

Nasjonalt senter for kvensk språk og kultur



KAINUN INSTITUTTI
KVENSKE INSTITUTT



Kainun institutti – Kvensk institutt (the Kven Institute) was established in 2005. The institute was officially opened on June 14, 2007 and has been fully operational since that time.



Kainun institutti – Kvensk institutt is a National Centre for Kven Language and Culture. The institute receives funding from the Ministry of Culture and Church Affairs. The institute's tasks are to establish and run a Kven Language Council and to implement education and information work about the Kven language and culture on a national basis.

The Board of the Kainun institutti – Kvensk institutt comprises representatives from the following institutions: Porsanger Municipal Council, the Norwegian Kven Association (NKF), the local NKF branches in Børselv and Lakselv, Finnmark University College and University of Tromsø.

The institute's objective is to develop, document and disseminate knowledge and information about Kven language and culture and promote use of the Kven language in society.

The mandate of Kainun institutti – Kvensk institutt defines the institute's overall objective as:

1. The Kven language and culture shall be visible and recognised among both the Kven minority and the wider Norwegian public
2. Achieve bilingualism, also among younger generations, in the central Kven areas
3. The Kven language shall be an asset and resource for both individuals and the wider community

ABOUT THE TERM KVEN

The Kvens were recognised as a national minority in Norway in 1998. A national minority is a minority group with longstanding attachment to a country. Other national minorities include Jews, Roma, the Romani people and Forest Finns.

The designation Kven has not traditionally been used by the Kven people themselves. The name was first and foremost utilised by the neighbouring population.

The first registered use of the word Kven was the account of King Ottar in the 9th century. Among sagas, Egils saga is the most important source about the Kvens. This saga is probably written by Snorre Sturlason around 1230. The designation Kven can be found in several written medieval Norse sources. People were first defined as Kven in tax registers in the 16th century.

More general use of the designation Kven began in the late 19th century. At the same time, a certain political and cultural discrimination led to the term Kven becoming derogatory. This discrimination led to some Kvens distancing themselves from the designation. However, since the foundation of the Norwegian Kven Association in 1987, Kven has been the official designation of this population group.

The etymology, or in other words origins, of the word Kven are still disputed.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The majority of the Kven population today lives in North Troms and Finnmark. Skibotn, Nordreisa and Kvænangen are regarded as the central Kven areas in North Troms. Places with Kven settlement in Finnmark today are Alta, Lakselv and Børselv in the west and Bugøynes, Neiden, Pasvik, Vadsø, Vestre Jakobselv, Skallelv and Tana in the east.

The first written instance of Kven settlement in Northern Norway dates back to tax records from the 1520s. It has become common to separate Kven immigration into three periods.

The first large immigration to and settling in Northern Norway was from the early 18th century until about 1820. At this time, Nordkalotten was an area without clearly defined national borders. The fertile river valleys and



fjord heads in West Finnmark and North Troms were attractive areas for agriculture.

The second immigration and settlement period, from around 1820 to around 1890, was characterised more by modern work-related immigration, with mining communities, fishing villages and towns the main settlements. In this period, the majority of the immigration flow was to East Finnmark.

In the third and final settlement period, which started around 1890, the immigration came to an end and the population pattern stabilised. The national census in 1930 was the last to register Kvens as a distinct population group. There is no official figure of the Kven population in Norway today.

ABOUT LANGUAGE GENERALLY

Today, around 5 000-6 000 different languages are spoken throughout the world. The majority of these languages are spoken by only a couple of thousand speakers or, in some cases, only a few hundred. Just 3-4 percent of the world's languages, in other words around 200, can claim to have more than one million speakers. The total number of speakers of these major languages accounts for around 95 percent of the world's population. In other words, five percent of the population speak around 97 percent of the world's languages.

In April 2005, Kven was recognised as a separate language in Norway. Until this point, there had been major discussion about whether Kven should be regarded as a separate language or an old Finnish dialect. There is actually no linguistic tool to distinguish between languages and dialects. There were several contributing factors as to why Kven was recognised as a language in its own right:

- Kven is spoken beyond Finland's borders
- The language has a long history beyond Finland's borders
- Finnish and Kven have developed in different directions
- A Finnish person and a Kven person can experience difficulties understanding each other

ABOUT THE KVEN LANGUAGE

Kven is a Finno-Ugric language, closely related to meänkieli in Sweden and North Finnish dialects. Kven is today classified as an endangered language. In other words, Kven first and foremost survives as an oral language among older generations in the central Kven areas.

Work is currently underway to develop a written Kven language. A written language is not designed to distinguish language differences between the different Kven dialects in Norway, but instead to serve as a tool to increase the use of and further develop the Kven language.

In the Nordic countries, we have long and distinguished traditions with writing dialects. Dialects and language forms are viewed as a strong identity indicator. Author Alf

Nilsen-Børsskog is a good example of a Kven author who writes in his dialect and uses it as a point of origin.

In autumn 2006, *The Organisation of Local and Private Archives* commenced a project to study archive material connected with the Kvens. This project resulted in sensation language finds from Kistrand Municipality (now Porsanger) which shows that the Kven language had a widespread written tradition as early as the 19th century.



