



# Michif Coloring Book

## RLI Indigenous Language Experiences Métis Nation of Alberta Region 1



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## Little Michif Language Learners

### Pilot Program Background Information

Nineteen first grade students participated in the pilot of the Rupertsland Centre for Teaching and Learning (RCTL) Michif Colouring Book project over the period of six weeks in the small community of Lac La Biche. Student's backgrounds were extremely diverse ranging from First Nations, Métis, Caucasian, Filipino, and many others. Students participated in the Michif Language program as part of their exploration of identity within the classroom. Students were provided the opportunity to explore their own identity in addition to explore the Métis language of Michif; the resource provided an opportunity to explore the Michif Language and incorporate student's understanding of identity and connection to others while interacting with the resource. As much of Métis culture is embedded within language, it was critical that students explore the language as part of the Métis identity. Students were able to interact and learn simple Michif words (colours) and use them in both a practical and applicable manner within the classroom. The following essay will outline the activity that was completed over the six-week duration within the elementary classroom as well as provide insight as to how educators can incorporate the book as part of their classroom culture and learning through an authentic, relatable Métis lens.

### Activity: RCTL Activity Booklet & Michif Colour Design Booklet

Ms. Johnston spent the week prior to the use of the Colouring Book within her classroom discussing the importance of the Métis people. Students began the week exploring Leah Dorion's book *The Giving Tree*, and exploring various Métis symbols, ways of living, traditions and culture that emerged from the story. Students then were encouraged to bring in their own "traditions" to share within the classroom either through written, oral, or pictorial form. Prior to the Michif Colouring Book, Ms. Johnston and her students explored the digital slides as a whole classroom and made connections to *The Giving Tree* along with the traditions/cultures that students brought in. Students were encouraged to make connections within their own traditions/cultures; many students explored the various colours that were introduced in the slides and as a class, each word (in Heritage and Northern Michif) were practiced out loud. Students then used the book to find the corresponding illustration and Michif words; new Michif words were introduced on a weekly basis for six-weeks which were added to the Classroom Word Wall as a referent for students. At the beginning of each weekly session, students

reviewed the previous vocabulary from the week prior and found items within the classroom that were the corresponding colour(s). At the end of the session, students paired up and practiced their words along with colouring the illustrations with the colour that was learned. As a conclusion to the lesson, students were able to complete the additional work in the back of the booklet (Picture Search).

Reflection by Ms. Kelly Johnston:

As an educator, it is imperative that we provide an accurate representation of our students within our classroom(s). This resource afforded my students the opportunity in exploring the Métis and its language within our community. My students were able to engage in authentic connections as to the importance of identity and how our identities shapes who we are. Prior to using the RCTL resource, my students and I began with the exploration of the various cultures within our classroom to create a powerful introduction for students to establish personal understanding and connections. We discussed what makes a person: where they are from; who is their family; what is their background and traditions; and what experiences which shape their being. Students were encouraged to bring their own cultures, identities, and traditions into the classroom and to make connections with their peers. Once this was established and students were able to present themselves to their peers, we explored the importance of the Métis culture and eventually transitioned into the Michif Language.

The RCTL Michif Colouring Design Booklet was a great supplemental resource for Early Elementary students to continue their conversations about identity, and more specifically, Métis identity. Many of my students within my classroom did not know they were Métis until they went home and informed their parents that we were learning about the Métis people. This encouraged ALL students (Métis and non-Métis) to bring their own stories and insights into the classroom. The resource was extremely easy to follow and implement within the classroom. For many of my struggling students, due to global pandemic interruptions, this resource provided an excellent way for them to practice both fine motor skills and language acquisition skills (expressive and receptive). Many of my students were able to participate in the conversations as they had valuable information to provide from their home and family life using both verbal and visual representations which allowed for a richer conversation.



It is important to know that some knowledge will need to be offered prior to this activity for students to continue building a deeper understanding of Métis identity and culture. We had explored Leah Dorion's book *The Giving Tree* for students to become introduced to who the Métis were and to see the imagery and symbols associated with the Métis. This generated discussions about why Métis symbols were important to their identity which provided transition into Métis languages.

### Recommendations for Implementation

- Resource was open-ended to encourage educators in building their own capacity within Métis Education; it would be beneficial to tie this activity to a specific language resource for students to continue learning the language
- Provide educators with a list of words beyond colours or where can educators find more Michif words
- Invite students to bring in photos and items to show a part of who they are, providing real and symbolic contexts for deeper connection with ideas (red-sash, blue-flag)
- The word wall provided students with the opportunity of a referent throughout the school day
- All students were encouraged to practice verbally to say the words out loud
- Visuals were extremely important; students had developed the association of the colour with the item in the booklet which helped with the Michif word association.

\*Appendix located below includes: RCTL original Booklet, student's sample work as well as students engaged in the activity. In addition, photographs of the Word wall words are included

Related Video:

[RLI ILE Region 1 - Michif Coloring Book](#)

Appendix A- Original Michif Document

Resource(s) are linked below and can be found on [rupertsland.org](https://rupertsland.org)

- a) [RCTL Activity Booklet](#)
- b) [Michif Colour Design Booklet](#)



