



▲ FIGURE 1. The dolls made by the pilot workshop participants. Photograph: Tatiana Kravtsov, 2025.

Mielikki – Forest Spirit Doll

A Craft Workshop Rooted in Finnish Folklore

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The Mielikki – Forest Spirit Doll craft workshop is designed as a service for visitors of Tonttula, Elves Village. Crafting with Finnish wool and materials gathered from the surrounding nature is combined with storytelling, providing a meaningful way to engage with Finland's nature-related traditions.

The process that led to the *Mielikki – Forest Spirit Doll* concept began at Tonttula, where our team was developing simple craft workshops for the busy winter season. During our visit, we met with representatives to discuss the need for new craft activities and gathered inspirational visual materials (Figure 2). During co-design sessions, we generated many ideas, which we narrowed as we began to under-

stand the realities of fast-paced services for large groups of visitors. This led us to focus on relatively simple braiding and cord-making techniques using wool yarn, and Wasastjerna experimented with different cord-making methods to make wrist ornaments (Figure 3). This concept was rooted in the healing properties of wool and in an old tradition of wearing a wool yarn wristband as a protective element.

After receiving feedback from Tonttula representatives, who noted that customers may prefer making decorative objects and that the concept of a “healing wool jewellery piece” could be difficult to understand for some travellers, we began developing alternative ideas. At this stage, we drew inspiration from yarn gnomes and began exploring and developing the concept further, incorporating ideas of nature spirits from Finnish folklore. From these explorations, the idea for the *Mielikki – Forest Spirit Doll* workshop emerged, blending the Finnish tradition of yarn gnomes with the interpretation of the forest goddess *Mielikki*.



▲ **FIGURE 2.** Greeting sheep at Tonttula – Elves Village; books and dried local plants in the Wise Elf Hut at Tonttula. Photographs: Tatiana Kravtsov, 2024.



▲ **FIGURE 3.** Braiding and cord-making technique experiments with wool yarn. Photographs: Sonja Wasastjerna, 2025.



▲ **FIGURE 4.** Participants crafting the dolls during pilot workshop; the workshop place, a wooden hut (kota) surrounded by a swamp. Photographs: Tatiana Kravtsov, 2025.

In Finnish folklore, *Mielikki* is a forest spirit and goddess who cares for the forest, protects its animals, and guides their movements. In the past, people showed respect for her while wandering through the woods and communicated with her through rituals. The process of crafting the doll from raw wool, wool yarn, and other natural materials offers an opportunity to encounter the spirit of the forest and reflect on the reciprocity of nature. We tested various types of Finnish wool and other materials, such as sweet grass, birch bark, fallen branches and lichens, cones, and glass beads, and crafted the first dolls. Based on these experiments, we developed the instructions and content for a pilot workshop (see in the attachments, page 190).

Our team piloted the *Mielikki – Forest Spirit Doll* craft workshop at Tonttula in June 2025. The workshop brought eight enthusiastic participants together from the Kittilä area. The environment was well-suited for the workshop: the wooden hut (*kota*) provided an atmosphere that resonated with the theme, whilst offering sufficient space and natural light for working. Moreover, the surrounding swampy landscape created a sense of closeness to nature, and the nearby growing cottongrass was used in the crafting process (Figure 4). The inclusion of natural materials enhanced participants'

engagement with the local environment and gave each *Mielikki* a unique character. Through a variety of colours and textures, participants were able to express their own interpretations and narratives in the crafted dolls (Figure 1).

The pilot workshop showed that the *Mielikki – Forest Spirit Doll* concept can successfully blend craft, storytelling, and locally sourced natural materials into an engaging visitor experience. Participants responded positively to the atmosphere, the use of local wool, and the connection to Finnish folklore. During the workshop, we facilitated discussions on the place-based aspects of the activity, emphasising the value of incorporating Finnish wool into locally grounded craft practices. Participants' feedback highlighted the importance of providing clear instructions, particularly when designing workshops for diverse visitor groups. Overall, the process demonstrated the potential of the concept as a culturally meaningful craft activity that can be adapted for various contexts and durations.