



Truth & Reconciliation Day Experiences in Residential Schools

Aen shinihkatayk (title):

The Métis Experiences in Residential Schools

Wiihtamakayhk kaykwy kaa kishkayhtamihk (explaining what is being learned/overview):

This lesson focuses on Métis specific experiences in residential schools, specifically the Île-à-la-Crosse residential boarding school.

In honour of Truth and Reconciliation Day, we acknowledge the experiences of Métis Survivors, and we listen to their stories with open hearts and open minds.

Apishiishiw

(small version/summary):

Students will engage in a pre-learning discussion guided by the teacher, which will provide basic background knowledge to inform the rest of the lesson.

Students will participate in a silent gallery walk where they will have the opportunity to engage with experiences and perspectives provided by Métis residential school Survivors.

Students will complete a summative assessment that demonstrates their understanding of Métis specific experiences in residential schools.

Teacher Note: Optional – A viewing of the Île-à-la-Crosse Métis Residential School Documentary,

Trigger Warning: Contains references of sexual abuse.

Kaykwy chi kii ishpayihk

(what should happen/connections):

IN9.2

Analyze the influence of worldview on the choices, decisions, and interactions in a society. Exploring how colonial worldviews shaped the government's treatment of the Métis people.

DR9.1

Examine the impact of globalization on the lives of people in Canada and around the world. Understanding how colonial and settler expansion affected Indigenous and Métis communities.

PA9.3

Investigate the roles and responsibilities of members in Canadian society and the levels of government. Looking at the government's denial of responsibility for Métis peoples post-1885 resistance.

L'aanii d'ikol (year of school/grade):

Nine

Kaykwy kaa kishkayhtamihk (what is being learned/subject):

Social Studies, ELA

Li taan (time): 60 minutes

CR9.2

View, listen to, read, comprehend, and respond to a variety of texts that address identity, social responsibility, and cultural understanding. Using Métis residential school survivor stories and testimonies.

CC9.6

Create and present a variety of visual, multimedia, oral, and written texts that explore social and cultural issues. Developing creative projects based on Métis-specific experiences.

AR9.1

Analyze and reflect on ideas and experiences presented in literature and other texts. Reflecting on historical and personal narratives of Métis survivors.

RW9.1

Assess the relationship of power and authority on individuals, relationships, and communities. Analyzing how church and government power structures impacted Métis children and families.



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Niikaan lii kesyoon

Focus question:

In what ways were the Métis people specifically impacted by Residential Schools?

Taanishi aen ishi ooshihtaahk

Lesson Description:

1. MOTIVATIONAL SET/FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT: (15 MINUTES)

Prompt: “What do you know about the history of Métis people in Saskatchewan?”

Engage prior knowledge by posing this question to students.

Teacher Note: Please utilize any activity that suits your classroom such as a K-W-L chart, quick write, think-pair-share, 5-Minute-Finds etc.

2. TEACHER-LED DISCUSSION

Teacher Note: Refer to **Appendix 1** to guide your discussion. You can use it as a point of reference for yourself, read it as a group, or print off copies for student notes.

Key Takeaways:

- Before colonization, Métis communities were self-sufficient, grounded in strong cultural, land-based and family teachings.
- After the 1885 Resistance, the government refused to recognize the Métis people as Indigenous, denying them status and support.
- Despite this, many Métis children were taken into residential and church-run schools.
- Schools like Île-à-la-Crosse targeted Métis children specifically, aiming to assimilate (erase their identity).
- Île-à-la-Crosse Métis Survivors were left out of government compensation until very recently, after decades of advocacy.
- The impacts of residential schools continue today through intergenerational trauma, identity loss, and language decline.

Lii zafayr poor chi ooshitaahk ooma

(things needed to do this/
materials needed):

- Sticky notes
- Writing utensils
- **Appendixes 1, 2, 3**
- Materials for creative response

Gashkihtaan (I can do it) Statements:

- I can understand Métis-specific experiences in residential schools.
- I can recognize the parallels between the treatment of Métis and First Nations peoples within the context of assimilation.
- I can identify the injustice of the government failing to recognize the Île-à-la-Crosse Residential School.
- I can explain the historical and present-day significance of the Île-à-la-Crosse Residential School in Saskatchewan.





