

Niillas Holmberg (born 1990) is a poet, musician, actor, translator and activist from Ohcejohka in Sámiland, Finland. He is the author of three collections of poetry, written in his mother tongue, Northern Sami, a minority language spoken by 20 000 people in Finland, Norway and Sweden.

Lill Tove Fredriksen, associate professor of Sámi literature at UiT The Arctic University of Norway, is the one who selected this poem.

Máttu oahpus

Gánneha muitalit nieguidis
jámadeaddji olbmuide

máttarmáttaráddján lei gullan
ahte áiggošin menestuvvat
deh de skillalahtii
deaddilin ruoksada
ja ringestin sutnje Skaippas
vai suittäšin háleštít

go dálvá
galggat čuoigalit vai bivat
ále bisán vaikke bivaldivččii
ále luottastala
čuoigga gosa áiggožat
muhto ále luottastala
go bievladielkkut ihtigohtet
čuoigga jávregáddái
boaldde sabehiid ja soappi
botkal gunaid biggii
ja vácce suddái

ok, áddjá
muhto dán áigge
olbmot čuiget guvttiin soppiin

A Lesson from an Ancestor

It's helpful to tell your dreams
to dying people

my great great grandfather
heard of my desire to get on
he called me up
but I didn't answer the phone
and called him back on Skype
because it's cheaper

come winter
you must ski to stay warm
keep skiing on the mild days too
don't leave traces
ski wherever you want
but don't leave traces
when the snow starts to melt
go to the lakefront
burn the skis and ski pole
sprinkle the ashes to the wind
and walk into the flooded ice

ok, granddad
but these days
we ski with two poles