

**Modern Nations of the World: Finland** by Linda Hutchison  
Lucent Books (division of Thomson / Gale), 2004

## Contents

### INTRODUCTION

From the Remote Edge to Cutting Edge

### CHAPTER ONE

At the Top of the World

### CHAPTER TWO

From Nomads and Vikings to Kings and Czars

### CHAPTER THREE

From Farm and Forest to Urban High Tech

### CHAPTER FOUR

High Ideals on Solid Ground

### CHAPTER FIVE

Never Far from the Forest

### CHAPTER SIX

Celebrating Nature in Arts and Entertainment

### CHAPTER SEVEN

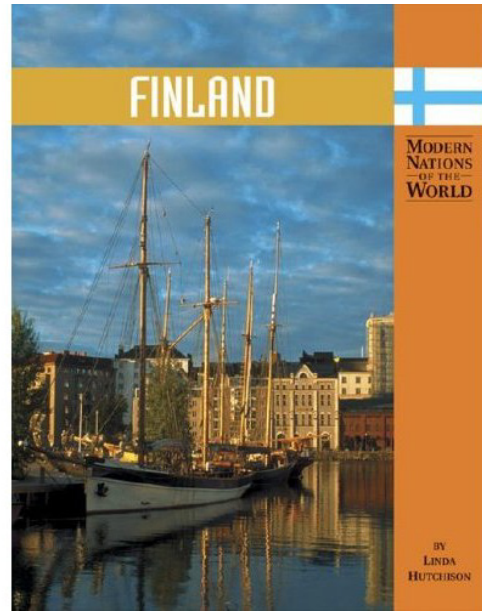
Maintaining Balance in the Twenty-first Century

## INTRODUCTION: FROM THE REMOTE EDGE TO CUTTING EDGE

In the last 20 years, Finland has emerged from its remote location on the top edge of the world to become a leader in cutting-edge technology. As home to number one cell phone maker Nokia, Finland represents remote wireless in ways no other country can. It has introduced its technology to the world and embraced it enthusiastically at home—from students and workers in the cities to reindeer herders in the far north.

This emergence from a remote and little known nation might seem unusual, but Finland has always been unique. Although it is a part of Europe, it lies apart from its neighbors, both geographically and culturally. It is considered a *Nordic* country—meaning North—but its language and history are different from that of the other Nordic countries. It is also considered by some to be Scandinavian, bordering Norway and Sweden and near Denmark. Others call it a Baltic country, grouping it with Russia and other nations around the Baltic Sea, like Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. The truth is, Finland is a little bit of all of these—European, Scandinavian and Baltic—and yet its own country too.

More than anything, Finland has been defined by its forests. Covering 70% of the land, they have provided resources and refuge for



hardy hunters, explorers and farmers for thousands of years. Eventually the forests also became a source of myths and an integral, intertwined part of Finnish personal and national identity. These myths, songs, poems and stories were ambitiously collected by a Finnish country doctor, Dr. Elias Lonnrot, in the 1800s. He named them *The Kalevala; Poems of the Kaleva District*, a magical land.

Dominating *The Kalevala* are three main characters—the Big Three—Vainamoinen, Ilmarinen and Lemminkainen. Vainamoinen is the chief of the three, the eternal sage, old and wise, inventor of the kantele. Ilmarinen is the forger of metals, the craftsman, the steady, competent worker. Lemminkainen is the lover, the restless one with a roving eye and mind. In some ways, these characters have represented Finland itself and still do, 150 years later.

Like Vainamoinen, the Finns acknowledge their ancient past and have built a modern nation on the wisdom of ageless principles. Like Ilmarinen, they are dependable workers and builders. Finally, like Lemminkainen, they are individualistic lovers of life who look to the future. A combination of all three, Finns respect the past, work in the present and allow for future innovation. To them, Finland, like Kaleva, is a unique, magical land—and yet very real.