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3. MAIN PROCEDURES/FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT (30 MINUTES)

Survivor Testimony: (Optional) Watch: Île-à-la-Crosse Métis Residential School Documentary (17:52)
<https://youtu.be/POWjaA2wn5Y?si=xbfzXJNdGf6i6zJx>

Teacher note: This documentary does contain themes of abuse, including sexual abuse. Please use your judgement in determining if this is the right resource for your classroom. The corresponding activity focuses on Survivor statements from the documentary, while the documentary itself goes into more detail on the injustices and the fight for recognition. You can choose to show the documentary first, followed by the activity for emphasis, or to simply do the activity.

4. ACTIVITY: SILENT GALLERY WALK

Teacher Note: Refer to **Appendix 2**. Print off the quotes and cut them out individually. Paste the quotes from the Survivors around the classroom.

Distribute sticky notes to students. Have students rotate around the classroom individually, reading the quotes from the Survivors. At each stop, students will write one of three things on a sticky note:

- A comment
- A question
- An emotion they felt after reading

After visiting the stations, students can return to their seats.

Teacher Note: You decide if you want to take this further and unpack this activity as a group, or use it as formative assessment. There are 16 quotes total, you determine the number of stations that students need to visit.

5. POST ACTIVITY DISCUSSION

- What is something that stood out to you or surprised you?

Teacher Note: A talking circle is recommended for this debrief as it offers each student a solemn opportunity to respond while being held in a caring circle of other participants. Knowing your students and their family histories is deeply important for this activity.

6. CLOSING/SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT PIECE (20 MINUTES)

Creative Response

Introduce the following three activities, students choose one to complete for hand-in:

- Write a letter to a Métis residential school survivor
- Create a visual representation of Métis resilience
- Draft a social media post or a poster raising awareness of the Métis experience

Teacher Note: Refer to **Appendix 3** for the rubric.

7. OPTIONAL EXTENSIONS

- Invite a Métis Knowledge Keeper or Elder to speak to the class about reconciliation
- Examine a map of Saskatchewan and highlight key Métis communities and residential school sites
- Explore the 2018 settlement agreement with Métis survivors of Île-à-la-Crosse
- Discuss the 2025 Agreement-in-Principle [*Île-à-la-Crosse School Survivors and Canada sign Agreement-in-Principle - Canada.ca*](#)
- Examine Métis-specific Calls to Action from the TRC and the MNC (Métis National Council)



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Appendix 1:

Métis Specific Experiences in Residential Schools: Background Information

What is commonly understood about Canadian history now is Residential Schools were government-funded, church-run institutions designed to assimilate Indigenous children, including Métis, by forcibly removing them from their families and communities. Métis children were often treated as outsiders, caught between their European and Indigenous heritage, Métis people suffered from the loss of their distinct culture and languages, and various forms of abuse. While this is discussed as a significant moment of Canadian history, it is important to understand that it was not so long ago. The last Residential School closed in Saskatchewan in 1996, and many Survivors who attended them are still alive today.

Before colonial policies disrupted and attempted to erase their way of life, Métis families lived vibrant, self-sufficient lives. We thrived through buffalo hunts, river lot farming, and close-knit communities. Children learned from their Elders through teachings grounded in language, culture, and a deep connection to the land. Métis life was rooted in cooperation, strong relationships, and the blending of traditions from both First Nations and European ancestors, showing that these two worlds could exist in harmony. Métis people also created their own unique traditions, during this time period.

However, the provincial and federal governments of Canada sought to assimilate the Métis people. Essentially, the goal existed to force Métis people to give up our unique culture, language, traditions, and identity to adopt westernized customs, language, and beliefs. Métis culture, and all Indigenous cultures were, viewed by many in powerful government positions as inferior.

