



## Foundational Knowledge Resource - Languages of Métis

As an Educator I should know...

Appreciating Métis oral traditions necessitates understanding Métis languages, the storyteller, and the narrative of the story itself.

Métis stories are best experienced and understood when shared in the Métis language the story originated in. For example, if a story was told in a Cree, the essence may be lost when translated to English, Michif, or French. Using Cree, French and/or Michif languages to tell a story allows listeners to experience the language and perceive what aspects of the story the Métis storyteller is emphasizing. Some concepts and experiences cannot be fully articulated in English. Stories often include specific words which, when told in their original language, express a multitude of connections and connotations. This depth of meaning can be lost when the words are translated into English.

Métis storytellers can be anyone in Métis communities. Storytellers are often among older Métis, as well as children who can also hold this unique gift. Storytellers can be community historians, and the stories they pass on would have been told for many generations. Individuals are generally not appointed as storytellers, but rather storytellers emerge organically in communities.

There are many types of stories told in Métis families and communities. Personal stories that share aspects of resilience and survival often include humour. Métis people have relied on using humour to navigate painful experiences and trauma. A good story includes lots of laughter, joking, and teasing that builds character. It is not uncommon to hear someone shout, “Acimo!” (ah-chee-mo) which in Cree means, “Tell a story.”

Métis storytelling in writing also has historical roots. One of these traditions is the written expression of Métis resilience. Writers from the 1800s onwards include stories of the resilient Métis people and Nation.<sup>[i]</sup> Some of the most recognized writers in Métis history include Louis Riel, Pierre Falcon, and James Brady.

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[i] Emma LaRocque, "Contemporary Metis Literature: Resistance, Roots, Innovation" in Cynthia Sugars (ed) *The Oxford Handbook of Canadian Literature*, (US: Oxford University Press, 2015), ?? URL: <http://www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199941865.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780199941865-e-8>

Excerpt from Foundational Knowledge theme: Métis Culture and Traditions



<b>Title/Unit:</b> What is Oral history? Why is it important to the Métis people?	<b>Time Frame:</b> 45-50 minutes
<b>Grade/Subject:</b> Grade 4 - ELA/Social	<b>Topic(s):</b> Oral Tradition/History Culture & Traditions
<b>Métis Education Themes</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Languages of Métis <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Culture and Traditions <input type="checkbox"/> Homeland History <input type="checkbox"/> Métis in Alberta <input type="checkbox"/> Métis Nation Governance	
<b>Teacher Quality Standard (TQS) connections</b>	
How does this lesson contribute to my knowledge in the following areas?	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Fostering Effective Relationships</li> <li>2. Engaging in Career-Long Learning</li> <li>3. Demonstrating a Professional Body of Knowledge</li> <li>4. Establishing Inclusive Learning Environments</li> <li>5. Applying Foundational Knowledge about First Nations, Métis, and Inuit</li> <li>6. Adhering to Legal Frameworks and Policies</li> </ol>	
<b>Competencies</b>	
Critical Thinking • Problem Solving • Managing Information • Creativity and Innovation • Communication • Collaboration • Cultural and Global Citizenship • Personal Growth and Well-being	



## Vocabulary/Terms

### 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>

### Michif

Métis across the nation have four living languages today:

Michif, Cree, English and French.

Michif is a blended language of both French nouns and Cree verbs. It uses the language structure of both languages to communicate the unique culture and identity of Métis people.

### Nehiyawewin (Cree)

An Indigenous language. There are several dialects, broken up by region.

**Oral Tradition/Oral History:** Expressing yourself by word of mouth. Passing information/history down from person to person through word of mouth to create a collective memory/collective knowledge. Often done through story. “ Valuable life lessons are taught in the Métis Oral Tradition.”

