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Birgejupmi, phenomenology, and land-based learning: Reclaiming attentive ways of knowing in sustainability education

Short description / Abstract:

This presentation brings together the Sámi concept birgejupmi and a phenomenological approach to explore how sustainability education can be grounded in lived, embodied experience rather than abstract conceptual models. Phenomenology foregrounds the primacy of perception, the cultivation of attention, and the significance of direct encounters with the world. These concerns resonate strongly with Sami and Indigenous knowledge traditions, where knowing emerges through being in relation with land, materials, and more-than-human life. Birgejupmi represents a relational, place-embedded way of living that integrates knowledge, responsibility, and ecological attunement. The teaching module, developed for primary teacher education in science, invites students to engage with a South Sámi myth, gather natural materials, and create objects inspired by Sámi crafts (duodji), followed by individual and collective reflection. The module highlights sustainability not as a theme to be taught, but as something enacted through reciprocal relations with land and materials. The project examines how such practices can disrupt dominant Western epistemologies that often prioritize abstract models over lived experience. Student reflection logs indicate that the students reconsider what counts as valuable knowledge, how Indigenous epistemologies are represented, and how material engagement can strengthen learners' relationship with nature. The project demonstrates how birgejupmi can serve as an entry point and support a more grounded, relational, and experience-based approach to science education and sustainability.