In Canadian history, these were some of the methods used in an effort to assimilate not only Métis people, but all Indigenous people:

- Placing children in residential or boarding schools where they were separated from their families and communities and taught to reject their Métis identity. They were not allowed to speak their language, practice their culture, wear their traditional clothes, use their given names, or return home to their families during the school year.
- Denying legal recognition or land rights, making it harder to maintain their way of life.

After the **Resistance of 1885**, led by Louis Riel, the Métis people fought against the Canadian government to defend their land, rights, and way of life - the Canadian government, frustrated with the Métis as a nation, refused to recognize them as "Indians" under the law and denied them status as Canadian citizens. As a result, Métis children were not funded to attend residential schools, meaning many Métis children were left out of the records of the schools, despite having attended. In reality, the church-run institutions still seized many Métis children. In some cases, the Church operated schools exclusively for Métis children, such as the Île-à-la-Crosse Residential Boarding School, independent of federal oversight. The intent was clear: by forcibly removing Métis children from their homes, language, and traditions, they aimed to erase Métis identity and assimilate them into settler society. This process deeply harmed families and disrupted the cultural, social, spiritual and emotional fabric of the Métis people. In addition, when the provincial and federal governments recognized the harmful legacy of residential schools and compensated the Survivors, the Métis Survivors of the Île-à-la-Crosse Residential Boarding School were not acknowledged. That recognition came only earlier in 2025, after a decades long battle and resorting to legal action.



Truth & Reconciliation Day

Experiences in Residential Schools

The legacy of residential schools reaches far beyond those who were taken. Survivors returned to their communities as strangers, disconnected from their language, culture, and families. This disconnection was not just their burden to carry but one passed down to their children and grandchildren, creating cycles of intergenerational trauma that still ripple through Métis families today. This experience speaks to the intricacy of the Métis story where national trauma weaves into personal histories. Many Métis youth today struggle with identity, feeling a sense of loss, shame or confusion about their heritage. The decline of the Michif language is another reflection of this disconnection. Yet, despite these challenges, Métis communities are resilient. Métis are working to heal, reclaim their culture, and restore what was taken.

It is important to not tell history in a way that suggests Indigenous people passively accepted assimilation policies and practices. Indigenous peoples have always been strong, resistant, and resilient to assimilation policies and mistreatment. It is a misconception that parents, families, and children never fought back or tried to resist the schools. There is an entire section of the Truth & Reconciliation Commission devoted to these stories and the stories of Métis specific experiences in the schools.





Truth & Reconciliation Day Experiences in Residential Schools

Appendix 2:

Survivor Quotes from the Île-à-la-Crosse Métis Residential School Documentary

"The agenda was to take the culture out of the child." **Louis Gardiner**

"The goal was to take the savage away from us, and then try to make us a little more human."

Robert Merasty

"I used to like going to school, I wanted to learn, but not to be treated mean." **Max Morin**

"The rules were no different than the Indian Residential School." **Louis Gardiner**

"When my grandkids come over I always hug them and tell them I love them, because for 10 months out of the year, I never heard I love you." **Emile Janvier**

"Beauval is right next door to us. A lot of our Survivors actually went to both places. Same thing with supervisors, they exchanged from both places. Beauval got recognized, and we didn't" **Louis Gardiner**

"Île-à-la-Crosse is the people. It's those that live here, those that have been here, and those that come home to Île-à-la-Crosse. It's a place we call home. It's loving, its kind, but it does have its pains and its sorrows."

Dorothy Dubrule

"Once we were inside the institution, everything changed for us. We lost our names, we were never called by name. We had a number." **Robert Merasty**

"My number was number 44. I had to remember that number. If I didn't, then there was consequences to deal with."

