

# Snow - Lule Sami snow terms

## HERITAGE

Johan Rassa was born in 1921 in a tent hut at Bårddegiehtje, on the edge of Sarek's National Park. He belongs to Jähkägasska Sami village and speaks Lule Sami as his mother tongue. Today, Johan lives with his wife Ibb-Anna in Jokkmokk, but was brought up in the old nomadic life. He has spent his entire working life as a reindeer herder and has a fantastic knowledge of snow. This is because the snow is of great importance for reindeer husbandry. There are many different ways that snow can be used for and therefore it is described in different ways, even though the snow consistency is the same. Skiing is easiest when there is hard snow, frost. For the reindeer, it is best if it is soft and light snow, as they can more easily dig out the food. In the past, before snowmobiles were used, people were more dependent on how the snow was when traveling. There are many ways to describe the snow; fresh snow, thawed snow, skare and endlessly more terminologies. Here we have a selection of snow terminologies and their description.

**Snow thickness & snowfall** - The snow can be of different thickness depending on where you are. In the mountains, it changes incredibly depending on whether it's a valley or on bare mountains, whether it drifted or whether the trees have received most of the snow. A reindeer herder is most interested in winter, *dálvve* (n) because this is the bottleneck in reindeer husbandry. What you fear is thick snow winters, *Gassadálvve*. There are different ways to measure snow, on yourself, the reindeer or the ski poles. If the rod is used to measure snow, it is measured in quarters, *goartta*. A *goartta* depends on the size of the hand, approximately 15-18 cm. When the snow reaches under the belly of the reindeer, *tjoajvevuolmuohta*, the snow is about up to the thighs of the people, that is, between *buolvvamuohta* and *badárádjmuohta*. The very simplest way to express snow is to use the word snow, *muohta* (n). But there are different ways to describe the snowfall, for example when it has just turned white on the ground, *dabrijdit*, single snowflakes, *muohtatjalme* (1 plur), large soft snowflakes or so-called patchwork gloves, *tsihtsebelaga*. If it snows very little fresh snow, *vassme*, heavy snowfall, *loahtte*.

There are different ways to predict snowfall. For example, if there is a small ring around the moon, it means that there will be a lot of snow, and if there is a large ring around the moon, it is often cold weather and there may be a little snow. The dunlin, *guostatsihtse*, The red-throated loon, *gurrte*, the grouse, *rievsak*, and the dog can also be used to predict snowfall.

Autumn snow- The best is if the leaves fall from the trees before the first snow comes, then the reindeer pasture will be the best because it will be easier for the reindeer to dig for food. Sometimes the leaves remain on the trees when the first snow comes in fall. When it starts to snow and get windy, the leaves fall off and form a carpet of leaves. This makes it more difficult for the reindeer to dig for food.

Snow mixed with rain is called *slahtte* (n), if there is more wet snow you say *slabttse*. Rain-mixed snow lying down, *släbtsádahka*. Thin and slightly icy snow on the ground is called *skártta* (n), the reindeer can dig through but are very restless and wander a lot. This type of snow is not as hard as the spring slush, *tarvva*, but is wetter and usually not good for walking on. If it becomes very clear during the autumn, then we speak of skark winter, *skark kavale*, which produces a poor number of reindeer calves in the spring. The reindeer get too much water when the snow is stuck in the lichen, which causes the reindeer to become too weak and thin to be able to give birth to healthy calves. Many times the calves are stillborn or have a hole in the belly button, *tjadánábága*, which causes them to become hollow and unable to contain the food, so it flows out through the hole and the calf dies. Ice both on water and on land is called *jiegna*. Ice also has many different designations such as very thin ice on the snow, *shoavde*, thin slippery ice is, *vuodtja*.

Winter snow- The lightest new snow that is cold, dry and completely weightless is called *Habllek*. This type of snow is dangerous for the reindeer as it is drawn into the lungs when the snow swirls. This can cause the animals to suffocate when they run, *snäráskuvvat*. It can also affect animals other than reindeer. Some words that are often used are light and airy lying snow, *slievar*, light snow, *giehppis muohta*, dry snow, *gájkke muohta*, dry cold loose snow, *galmma muohta*. But fresh snow can also be heavy, *lássá muohta*. You are a little afraid of this snow in the reindeer forest, if it comes a lot it can get so hard that the reindeer don't dig through, *tsievve*.

The snow's bearing capacity in winter & the ski guide- If the skis sink deep into thick, loose winter snow, it is called a deep groove, *gálav* if it is about the skis, but if it is a deep groove for the reindeer, it is called, *åbåt*. Loose, thick winter snow, *åbådahka*. When it is almost impossible to advance in deep fresh snow, *buohkkit*. Bad before so you get stuck, *dáhpádahka*. When the skis float on the snow, *bajadahka* and when the reindeer starts to carry the snow, *gåbdijdit*. When the skis slide and float easily on the snow, *jådådahka* and when it's just good mobility, *fievrrro*. Easy skiing on a icy thin layer, *snoaládahka* or *smoalát*. Reindeer grazing is not affected, but the reindeer dig just as easily. If it's thicker real ice, which breaks into pieces and cuts into bones and skis, then it's bad skiing. Sluggish mobility, *sagij*, silent mobility, *linádahka*, creaking hug snow, *smierrat*, so-called "clump mobility" when the snow sticks to the skis, scraping noise is heard from the skis, *skoarádahka*. The snow is so wet that it doesn't get stuck under the skis, *tjásjslahpe* (n), when the spring sun has soaked the fresh snow and the ski lining will be fine, *jiemkkit*.

