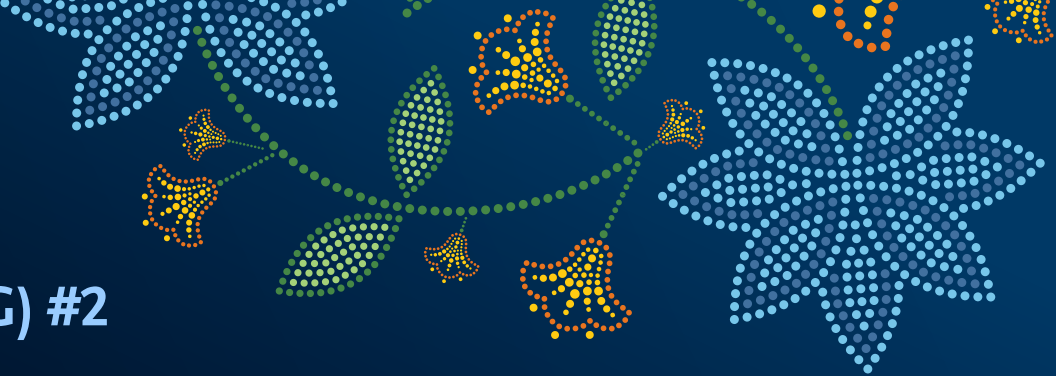


LA JIG DI LA RIVYAYR ROOZH (THE RED RIVER JIG) #2



Subject/topic

Language, Dance, Social studies, Music

Overview/focus questions

Students will be learning the most famous dance of the Métis, La Jig di la Rivyayr Roozh (Red River Jig).

Developed by

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Time

60 minutes

Grade level

Grades 4-6

Learning Goals

Students will:

- Be able to identify that the Red River Jig is a traditional Métis dance.
- Be able to “train their ear” to identify the changes in the Red River Jig, from basic to fancy.
- Be able to demonstrate the basic step of the Red River Jig (hen, deu, trwaa scuff).
- Be able to demonstrate five fancy steps.
- Learn to demonstrate the Métis value of perseverance through trying a new dance and learning new steps.

Materials Needed

- *Call of the Fiddle* by Wilfred Burton and Anne Patton
- Song *Red River Jig* by John Arcand
- Speaker or CD player
- Michif Terms teacher card
- *Jigging* video

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.

Music, singing and dancing have always been very important to the Métis, whose culture is very social and celebratory. Their European ancestral influence is evident in Métis fiddle playing and dancing, with fiddle players holding a very important cultural role in Métis society. There are contests throughout North America for fiddling, jigging, and square dancing. Coming from the Red River area, Métis jigging blends dancing and steps from various First Nations, Scotland, and French-Canada. Each jigger develops their own unique style over time. A jigger’s steps can sometimes even reveal where they are from!

Teachers should watch the *Jigging* video prior to the lesson to become familiar with the dancing steps involved in the Red River Jig, for the Michif names of the dance steps, and for a modelling of the lesson.

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Connection to the Canadian Geography Learning Framework

Concepts of Geographic Thinking

- Interrelationships
- Geographic perspective

Inquiry Process

- Reflect and respond

Student activities:

Minds on: The teacher will read aloud *Call of the Fiddle* and lead a discussion of the book. The teacher will lead students through an activity to train their ear to hear the changes in the song Red River Jig between a basic step and a fancy step.

Action: Students will learn the basic and fancy steps of the Red River Jig, along with the Michif names of these steps, and put the steps together with music.

Conclusion: The teacher will lead a dance competition where students can demonstrate their best fancy step. Students will discuss the Métis values of perseverance and fun in a sharing circle.

Lesson Implementation

Minds on

Read aloud the book *Call of the Fiddle* and engage students in a discussion about Nolen's experience with dancing. Possible discussion questions:

- What place that is important to the Métis do Nolen and his family visit?
- What fancy steps does Nolen show off at the competition?
- Connection: What brings out your competitive side?

Next, explain to students that they are going to learn how to train their ears for the Red River Jig (*La Jig di la Rivyayr Roozh*). They will be training their ears to listen for differences in the song between two parts: the basic step and the fancy step.

1. Have students sit in a circle on the floor.
2. Share with students that the Red River jig, the most famous dance of the Métis, has two parts. Part one is the basic step and part two is the fancy step. For fancy steps they will place two thumbs in the air and for the basic step they will tuck their two thumbs into their fists.
3. Play the music and model for students thumbs up (fancy) and thumbs in (basic) as demonstrated in the *Jigging* video.
4. Have students join in. Once mastered, they can close their eyes and listen to the changes.

Action

Explain to students that today, they will be learning the Red River Jig (*La Jig di la Rivyayr Roozh*), along with the Michif names of some of the steps. Tell students that music and dance are very important in Métis culture. Inform students that as they learn to dance, they will also be practicing the Métis values of perseverance and fun by learning this new skill.