Robert Merasty

"They came in, and their impact was to change us. To change our way of thinking about God. They wanted us to believe what they believed." **Dorothy Dubrule**

"We lost our parents. Our parents lost their children. And so a lot of them became alcoholics. There was a lot of alcohol that went around the community. That impacted all of us." **Dorothy Dubrule**

"My number was 66. I had a little box, you call them lockers now. My number was written there and that's where we kept our clothes and everything that we owned." **Max Morin**

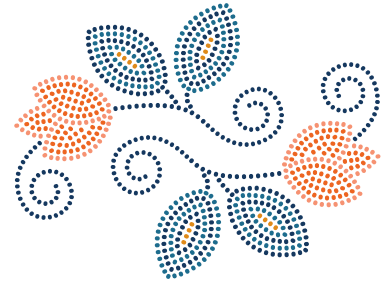
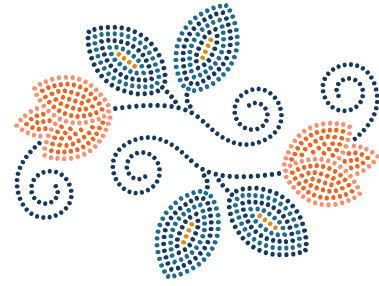
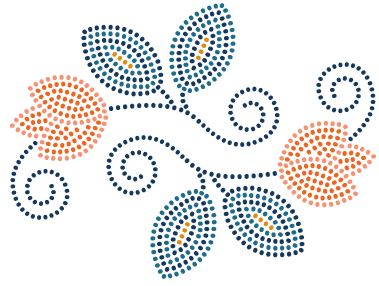
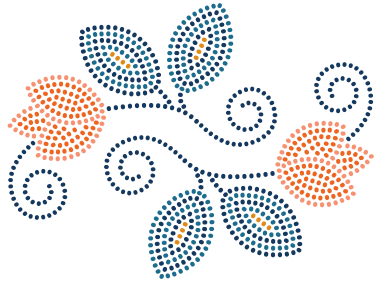
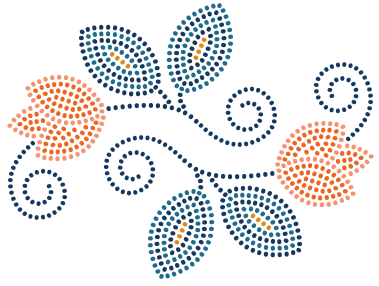
"We couldn't talk our language, that was all we knew, the Michif language. You couldn't even say Tansi (hello), you'd get strapped. Every day we would get strapped if we talked our language." **Lawrence Morin**

"I never really knew my family, my mom and dad, because of boarding school." **Emile Janvier**

"We had nothing to play with in the yard. Not even a ball, not even a football or anything. We never went to town or anything, we don't buy nothing, we never get out of the yard. This is a true story. It's just like jail where I went to school." **Pat Desjarlais**

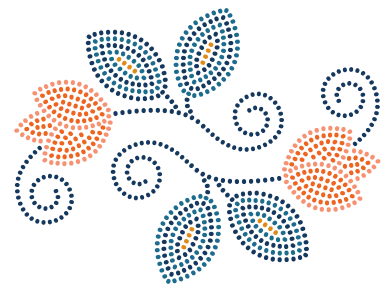
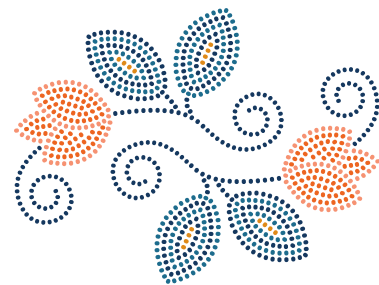
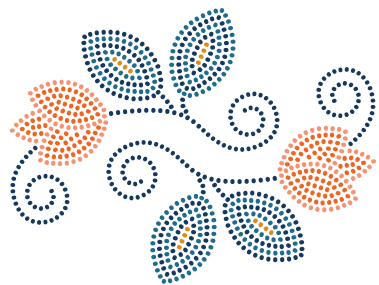
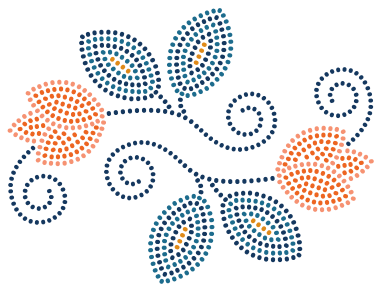
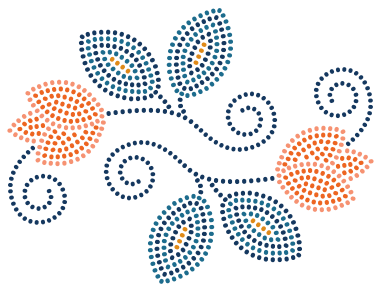
"I was abused at one time, but I was so young that in my mind I try to figure out what actually happened. It's like I had suppressed it for so long that I can't even make a figure of who it was." **Antoinette LaFleur**

