WHAT CAN A SAMI WRITER FROM 1910 TELL US ABOUT LIFE TODAY?

WHAT'S HAPPENING?

A new exhibition in Kiruna, northern Sweden, is showing the work of Johan Turi, a Sami writer and artist who lived around the beginning of the twentieth century. Turi was one of the first Sami people to write about Sami life in his own language. His drawings and writing describe reindeer herding, beliefs, family life and the pressure placed on Sami communities by settlers, railways, mining and national borders. The exhibition has opened as Sweden prepares to receive a report about the mistreatment of Sami people by the state. The Sami are the Indigenous people of northern Norway, Sweden, Finland and part of Russia. Many still face disputes over land because mining, wind farms and other industries can damage the areas needed for reindeer herding. Turi hoped that telling his own story would make powerful people understand Sami lives. More than a century later, his work is still part of that struggle.

WHY IS THIS INTERESTING?

This story shows why people want to tell their own history instead of allowing outsiders to speak for them. Turi's work is both a record of everyday life and a protest against unfair treatment. It also shows that problems involving land, language and discrimination can continue for generations.

THINK LIKE A HISTORIAN

“Why did Johan Turi want Sami people to tell their own history?”

Source: The Guardian

https://www.theguardian.com/world/2026/sep/28/same-struggles-exhibition-highlights-lives-sami-people-sweden