<https://indigenouspeoplesatlasofcanada.ca/article/oral-tradition/>

## Assessment FOR Learning

Students:

- make connections
- demonstrate respectful
- actively participate in discussion

## Assessment OF Learning

Students are:

- able to present part of the book orally
- able to communicate that Oral tradition helped passed down cultural knowledge through creating collective knowledge



<p><b>Differentiation/Adaptations</b></p> <p>Students have the option to pre-record rather than presenting live</p>		
Approx. time	Activity	Materials/Text References
5-10min	<p><b>Share</b> a personal story that has a family connection.</p> <p>(EXAMPLE: How your grandparents met, or a funny story about a relative), or a common story (EXAMPLE: 3 Little Pigs, or The Ugly Duckling)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) As you share your story, explain that this is a story that you heard growing up. (It was not a book that was read to you).</li> <li>2) Explain that <u>Oral Traditions</u> are stories that we hear and learn from but may not be written down.</li> </ol>	
<b>New information:</b> 20 min.	<p>Oral Tradition is how the Métis people passed down information from one generation to the other, including their language; Michif.</p> <p>Michif is not traditionally a written language, but rather it developed orally and later was made into a written language. The Métis would share stories to help teach lessons, and create group knowledge (collective knowledge).</p> <p>2) <b>Explain what collective knowledge is:</b> What is something we all know? For example the sky is blue, snow is white, etc. That is knowledge known by everyone. The</p>	<p><a href="https://rv.srsd119.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/The-Story-of-the-Rabbit-Dance.pdf">https://rv.srsd119.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/The-Story-of-the-Rabbit-Dance.pdf</a></p> <p>Have a copy of this story printed to read.</p>



Métis people would share stories orally with the people in the community so that they could learn and have collective knowledge about the Métis culture, language, and learn lessons.

3) **Explain:** Oral tradition strengthens culture because that is how ways-of-being and knowing are passed down to the next generation.

4) **Share** stories, or traditions your families or groups of friends passed down through oral tradition? (example: story of how someone got a nickname)

5) **Give** students 5 minutes to share a personal story with a classmate.

6) **Share** a Métis story without showing the pictures. Ask students to close their eyes and visualize the story being told.

The Story of the Rabbit Dance:

<https://rv.srsd119.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/The-Story-of-the-Rabbit-Dance.pdf> *Before reading: Review with them how the listener to an oral story would listen. They would not ask questions, or interrupt at all, until the story was finished. They would only reflect on the story and try to figure out the lesson that the story intended to teach. Read the story to the class without showing the pages, words, or pictures.*

Why would this be a story shared through oral tradition?

What is the story trying to teach?

(ANSWER: The story is meant to teach The Rabbit Dance, parts of Métis culture; as well as share the value of equality).



<p><b>Closure</b> 20 min.</p>	<p><b>Discussion questions:</b> Who would be the people sharing these stories?</p> <p>Métis storytellers can be anyone in Métis communities. Storytellers are often among older Métis, as well as children who can also hold this unique gift. Storytellers can be community historians, and the stories they pass on would have been told for many generations. Individuals are generally not appointed as storytellers, but rather storytellers emerge organically in communities.</p> <p><b>ACTIVITY:</b> It is important to document stories and teachings of older generations to maintain culture and traditions. Traditionally, people remembered these very important stories.</p> <p>Have the students retell The Story of the Rabbit Dance to another class, to simulate an oral story. They may practice with a partner before going to the other class to ensure that they feel comfortable retelling the story. It is important that they tell it in their own manner and do not read from a script.</p>	
<p><b>Extension Activities</b> Watch this video of children dancing the Rabbit Dance: <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qUca19qVBjE">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qUca19qVBjE</a> Listen to the Rabbit Dance performed on the fiddle by John Arcand: <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q8-Ca51RLZo&amp;list=RDq8-Ca51RLZo&amp;start_radio=1&amp;t=115">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q8-Ca51RLZo&amp;list=RDq8-Ca51RLZo&amp;start_radio=1&amp;t=115</a> Read The Story of the Rabbit Dance, this time while showing the pictures.</p>		
<p><b>Resources/Links/Videos</b></p> <p><b>Digital Story - The Rabbit Dance (includes English &amp; Michif)</b> <a href="https://rv.srsd119.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/The-Story-of-the-Rabbit-Dance.pdf">https://rv.srsd119.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/The-Story-of-the-Rabbit-Dance.pdf</a></p>		
<p><b>Credits</b></p> <p>Foundational Knowledge Resource: Languages of Métis - Rupertsland Institute Rupertsland Institute - Métis Centre of Excellence, Education Team (2020) *Please note that while Rupertsland Centre for Teaching and Learning (RCTL) has consulted with a variety of</p>		



Language & Culture carriers, it is recognized that there are a variety of dialects spoken or written amongst communities.