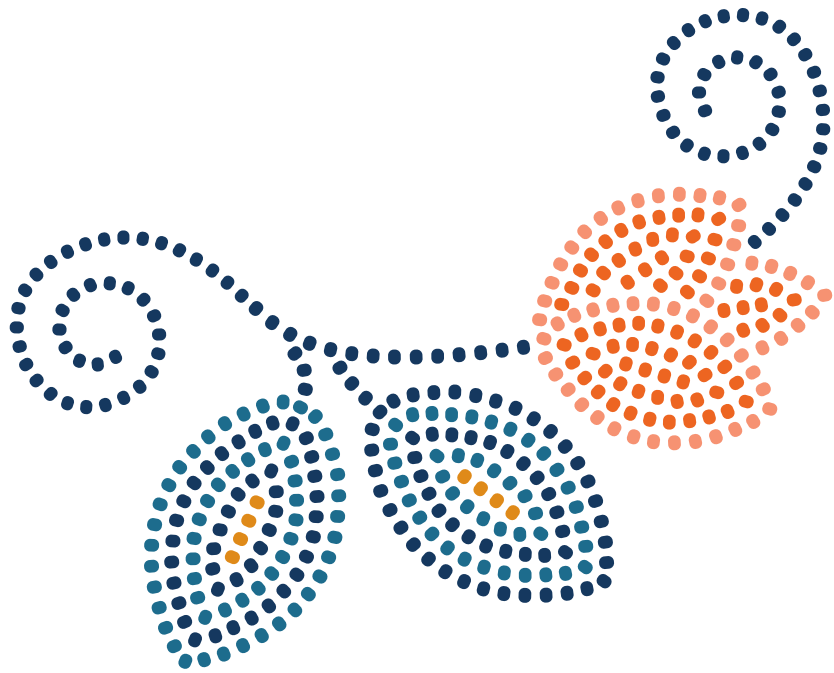




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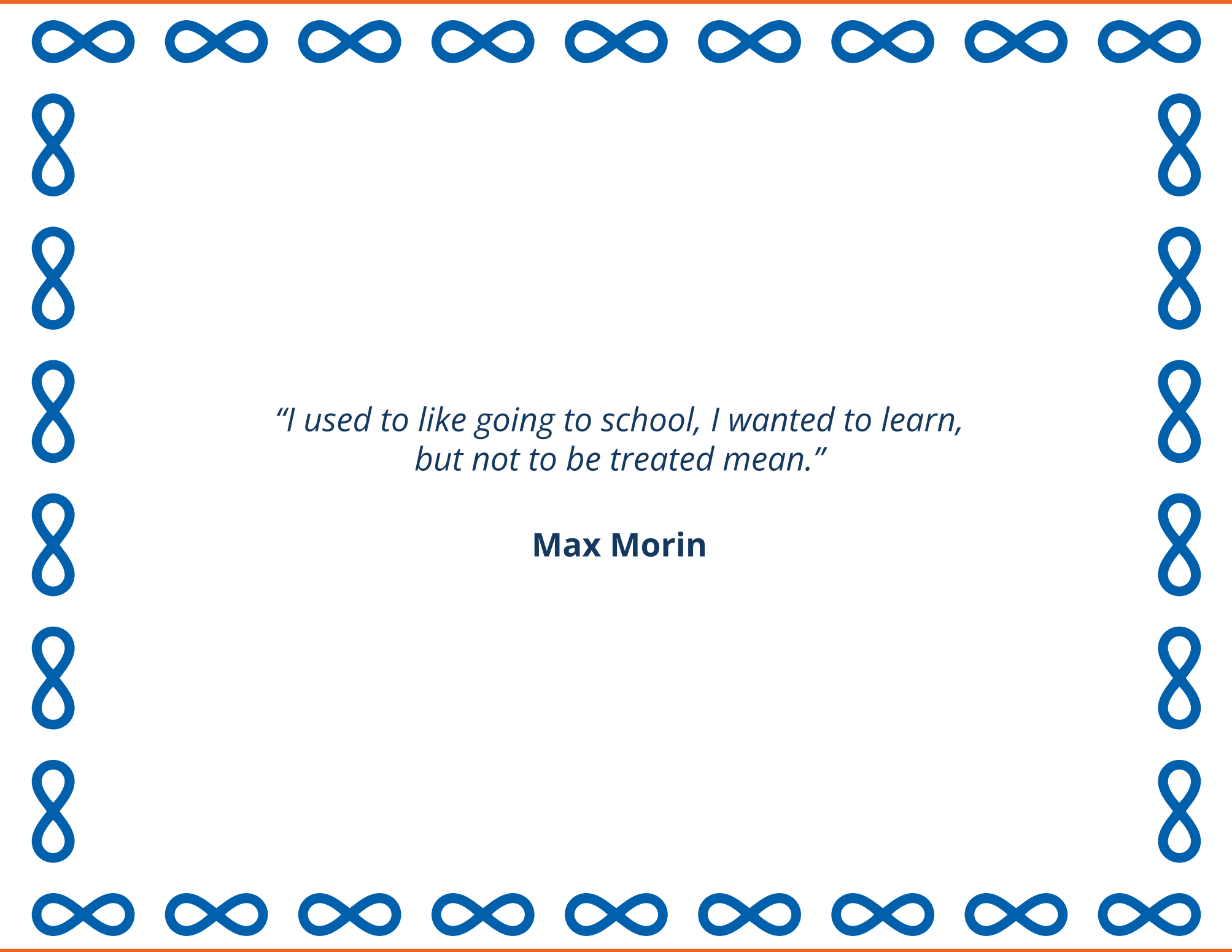




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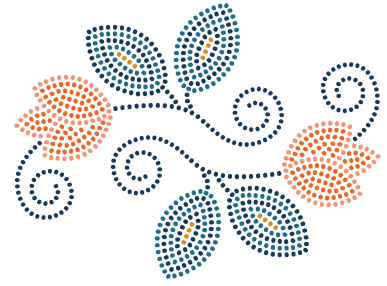
