

## MÉTIS CULTURE • SYMBOLS, VALUE SYSTEM, ART AND MUSIC • SYMBOLS

**Learning goal:** Students will understand the importance of the Métis flag and sash.

**Suggested timeline:** 1 x 75-minute period

**Subjects:** Music, Drama, Physical Education

### Lesson opener

**See it:**

*“...culture should be regarded as the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group, and that it encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs...”*

— *United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization. UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2003)*

*“My people will sleep for one hundred years, but when they awake, it is the artists who will give them their spirit back.”*

— *Louis Riel*

*“Métis people, God, have been wearing the sash proudly for many years. When I look at it, I notice that it is composed of many interconnected threads, many strands, many patterns, many colors contribute to the overall design of the sash. Our Métis culture God is like the sash. The lives of the Métis have been woven together from a variety of cultures, traditions and beliefs.... For example, God, we are the descendants of the English, of the French, of the Indian-Cree and Ojibway and Scots to name a few. We speak a variety of languages: English, Canadian French, Michif French, Michif Cree and Mashkegon. Look at the sash: it is a composite. It is a mixture. It is Métis. It is made of a variety of elements, like the lives of the Métis. Look at its pattern, its fabric, its colors. Nonetheless, these disparate elements form an integrated whole. Similarly, the different ethnic backgrounds and different languages to the Métis blend into one another to form a rich tapestry like the lives and culture of the Métis.”*

— *Excerpts from a Métis Priest's prayer (Society)*

### 1. Sash

Using a sash, from the Métis Education Kit, have students brainstorm ways in which to use the sash.

### 2. Flag

Using images of the Métis flag, ask students why is the infinity symbol used on the Métis flag. Ask why there is a red flag and also a blue flag. Discuss ways in which the flag was used.

### Strategy/Lesson activity

**Feel it:**

What was the historical significance of the Métis sash and Métis flag? What is the significance today?

**Know it:**

## 1. Sash

What was the origin of the Métis sash? How does the Métis sash reflect the Métis people? What were the historical uses of the sash during the Fur Trade? What is its significance today? How did the Métis sash help to prevent the leading cause of death during the fur trade? What other peoples used a similar sash? What are some sash styles and patterns? What are some additional ways to decorate a sash? How was/is the artwork of the sash impacted by local resources, and the availability of European goods? What is the proper way to wear a Métis sash?

## 2. Flag

What was the origin of the Métis flag? What is the meaning of the flag? What are some theories of the meaning of the colours of the Métis flag? Which one(s) seem(s) more likely? Why? How many years was the Métis flag in existence before the Canadian flag? What does that tell you about the depth of history of the Métis people?

### Assessment

#### **Do It:**

Make a flag that symbolizes, represents who you are and what is important to you.

**Extension:** finger weaving—Finger Weaving: [northwestjournal.ca/sash.html](http://northwestjournal.ca/sash.html)

The Sash: Métis Finger Weaving: [www.metismuseum.ca/browse/index.php?id=211](http://www.metismuseum.ca/browse/index.php?id=211)

### Suggested Resources:

Métis Nation of Ontario Website—Culture and Heritage:  
[metisnation.org/culture-heritage/who-are-the-m%C3%A9tis](http://metisnation.org/culture-heritage/who-are-the-m%C3%A9tis)  
[metisnation.org/culture-heritage/symbols-and-traditions](http://metisnation.org/culture-heritage/symbols-and-traditions)

Métis—The Canadian Encyclopedia: [thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/metis](http://thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/metis)  
Our Legacy; Métis Culture: [scaa.sk.ca/ourlegacy/exhibit\\_metisculture](http://scaa.sk.ca/ourlegacy/exhibit_metisculture)

Flags of the Métis; Calvin Racette, Sherry Farrell Racette, Charles Belhumeur  
Colour Adds a Whole New Meaning—The Métis Sash: New Breed Magazine Page 20:  
[metismuseum.ca/media/db/04181](http://metismuseum.ca/media/db/04181)

Flying the Flag: New Breed Magazine (Gabriel Dumont Institute) Pages 4–6:  
[metismuseum.ca/media/document.php/05851.DB6654%20GDI%20Winter.pdf](http://metismuseum.ca/media/document.php/05851.DB6654%20GDI%20Winter.pdf)

The Métis Infinity Flag: Lawrence Barkwell—Louis Riel Institute:  
[www.scribd.com/document/211617548/The-Metis-Infinity-Flag](http://www.scribd.com/document/211617548/The-Metis-Infinity-Flag)

The Métis Flag: Indigenous Corporate Training Inc. [www.ictinc.ca/blog/the-metis-flag](http://www.ictinc.ca/blog/the-metis-flag)  
[metismuseum.ca](http://metismuseum.ca) (Métis Virtual Museum)  
[northwestjournal.ca/sash.html](http://northwestjournal.ca/sash.html)

*Aboriginal Beliefs, Values and Inspirations* (student textbook)—ISBN:978-0-13-510651-8 Co-published by Pearson Education Canada and [GoodMinds.com](http://GoodMinds.com)

Métis Sash (video) Loom weaving a sash workshop: [vimeo.com/66841701](http://vimeo.com/66841701)

The Sash (Louis Riel Institute): [louisrielinstitute.com/the-sash.php](http://louisrielinstitute.com/the-sash.php)

The Sash (GDI):  
[virtualmuseum.ca/sgc-cms/expositions-exhibitions/batoche/docs/proof\\_en\\_the\\_sash.pdf](http://virtualmuseum.ca/sgc-cms/expositions-exhibitions/batoche/docs/proof_en_the_sash.pdf)

*History of the Métis Sash*: by Louise Vien and Lawrence Barkwell:  
[metismuseum.ca/media/document.php/14789.History%20of%20the%20Metis%20Sash.pdf](http://metismuseum.ca/media/document.php/14789.History%20of%20the%20Metis%20Sash.pdf)

The Assomption Sash: [ameriquefrancaise.org/en/article-477/assomption\\_sash.html](http://ameriquefrancaise.org/en/article-477/assomption_sash.html)