

# THE FLOWER BEADWORK PEOPLE #2

## Subject/topic

Fine Arts and Métis Identity, History, Art, Geography, Language

## Overview/focus questions

Why were the Métis recognized as the “Flower Beadwork People”?

## Developed by

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## Time

Approx. 120 minutes over 2 learning blocks

## Grade level

Grades 6-8

## Learning Goals

Students will:

- Be able to identify why the Métis are referred to as the “Flower Beadwork People.”
- Be able to name colours in Michif.
- Be able to count from one to fifteen in Michif.
- Learn how to bead a bracelet with a floral pattern.
- Learn to model the Métis values of perseverance and generosity.

## Materials Needed

- *The Flower Beadwork People* by Sherry Farrell Racette
- Michif Terms teacher card
- *Métis beading* video
- Blank 8” by 11” paper, one per student
- Pencils, crayons, and/or markers
- Beading thread or sinew
- Size 10 needles, one per student

## Lesson Description

### Teacher preparation and background information:

In Canada, there are three recognized groups of Indigenous peoples: First Nations, Inuit, and Métis. The Métis Nation are self-defining people from a specific region (mainly the Canadian western prairies but also parts of British Columbia, Ontario, Northwest Territories, North Dakota, and Montana) with a unique culture, language, and history. The Métis are those who self-identify as Métis and are descended from Indigenous and European/Euro-Canadian people, and who acknowledge the conscious choice of their ancestors to identify as Métis because of a common history and past.

The official language of the Métis Nation is Michif, though there are other languages spoken by the Métis as well. Michif is spoken in Saskatchewan, Alberta, and Manitoba, as well as Montana and North Dakota. Dating to the late 18th century, Michif is a hybrid language that blends together different languages, most commonly English, French and Cree.

Michif is an oral language and, until very recently, had not been written down. There is no standardized orthography, and spelling will vary depending on the speaker and region, as words are spelled phonetically. When learning Michif, the focus is not so much on the spelling and the writing of the words, as on the speaking. There are also other Michif languages, including French Michif and Northern Michif. As such, teachers will see words spelled in numerous ways throughout the lesson plans and videos in the Future of Michif project. The Michif primarily referred to and used in these lesson plans and through the online dictionaries and apps is known as Michif or Heritage Michif; however, you will see other spellings and pronunciations.

You will also hear some speakers in the videos use the term “Michif” to describe a people, and not only a language. The Michif are Métis who speak Michif, versus other languages spoken by the Métis, such as Cree or French.

Teachers should watch the *Métis Beading* video prior to the lesson to learn how to create a beaded bracelet, for information on Michif vocabulary, and to see a modeling of the lesson.

### Student activities:

**Minds on:** The teacher will read aloud *The Flower Beadwork People* by Sherry Farrell Racette and share and study traditional Métis floral beadwork and embroidery.

**Action:** Students will gather materials and bead floral pattern bracelets.

**Conclusion:** Students will learn and demonstrate the Métis value of generosity.

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- Size 10 beads of varying colours
- Felt sheet, one per student
- Containers for storage

#### Optional:

- Clasps for bracelet
- Document Camera
- Computer
- Projector
- Jewelry pliers

## Connection to the Canadian Geography Learning Framework

### Concepts of Geographic Thinking

- Geographic perspective
- Interrelationships
- Spatial significance

### Inquiry Process

- Communicate
- Reflect and respond

### Geospatial Skills

- Foundational elements

## Lesson Implementation

### Minds on

1. Read aloud *The Flower Beadwork People* and ask questions to help students learn about Métis history, such as: What makes Métis culture distinct? Who referred to the Métis as the “Flower Beadwork People”?
2. Share traditional and contemporary beadwork and embroidery and identify the floral patterns and colours in Michif. (See this modeled in the first half of the *Métis Material Culture* video. This can be used as background information for the teacher and used with students if the teacher does not have pieces of their own that show floral beadwork and embroidery).
3. Ask students to share their thoughts about the examples and what they see while studying the beadwork and embroidery. Possible discussion questions include:
  - What do you notice in the beadwork?
  - What colours were used?
  - How do the floral shapes differ from beadwork to embroidery?