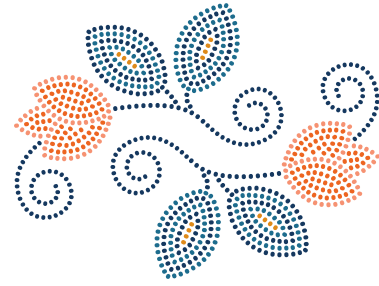
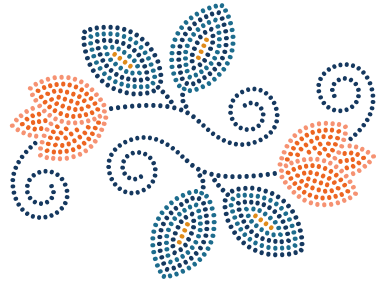
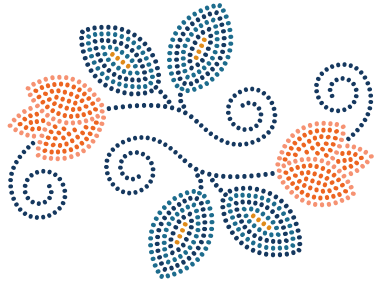
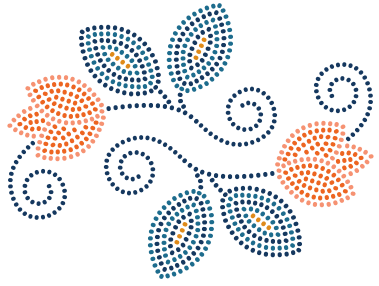
Dorthy Dubrule





