

Name: Christine Olsen-Nikkinen

Institution: Sámi preschool Miesieh in Östersund municipality

E-mail: christine.olsen-nikkinen@ostersund.se

Language at the table: Nourishing Sámi words, culture and identity

Short description / Abstract:

In this presentation, I share how we at the Sámi preschool Miesieh turn mealtimes into powerful arenas for Sámi language and cultural revitalization. At our preschool, language lives in action. The process begins even before the meal, as children clean up and wash their hands. Each meal then starts with a shared meal song in Sámi, grounding the moment in culture and community. We serve traditional Sámi food, making the meal itself a lived cultural experience. Around the table, we actively engage in Sámi through counting, naming food, and practicing everyday phrases like “Do you want...?” and “Can you pass me...?”. These small, intentional interactions create a low-threshold, high-impact environment where children naturally build vocabulary, confidence, and a strong sense of cultural belonging. We also extend this work beyond the preschool by giving parents practical tools to continue using Sámi around the table at home, strengthening the connection between language, family, and everyday life. This session offers concrete, easy-to-adapt methods for educators and communities working with Indigenous language revitalization. Participants will leave with practical tools and inspiration to transform everyday routines into meaningful language and cultural spaces.