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This dance process will be taught through a modeled approach. The teacher will demonstrate the step (or use the *Jigging* video to model) and then the students will repeat.

Have students stand in a circle or two lines facing the teacher (the dance instructor), maintaining personal dance space.

1. Identify that a Métis dance always begins on the right side. Have students identify their left and their right..
2. Have students practice their balance by getting them to shift their weight from their right side to their left side.
3. Show students the parts of the foot that will be used in the dance— the heel and the ball of the foot. Have students identify the heels and the balls of their own feet.
4. Model how to scuff the heel lightly five times (counting hen, due, trwaa, kaatr, saenk) on each side and repeat until everyone has mastered the scuffing with their heel and transferring their weight.

BASIC STEP

1. Start on your right-hand side, scuff your right heel, and step three times (right, left, right).
2. Scuff your left heel and step three times (left, right, left).
3. Repeat the basic step.
4. Try the basic step in time to the music.

FANCY STEPS

*Watch Jaylin model the following steps in the *Jigging* video.

1. Lii Buffalo/The Buffalo
Staying in one spot on the balls of your feet, run on the spot. This is intended to create a stampede noise.
2. Aen Lyayv/Rabbit
On the balls of your feet, lift your heels and, keeping your feet together, hop forward and backward like a rabbit.
3. Front March
Place your right foot forward, transfer your weight onto the front ball of the foot and slide it back. Place your left foot forward with the weight on the ball of the foot, and slide it back. Continue alternating feet, and stay light on your feet, almost as if you are skipping with each step.

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4. Front Cross

Similar to the front march step, you will alternate by crossing the right foot in front of the left and then sliding the right foot back. Repeat with the left foot. It should look like you are skipping in place along an imaginary line in the center.

5. Chi Gaaloo/Little Gallop

Start with your right foot forward and your left foot behind. Transfer your weight, like a rocking horse, front to back with a small hop. Switch sides and repeat the step on your left side.

RED RIVER JIG

Have students put the steps together and dance the Red River Jig with the music. The teacher will call out the steps.

- Basic Step
- Lii Buffalo
- Basic Step
- Ane Lyayv
- Basic Step
- Front March
- Basic Step
- Front Cross
- Basic Step
- Chi Gaaloo
- Basic Step

Conclusion and Consolidation

Now, it is time to have students demonstrate the dance steps in a dance competition.

1. Have teachers and students stand in a circle.
2. On the basic step, students and teachers jig in a circle clockwise.
3. On the fancy step, have students take turns going into the middle of the circle and showing off their best fancy step.

Sharing Circle

1. Have students sit in a circle.
2. Share with students that it takes practice and perseverance to become a great dancer and that the Métis love to dance and have fun. The most important part is to have fun and enjoy the music.
3. Go around in a circle and have students share what they liked about learning to dance and what they found difficult.

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Extend your geographical thinking

- Create a word wall of Michif terms.
- Invite a Métis dance group in to perform to students, or watch videos of Métis dancing.
- Research the importance of music and dancing to the Métis.
- Explore other styles of Métis dance.
- Investigate the geographical differences in Métis dance styles.

Modifications

- Teach the basic step to a first change song that is slower. Note: During traditional jiggling songs, such as The Red River Jig, there are two kinds of steps: one is called the resting step, and the other is called a fancy step. During the resting step a certain beat of music is played and the jiggers jig to this beat. Then, when the fancy step music changes the beat this is called the “change.” Each song may have three to four “changes” from resting to fancy.
- Extension: Have students learn additional fancy steps:
 - Criss Cross
 - Show your moccasin
 - Back step
 - Back cross
- Have students practice balance while holding on to a wall.
- For students who are not able to dance, they can accompany the music by playing the spoons or by using their hands on their laps to keep the beat.

Assessment Opportunities

- Assess students’ ability to identify changes in the song with the thumbs up and thumbs in motions.
- Assess students’ ability to identify the changes in the song using their steps from basic to fancy.
- Assess if students’ basic steps are in time to the beat.
- Assess if the students can demonstrate five basic steps.
- Make observational notes of students’ participation in the sharing circle.
- Make observational notes of the students having fun and trying their best.

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Sources and Additional Resources

- *Dancing in My Bones* by Wilfred Burton and Anne Patton
- *Call of the Fiddle* by Wilfred Burton and Anne Patton
- *Taanishi Book - Emergent Readers Series* by Angie Caron and Wilfred Burton
- *Steps in Time II: Métis Dance & Instruction* - DVD published by Gabriel Dumont Institute
- *Let Me See Your Fancy Steps: Story of a Métis Dance Caller* - The Story of Jeanne Pelletier as told to Sylvie Sara Roy and Wilfred Burton, published by Gabriel Dumont Institute
- Indigenous Peoples Atlas of Canada - Métis
- Gabriel Dumont Institute Michif Dictionary