KVEN DIALECTS

Suomen kielen nauhoitearkisto (Finland's Audio Recordings Archive) at the Research Institute for the Languages of Finland in Helsinki has more than 400 hours of audio recordings of Kven dialects. These audio recordings cover virtually the entire Kven area, from North Troms to East Finnmark. The first recordings were made in Nordreisa in 1959, while the last field trip was implemented in the summer of 1973 and covered the area around Alta. The majority of the recordings, around 300 hours, were made in the early 1970s.

Older, written documentation of Kven dialects was gathered, for example, by Just Qvigstad (1853-1957) and Johan Beronka (1885-1965).

Nordreisa 1892/1893

Se oli kerran yks mies, joka meni väylhän kaloja pyytämhän. Niin se tuli kova sää, ja hän pölkäis kovasti. Mutta se hän havais, että se tuli joku niinku mies yli riipon, ja se tahtoi voolin hältä, ja se antoi sillet sen; mutta se pölkäis sallaa. Mutta vaikka oli kova sää, se ei tullu kuitenkaan noppa venheesen, ja ku het tulthin liki kotipaikka, niin se katois meritrolli, ja mies pääsi lykylisesti kothiin.

Kvænangen 1892/1893

Se oli Nilla yhen lantalaisen nimi, joka tuli Alattihjan tässä viime satavuosilu'ussa, ja hän otti asuman Jokitörmälet. Ennen häntä olit jo ruijalaiset asuhman tulhet sinnet, ja Tanskan kuninkas oli lähätynyt yhen amtmannin Alattihjan; mutta hän oli kovin kova mies, ryösti ausjilta kaikkit, mitä hänen mielestä oli hället tarpheellinen ja hyvä.

Vadsø (12.2.1917)

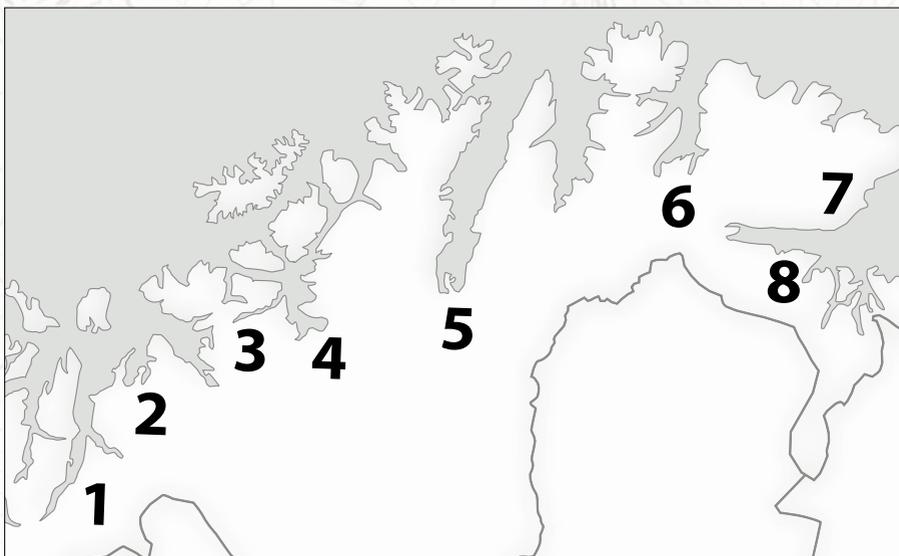
Finmarkussa on ushein pahat sää; muutamat tormit on niin kovat että niitä muistethan vuosikymmeniä. Kahestoista fepruaari yheksäntoista sattaa ja seittemäntoista oli semmonen tormi ympäri Finmarkkua. S'oli kovviin Vesisaaren tienhoila. Se paukahti juuriko pyssynsuusta vähhää ennen puoltapäivää, ja tuli niin ankanan lumi-tuiskun kansa, että ethensä ei nähny, ja että oli vaikia saaha vettää henkiä.

Børselv ~ 1922

Täälä on kova ja pitkä talvi; oktooperissa jo alkkaa täysi kova talvi; ei ennään saateta fiskata; ainuastansa net fiskarit, joila on hyvät muturiseitat, fiskaavat vielä. Tässä kylässä ei ole ko yhdelä miehelä muturiseitta; muila ei ole ko pienet, aukkeet venheet. Silläpä se jouttuu pienilä venetfiskarilla kovaksi ja pitkäksi talvi.

All extracts are sourced from Beronka, Qvigstad og Pyykkö, HIF teaching, 2007:2

Photos: Nord-Troms Museum, Kainun institutti – Kvensk institutt, Museovirasto, Finland.



KVEN DIALECTS

1. Lyngen
2. Nordreisa
3. Kvænangen
4. Alta
5. Porsanger
6. Tana
7. Nord-Varanger
8. Sør-Varanger

Western dialects

Eastern dialects

Kainun institutti – Kvensk institutt

Postiloova / Postboks 160

N-9716 Pyssyjoki / Børselv

E-posti / E-post: post@kvenskinstitutt.no

Tel. +47 78 46 10 10

Fax: +47 78 46 10 11

www.kvenskinstitutt.no