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Duodji and Ilusivut (Arts and Crafts) as Pedagogy in the Circumpolar North

Short description / Abstract:

This presentation draws on findings from the *Duodji and Ilusivut (Arts and Crafts) as Pedagogy in the Circumpolar North* project to examine Indigenous crafting practices as sites of pedagogical innovation, relational inquiry, and educational renewal across Arctic and Subarctic contexts. Grounded in collaborative work within the Verdde Indigenous Education Thematic Network, the presentation foregrounds how Sámi duodji and Inuit Ilusivut function not as supplementary cultural activities but as foundational pedagogical processes through which knowledge, identity, and relationships are transmitted.

Across circumpolar regions, Indigenous educators, artists, and knowledge holders engaged in workshops, land-based gatherings, and self-study sessions that positioned making as a form of thinking and learning. These practices revealed crafting as inherently relational, by connecting land, language, materials, and community, and as a primary mode of intergenerational knowledge transmission. Participants consistently reframed “research” as everyday inquiry grounded in observation, experience, and cultural practice, challenging distinctions between academic research and lived pedagogical knowledge.

The presentation addresses a central tension in Indigenous education: the gap between university-based research frameworks and the lived, often unrecognized, inquiry enacted by Indigenous educators in their daily work. By centering educator practice as inquiry, this work affirms Indigenous pedagogies as embodied, place-based, and community-rooted. It also highlights the importance of relational accountability, collaborative knowledge creation, and storytelling as methodology.

Panelists will share visual documentation, reflections from crafting exchanges, and emerging theoretical contributions that position arts and crafts as pedagogical pathways for strengthening Indigenous education across the Circumpolar North. Collectively, the panel offers reorientation toward education as relational practice—one that sustains cultural continuity, supports educator leadership, and fosters community wellbeing.