### Action

1. Have students select three colours in Michif (see attached Michif Terms teacher card) that they would like to use for their bracelet.
2. Model for students an example of the template of a bracelet, as demonstrated in the video *Métis Material Culture*. Name, title, draw and colour the pattern.
3. Have students create a template for their work on a piece of white paper (as modeled in the video). Note that students will be creating a bracelet pattern of 15 beads for the vine, seven beads for the flower, and one bead for the center as opposed to a smaller pattern in the video.
4. Have students prepare their supplies:
  - a small container to store beads
  - a piece of felt to place beads on
  - a needle
  - a piece of beading thread approximately 12 inches (30 centimeters) in length
  - beads (including one stopper bead of a colour different than those the student chose)
5. Model for students how to thread their needle and how to put on a stopper bead. The following steps are modeled in the video. Some students will need assistance and safety guidelines surrounding needle use.
6. Have students thread their needle and put on their stopper beads (a different colour than the beads in their pattern).

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7. Model for students how to bead their pattern: 15 beads for the vine, seven for the flower, and one bead for the center. See video for instructions. Count in Michif (see attached Michif Terms teacher card) and speak to the value of perseverance. Using a document camera or projector allows the teacher to model for a larger group of students, as well as to show a close up of how to create the flower.
8. Have students create their bracelet and explain the concept of perseverance. Possible discussion questions surrounding the value of perseverance:
  - What does the term perseverance mean to you?
  - Can you think of an example of a situation in which you have persevered?
  - How are you persevering in this project?
9. Model for students how to put a clasp on their bracelet if need be, otherwise demonstrate how to tie the ends off.
10. Have students clean up their materials.

## Conclusion and Consolidation

1. Acknowledge the hard work and perseverance the students put into their bracelets.
2. Share with students the Métis value of generosity. Métis are generous people, they believe in sharing and giving to others.
3. Have students give their bracelet to a person they care about (e.g., Koohkoom (Grandma), Mooshmoom (Grandpa), Maamaa (Mom), Paapaa (Dad), aen naamii (friend)). Possible discussion questions surrounding the value of generosity:
  - Why is generosity important to a community?
  - Why is generosity important to us and others?

## Extend your geographical thinking

- Research the history of trade between non-Indigenous people and Métis in Canada throughout history.
- Examine examples of beadwork and Indigenous art, and the locations from which they originate.
- Create a vocabulary wall of Michif terms. Use the Michif To Go or Heritage Michif To Go apps (linked in Additional Resources) to learn more terms and phrases in Michif.
- Investigate the cultural, political, and geographical history of the Métis Nation.
- Explore the history and development of the Michif language.
- Invite Métis Elders and artists to speak to students.

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## Modifications

- The teacher can thread needles for students.
- The size of beads, type of elastic or thread, and needle size can be adjusted to suit students' needs.
- Sinew (which does not require a needle) can be used.
- Supplies (number of beads, pre-cut sinew or thread with stopper beads attached) can be prepared for students prior to beginning the activity.
- Students can work in pairs to assist one another.
- Teachers can offer one-on-one support for students who require assistance.
- Extension: Students can explore painting and pointillism.

## Assessment Opportunities

- Assess students' templates.
- Assess students' ability to name the three colours they are using in their bracelet in Michif.
- Assess the students' ability to count from one to 15 in Michif.
- Does the student show perseverance with their beading project?  
Example:
  - If their beads fall off, can they regroup and try again?
  - If their needle comes off, can they rethread independently?
- Assess the completion of the product and the students' ability to follow directions.

## Sources and Additional resources

- *The Flower Beadwork People* by Sherry Farrell Racette
- *Taanishi Book Series* by Angie Caron and Wilfred Burton
- [Gabriel Dumont Institute Michif Dictionary](#)
- *Expressing Our Heritage Metis Artistic Designs Resource Manual* by Cheryl Troupe
- [Indigenous Peoples Atlas of Canada - Métis](#)
- [The Virtual Museum of Métis History and Culture - Beadwork](#)
- [The Virtual Museum of Métis History and Culture - Embroidery](#)
- Michif To Go app (Google Play) and the Heritage Michif To Go app (App Store)
- Beads:
  - [Twig & Squirrel's Wild Goods](#)
  - [His Bead Store](#)