



Foundational Knowledge Overview - Culture & Traditions

As an Educator I should know...

Métis culture and traditions are the customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of Métis communities. They are also woven within the characteristics of the everyday lives of the Métis.

Culture is an expression of identity, and traditions are an expression of values.

One of the most recognized symbols of Métis culture is the Métis sash.

The expressions of Métis culture are as diverse as the coloured threads of the sash.

Woven together the individual sash threads represent the strength of Métis people.

A typical sash is a hand-woven wool belt and is 15 centimetres wide and 2 – 3 metres long but could be up to 6 metres in length. Today the majority of sashes are machine woven. Sashes that are woven by hand tend to be of higher quality and are more expensive. The art of finger weaving is a Métis tradition that is handed down through the generations.

When the Voyageurs married the women of the different Indigenous communities (mainly Cree and Ojibway), they introduced the L'Assomption Sash to their families – a sash originating from L'Assomption, Quebec. This sash was a popular trade item for the Hudson Bay Company, the North West Company, and later, western Métis communities. As the Métis families grew, and communities formed, the sash became a popular item of daily use.

The sash was used with clothing as a belt, but also as a multi-purpose tool in a variety of situations. The fringed ends are decorative, as well as purposeful.

Below are some of the documented uses of the sash:

- A Belt (for a coat)
- Holding items, such as a hunting knife, or a fire bag
- Symbol of pride and affiliation
- Decoration
- Tourniquet for injuries
- Fringes were knotted to count the days
- Tumpline (a strap that passes over the forehead to carry a load on the back)
- A Rope
- A Scarf
- Key Holder
- First Aid Kit
- Washcloth
- Towel



- Emergency Bridle/Saddle Blanket
- Sewing Kit
- Ankle cover (to prevent snow from getting in leggings when walking in deep snow)
- Markers left on buffalo (after killed- to mark buffalo as their property)

Today, the traditional guidelines for wearing the sash varies across Métis communities. Some Métis communities say that because traditionally only men wore the sash in their community, and women did not wear one, it should only be worn by men today to keep with that tradition. In general, it is said that both men and women can wear the sash today. Men tie the sash around their waist with the fringes hanging down. Women often wear the sash as a banner of pride and representation over the shoulder, across the heart, and crosses over the opposite hip. Today Métis people often wear sashes during ceremonies, performances, or in cultural celebrations.

Métis sashes have a diverse range of colors and designs.

While some people may include the sash in their daily life, many Métis use it as a cultural identifier and only wear it for a special occasion. There is diversity in the way that Métis practice their traditions and culture. This is a reflection of the wide-spread, mobile ways of our people; some practice their traditions independent of other Métis communities.

(adapted from Foundational Knowledge Theme: Culture and Traditions)

Title/Unit: Cultural Expression - The Métis Sash

Time Frame: 45 - 60 minutes

Grade/Subject: 4-9 Fine Arts, Social Studies, Math (Patterns/Measurement)

Topic(s): Culture/Tradition/Identity/Diversity

Métis Education Themes

- Languages of Métis
- Culture and Traditions
- Homeland History
- Métis in Alberta
- Métis Nation Governance

Teacher Quality Standard (TQS) connections

How does this lesson contribute to my knowledge in the following areas?

1. Fostering Effective Relationships
2. Engaging in Career-Long Learning
3. Demonstrating a Professional Body of Knowledge
4. Establishing Inclusive Learning Environments
5. Applying Foundational Knowledge about First Nations, Métis, and Inuit
6. Adhering to Legal Frameworks and Policies



Competencies

Critical Thinking • Problem Solving • Managing Information • Creativity and Innovation • Communication • Collaboration • Cultural and Global Citizenship • Personal Growth and Well-being

Vocabulary/Terms - <https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/>

affiliation: “official” connection to something

culture: an expression of identity; all the knowledge and values shared by a society

diaspora: a large group of people with common heritage and/or homeland who have moved to multiple places

dispossession: the expulsion of someone from the possession of land by process of law

identity: the individual characteristics by which a thing or person is recognized or known

Métis: “Métis means a person who self-identifies as Metis, is distinct from other Aboriginal peoples, is of historic Métis Nation Ancestry and who is accepted by the Métis Nation”

(<http://albertametis.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/NationalDefinitionofMetis.pdf>)

prosperity: an economic state of growth with rising profits and full employment

rights: an abstract idea of that which is due to a person or governmental body by law or tradition or nature

tradition: an expression of values: long standing customs and practices

tumpline: a strap or sling passed around the chest or forehead to help support a pack carried on a person's back (www.dictionary.com)

tourniquet: a device used to control the flow of blood temporarily

Ticket Out

Students will...

- practice simple finger weaving techniques to create a Métis friendship bracelet
- identify at least 3 practical uses of a Métis sash
- understand that the diversity of the sash can represent the diversity of Métis

Assessment FOR Learning

Students are engaged and successfully able to finger weave, (modifications are considered success)!

Assessment OF Learning

Students understand the cultural importance and functionality of the Métis sash.

