled week, plans for the next Firefox Project were started right away. Future projects will try to elaborate on the Firefox

theme and consider different ways to approach the art and science of Northern lights and community activities.



Firefox performance.

Photo 12: Anna Pakkanen

Photo 13: Virpi Valkonen

Photo 14: Anna Pakkanen

SUCSESSES AND FUTURE CHALLENGES

- + Interaction between the arts and community: the project was an unforgettable experience for the local participants as well as the visiting students.
- + The science and art education days improved the original Sun Celebration programme.
- + Firefox will continue in the future.
- Conflicts arose within the local community. The activities should come more from the community itself so it would feel more their own.

Univerisity of Lapland: Mirja Hiltunen, Virpi Valkonen, Pia Kostander, Piia Juntunen and the Time-Space-Place Workshop

Utsjoki: Juhani Harjunharja, Esa Karpoff, Minna Saastamoinen, Anna-Majja Hilliaho, Helinä Konttinen, Hillevi Lamminen, Jouni Lamminen

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