



Société et culture

To understand the Finnish school system quite well, it seems very important to know the History of Finland. It will give us keys to understand better why their system is performant and why the same things can not be replicable to the French system.

History: (Ici, une carte de la Finlande)

- Finland has been invaded by the Russians and the Swedes. It is a very young Republic which will celebrate its 100th anniversary this year. The Finnish have a very strong identity: they care about their country, their children.
- Because of the many invasions, they are used to speak several languages: Swedish and Finnish are compulsory because there are official languages. They know how important it is to have their own language.

Geographie

Climat

- In Finland there are only 18 inhabitants per square kilometre. To compare : in France it's about 100 and in Creuse 22 !
- The climate is very cold: there's snow half of the year and, for most of the country, less than minus 20 degrees in winter.
- You cannot separate sauna from the Finnish culture and it cannot be compared to anything else. You need to know that for the Finnish, it is absolutely necessary to go to a steam room regularly or to have one in their houses. And at a very early age.
- If they don't, they soon feel something is wrong or missing.
Sauna bathing does not only clean the body but also purifies the mind, and it has been so for centuries.

And it also enables you to expose yourself, literally (because you are naked), and to communicate with what is most intimate in you.

When you share a sauna with someone, it is **as** if you were building special relationships with them **as** you may talk about issues that matter to you. These conversations cannot be considered as “small talk”. It is said that some of the most important economic decisions in Finland came out of saunas.

- In Finland, there is a lot of forests and lakes : the Finns consider that ecology is an important matter.
- Helsinki was chosen as World Design Capital in 2012 : the Finns think design is important for everything : buses, tramways, and all the everyday objects are designed to be nice, comfortable and practical.
- The cold weather and the absence of sunlight are among the reasons which motivate the Finnish to have a warm and cosy lifestyle at home and at school.

Religion

- Today, most Finns belong to the Evangelical-Lutheran Church
- There are no fences : gardens and school yards are not fenced – or if there is a fence, it is to make it easier to collect the ball after a game.
- Associations are very important : solidarity is a way of life, certainly because of the climate which makes it impossible to be self-reliant.
- In the same line, there is no hierarchy relationship, no titles (teachers, doctors, inspectors ...) everybody is equal.

Because of a harsh climatic conditions and of the necessity to preserve the nation, each individual is made to feel responsible.

They often refer to the law. (For example : in Finland, it is written in law that you can go camping where you want to. In Finland, it is written in law that tuition is free ...)

The Finns benefit a lot from the law, but they are also very law-abiding: nobody would think of deteriorating the forest if they were to camp there. Nobody would think of not respecting the Highway Code.

Similarly, children are taught to act responsibly at an early age.

We did notice it when we visited the school. Everyone makes the most of what is offered without overpassing their rights. And they feel satisfy with what they have. They never complain.

Junior school children (Year 6) are by themselves during lunch breaks. No one looks after them and they behave nicely.

They learn self-discipline at a very early age. They trust !