

CONVERSATIONAL MICHIF #1

Subject/topic

Language, Social Studies

Overview/focus questions

Students will practise speaking Michif by repeating words and phrases modeled in the *Conversational Michif* video. What are some common phrases you say when speaking with someone in your home and how would you say them in Michif?

Developed by

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Time

60 mins

Grade level

Grades 1 - 3

Learning Goals

Students will:

- Learn individual Michif words used in the *Conversational Michif* video.
- Learn and repeat four short Michif phrases to converse with a partner.
- Perform a four-phrase conversation in Michif with a partner.
- List four words they have learned in Michif.

Materials Needed

- *Conversational Michif* video
- *Conversational Michif* video script cards (for reference)
- I am Learning to Speak Michif Passport card (one per student)
- Exit Slip card (one per student)
- Writing tools
- Whiteboard or blackboard

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.

In the past, the Métis spoke many different languages: those of different settlers, First Nations, as well as their own. Michif, French Michif, Northern Michif, and Bungi are all languages that were invented by the Métis and these languages are all endangered due to colonization and its impacts. Losing these heritage languages would mean losing Métis traditions and values.

In this lesson plan, Heritage Michif (Michif) will be the language used. Words are spelled phonetically, and the words do not have a set spelling. The Métis' ability to blend contrasting cultures' languages into one demonstrates the ingenuity of the Métis, and the uniqueness of the Michif language.

Michif is an oral language and, until very recently, had not been written down. There is no standardized orthography, and so 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 that the Métis speak such as Cree or French.

Teachers should watch the *Conversational Michif* video prior to the lesson to become familiar with the Michif words and phrases that will be used in the lesson.

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Connection to the Canadian Geography Learning Framework

Concepts of Geographic Thinking

- Geographic perspective

Inquiry Process

- Communicate
- Reflect and respond

Student activities:

Minds on: Inquiry into Michif: What are they saying? Students will watch a short clip in Michif from the Conversational Michif video and will attempt to determine what is being said based on their personal experience and clues in the video.

Action: Students will learn four phrases used in the Conversational Michif video and practise those phrases with a partner.

Conclusion: Think, Pair, Share – Students will share four new words learned in Michif with a partner and record the words in their I Am Learning to Speak Michif Passport. Students will set a personal goal by identifying four new words they want to learn and then write them on the Exit Slip to be submitted to the teacher.

Lesson Implementation

Minds on

Show a short clip from the Conversational Michif video of Lyla, Chandi, and Jaylin at the kitchen table (the first four exchanges) and then review with students to see if they can figure out what is being said without reading the subtitles (either play the audio only or cover up the part of the screen where the subtitles are shown). Discuss what helped them to figure it out. What clues did they see in the video or what background knowledge did they have to help them judge what was being said? For example, in the video, one of the people pointed to the food, which might remind students of having been to someone's house where they were offered food, and this experience helped them guess what was being said.

Action

Watch Video:

Play the section of the Conversational Michif video of the Michif conversation between Lyla, Jaylin, and Chandi at the front door. Stop periodically to ask students what they think is being said. Now, restart the section and stop the clip after one speaker and have students repeat the phrase in Michif. Tell students the English translation. Then, continue the video to listen to the next speaker, stop the video and have students repeat the exercise. Practise the two phrases exchanged between the two speakers in the video with two volunteer students (one phrase said by each student).

Next, repeat this process with another two students, using the next two phrases exchanged between the speakers. Once you have practised the four phrases, you can practise this four-phrase conversation with the whole class. See the Conversational Michif video - Scripts for a sample script. Write the phrases on the board with two different colours to represent the two speakers and then let pairs of students work together to practise the conversation in Michif.

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Conclusion and Consolidation

Review:

Have students volunteer to engage in the conversation with you as a review of the four phrases from the *Conversational Michif* video (Welcoming guests at the front door section), and the conversation learned today.

Think, Pair, Share:

Ask students to:

- Share with their partner four new Michif words they learned today.
- Peer assessment: Have students give their partner a sticker for each word they share on the I Am Learning to Speak Michif Passport card. This also becomes part of the assessment.
- Have students set a goal for four new words they want to learn in Michif. Students can write these words on a piece of paper or the provided Exit Slip card and hand them in to the teacher to inform next teaching steps.

Extend your geographical thinking

- Create a word wall of numbers, words and phrases in Michif.
- Locate where Michif is spoken in Canada and use a map to illustrate locations.
- Investigate the cultural, political, and geographical history of the Métis Nation.
- Explore the history and development of the Michif language.

Modifications

- Extension: Increase the number of words or phrases used in the conversation.
- Extension: Have students create their own four-phrase conversation in Michif using a Michif dictionary (see Additional Resources section for suggestions on dictionaries).
- Write the phrases on the board phonetically so students can sound them out when practising the phrases and during the Think, Pair, Share.
- Use visuals from the video to help students determine what is being said in Michif.
- For students who have difficulty reading, use symbols or drawings beside words written on the board to help them read the word.
- Work with small groups who are struggling.

Assessment Opportunities

- Have students do a peer assessment of four new Michif words learned in the lesson (I Am Learning to Speak Michif Passport card).
- Exit Slips identifying four new words students want to learn in Michif can be used to inform next teaching steps for future lessons.
- Observational notes can be taken of students' ability to repeat phrases in Michif.
- The I Am Learning to Speak Michif Passport can be used to assess students' learning.

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Sources and Additional Resources

- *Michif Dictionary 2013* by Norman Fleury
- Gabriel Dumont Institute Michif Dictionary
- Michif To Go (Google Play) or Heritage Michif To Go (The App Store) apps
- Indigenous Peoples Atlas of Canada - Métis