Differentiation/Adaptations

- The length of threads can be shorter to create a keychain
- The length of threads can be longer to create a belt
- Threads can be tied onto a zipper pull
- Use three threads for a simple braiding technique
- Twist the five coloured threads and knot to create a simple friendship bracelet



Critical Thinking Opportunities

- Brainstorm multiple uses of a Métis sash
- Discuss cultural items in your life that represent identity

Approx. time	Activity	Materials/Text References
20-30minutes	Preparation/Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Métis sash or sashes as example(s) • Red/Yellow/White/Green/Blue yarn -cut an arm length of each and fold over together, tying at the top • Small sticks/popsicle or toothpicks • Strong tape/packing tape/book tape
5-10 minutes	<p>Slide 1 Introduction</p> <p>Show a Métis Sash, or a variety of sashes</p>	<p>Tanisi! (Tan-say) Cree Greet your audience in Cree. Many Métis people speak Cree. Explain that Michif is a blend of French and Cree and is another language of Métis Taanishi! (Tan-shey) Michif</p> <p>Is there anyone else that knows a greeting in another language?</p> <p>Briefly discuss the following words in relation to the Sash: Diversity - various sashes used by many people Practicality - What practical uses can you think of for the sash? Why was it necessary to think practically? Culture - Culture is an expression of identity, and traditions are an expression of values Identity - How do we identify ourselves? Labels: friend, sister, brother, son, daughter, etc. Are there items we wear or own that show the world who we are? Jewelry, sports jersey, etc.</p>
2 minutes	<p>Slide 2</p> <p>Share Today's Goal & Ticket Out</p>	<p>Today's Goal is to understand the cultural importance and functionality of the Métis sash Ticket Out is to -practice simple finger weaving techniques to create a Métis friendship bracelet -identify at least 3 practical uses of a Métis sash</p>



2-5 minutes	<p>Slide 3 Who is Métis?</p>	<p><u>Métis National Council's Definition of Métis</u> Métis means a person who self-identifies as Métis is distinct from other Aboriginal people is of historic Métis Nation ancestry is accepted by the Métis Nation</p>
5-10 minutes	<p>Slide 4 The Métis Sash is not only beautiful but practical.</p>	<p>What do you see when you look at the sash now? If we have one piece of yarn it is not as strong. Woven together we are stronger together! Allow students to brainstorm uses of a sash PRIOR to the 2 minute video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L5YPt5O4c7c and AFTER. How many did they come up with BEFORE the video? How many did they come up with AFTER the video?</p>
5 minutes	<p>Slide 5 Documented uses of the sash</p>	<p>Compare to the lists generated. Are there any that are missing? Any that students brainstormed that were not on this list?</p>
2-5 minutes	<p>Slides 6 & 7 Sash in Michif Fun Facts</p>	<p>Briefly look at other designs of sashes</p> <p>Pronounce sash in Michif: (San cheur fla shay) http://www.metismuseum.ca/michif_dictionary.php</p>



<p>20-35 minutes</p>	<p>Slides 8-11 Step by Step Finger Weaving Technique</p> <p>Review step by step</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) tape yarn down 2) find & separate 5 loops (do not worry about the top yarns overlapping) 3) separate into two on one side/three on the other 4) fingers go into the loops <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -side with three, ring finger, middle and pointer -side with two, ring finger, middle finger - Your pointer finger on this hand becomes the "finger weaver" toward the three -weave down up down up and pull the outside yarn through -pull tightly -there will now be three loops on the other side -dance your fingers over with two, to make sure that your pointer finger is available to act as the "finger" 	<p>This method is taught through the Michif Museum in St. Albert and was passed down by the late Thelma Chalifoux, Métis, senator, educator, entrepreneur, and activist and her daughter Sharon Morin, who is the program manager at Michif Cultural Connections. It is important that traditional teachings are handed down and knowledge holder is recognized. Why do you think this is necessary? Why do we learn history prior to teaching? <i>By increasing our understanding prior to finger weaving we are not doing a craft but learning an art form.</i></p> <p>*teacher notes: Demonstrate step by step first. Show the video: Video of Finger Weaving https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bxtYXR5SJ04&feature=youtu.be</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite students closer to observe if they are still not understanding. • Move student to student - some will require hand over hand. But every student will eventually finger weave! (see modifications) • Students have commented how relaxing finger weaving is. • Have additional yarn ready because many students will finish and want to try again! <p>Optional: Have students use the bitly or QR code to pull up the video on their own device</p>
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	<p>weaver” -repeat until you have the desired length or run out of yarn -tie ends together</p> <p>Students have time practice finger-weaving now</p>	
<p>Closure</p> <p>4-8 minutes</p> <p>Ticket Out</p>	<p>Slide 12</p> <p>Proud to be Métis Anthem - listen to while finger-weaving</p> <p>Check in with students individually while they are finger-weaving</p>	<p>Marsee! Thank you in Michif Proud to be Métis Anthem https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=1&v=iVKSbVtYOOOU&feature=emb_logo</p> <p>Identify at least 5 practical uses of a sash Why are there a variety of colours? Different meanings? <i>The expressions of Métis culture are as diverse as the coloured threads of the sash. Woven together the individual sash threads represent the strength of Métis people.</i></p>

Extension Activities

- Utilize the sash as a measurement tool (Mathematics)
- How can patterning be represented? (Mathematics)
- Design your own pattern and replicate it (Mathematics/Fine Arts)
- Create poetry using the colours of the sash for symbolism (ELA)
- Learn the colours of the sash in Michif, French, & Cree



Resources/Links/Videos

Uses of Sash video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L5YPt5O4c7c>

Finger weaving tutorial:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bxtYXR5SJ04&feature=youtu.be>

<https://bit.ly/2HGqVOP>



Proud to be Métis video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iVKSbVtYOOU&feature=emb_logo

Finger Weaving Untangled - <https://gdins.org/product/fingerweaving-untangled/>

Credits

<http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/eppp-archive/100/205/301/ic/cdc/albertametis/history/sash.htm>

<https://indigenouspeoplesatlasofcanada.ca/article/material-culture/>

https://www.mnbc.ca/media/attachments/view/doc/mnbc_grade_4_cross_curricular_teacher_guide/pdf

APTNDigitalNations

<http://www.metismuseum.ca/fingerweaving/background.php>

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