### **Snow-Lule Semitic snow terms**

Winter snow & its buoyancy - The snow melts and becomes wet from mild weather or spring sun, *njáhtso*. In the spring, the snow can become soaked right down to the bottom, so-called penetration or *fällblöta*, *siebla*. This can freeze and then it becomes a really hard crust, *tjarvva*, about an hour before it becomes *tjarvva* just when the crust starts to bear is called *guottát*. It is then that the reindeer herders have the opportunity to start moving the reindeer. There are different kinds of snow crust, iron crust, holds for the weight of a horse or moose, *ruovddetjarvva*. Hoof crust, the reindeer's hoof print is clearly visible on the crust, *gadtsatjarvva*. When the crust is uneven and extra hard on the surface, really rough, *oarttjotjarvva*, crust that is half strong that carries the skis but not to walk on, *galma* while *idjabieju galma* means it is frozen day and night. It is better to use *idjabieju galma* instead of *tjarvva* when it is cloudy during the day. The first thin crust of the snow, the first sign that the snow is starting to freeze, *najalle*. When the snow freezes a little deeper (2-3 mm), it is called *skávve*. *Skávve* can be like a small cake that you can break apart to see how thick it is, when the cake is as thick as a finger or more, it starts to hold for the skis, *sabekhuttát*. When the snow holds when you stomp on it, *ruovddetjarvva*, it usually only gets so hard towards the end of the morning.

*Dibddet* (v) means that the crust thaws and disappears, you can also use the word *siebllut* for the same meaning.

### **Pristine Snow & Tracks –**

The snow is completely untouched in the winter and no tracks are visible, *åppås*. If it just snows a little so you can see tracks, *vahtsa*, the first tracking snow in autumn, *vuohťadahka*. Tracking snow in the reindeer forest, *ájńadahka*, or ski tracks, *láhťto*.

The opposite when there are many tracks, new and old and they all look the same so that you can't tell the tracks apart, *tjujovoj*. Tracks after people and animals, *luodda*, if there is loose snow when walking, *nuvár*. When there is a good footing (the opposite of *nuvár*) and hard snow, *juolggebahkka*. When the snow has been trampled and is therefore hard and smooth, *sjálkå*. If the track is completely fresh and soft, *sjuváj*, and if it is only fresh, *varås luodda*. Reindeer migration path, *ájddo*, reindeer path, *gurges*, reindeer tracks that can be seen far away, *rájssat*. Sometimes in winter it can get "snow blind" i.e. a very even gray weather so you can't see the snow, *savdda*.

### **Snow and wind-**

The snowstorm is coming and there is hardly any visibility at all, *guolldo*, it can also be used in the summer months when it storms so hard that the wind whips up the water from the lake. When the weather is fine and you can suddenly hear the storm roaring in the mountaintops, it is called *jåmidit* or *juhtsat*, although the latter word is mostly used when there is thunder. If the snow is so sharp that it scratches your face, *tjirástit*. The wind can be so weak that the snow just drifts low near the snow surface, *naveltguolldo*. Sometimes you can see that the snow has blown so that a snowdrift or snow pile have formed, it can be in the middle of the mountain, *gielbbit*. A snowdrift on the other hand is called, *gielbar*. A vertical snow wall, steep snow drift, *guoblla* and a hanging drift is called *goabrre*. On the mountain, bare spots are common in winter and there are some places where snow always blows away, *ruohkadagá*.

### **Frost and snow on trees –**

In autumn, there can be hoarfrost on the ground, just frozen so that it makes a mark on the ground without making a sound when you walk, *sjuhtje*. If it sounds when you walk, then the ground is a little more icy and frozen, it is called *skoaradahka*.

To freeze, *sjuvttjaguvvat*. It could be hoar frost without snow in the trees, *härmmo*. When the weather is mild, sunny or windy so that the forest is cleared of ice, snow and hoarfrost is called *sellat*. They say *selas* when the forest is completely clear of snow and frost. *Láho* is when there is a mild autumn winter air in the mountains and it is that wind that removes the snow from the trees. Snow on the clothes, *suovve*, sweep away snow *sjavnnjet*, animals that brush off the snow, *bådtset*. There are three words for snow that sticks, *skilltje*, *bulltje*, *tjilvve*. Bigger clumps of snow stuck to the clothes, *bulltje*. A shoveled pile of snow by a house or a snowball is *tjijdas*.

### **Melting-**

The common word for snow and ice melting is *suddat* and to become snow blind *suddut*, but actually it means to melt, "the eyes melt". Meltwater in streams and on land is called *oavloj*, while water on the ice is called *sårån*. Sometimes you melt the snow into water and if you do it in a pan it is called *sagnadit*, while the melted water is called *sievtikjáhtje* and snow that can be used to make water is called *sievtikmuohta*.

### **Bare ground thaws –**

From the time the first bare spot is visible until all the snow is completely gone, the word *bievlla* is used, for example *káffabievlla* which means coffee bare spot. When you are outside and you can see that it becomes bare around the tree trunks it is called *maddabievla* and if it thaws further so that it becomes completely bare under the trees it is called *muoravuolbievla*. In the mountains, the bare spots are first thawed by the heat of the sun, *ruohkadakbievla*. When it starts to thaw even more and the first small spots of bare ground start to appear here and there, they are called *bievllarájge*. *Fiehta* means that the first reindeer pasture has thawed so that the reindeer can get food without digging. The last bare spots left is called *muohtarievta*.

### **Snow in the summer-**

Snow that becomes hard when it thaws on the mountain is called *dielle*. Snow that has drifted can accumulate over streams and become a meter thick and look like a snow bridge, *suohpa*. Sometimes you can see large vast snowfields, *tsuobttsa* which do not always melt away but remain throughout the summer.