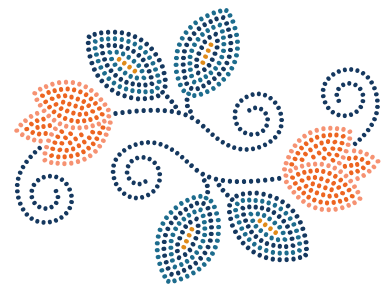
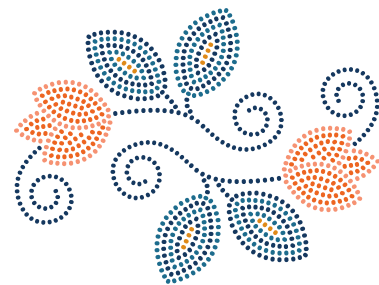
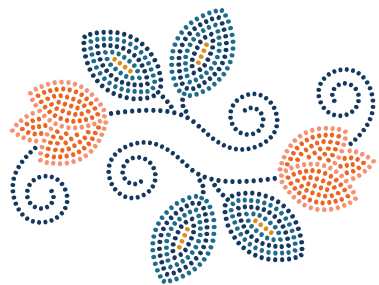
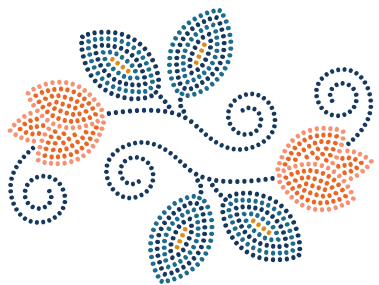
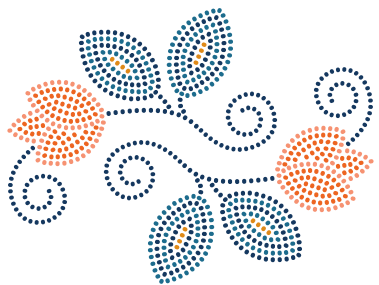
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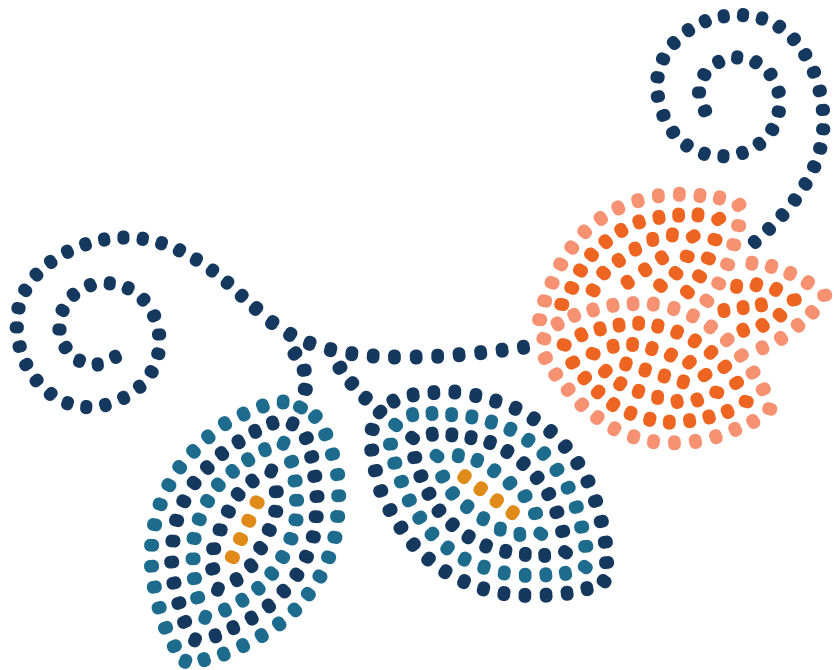
Max Morin



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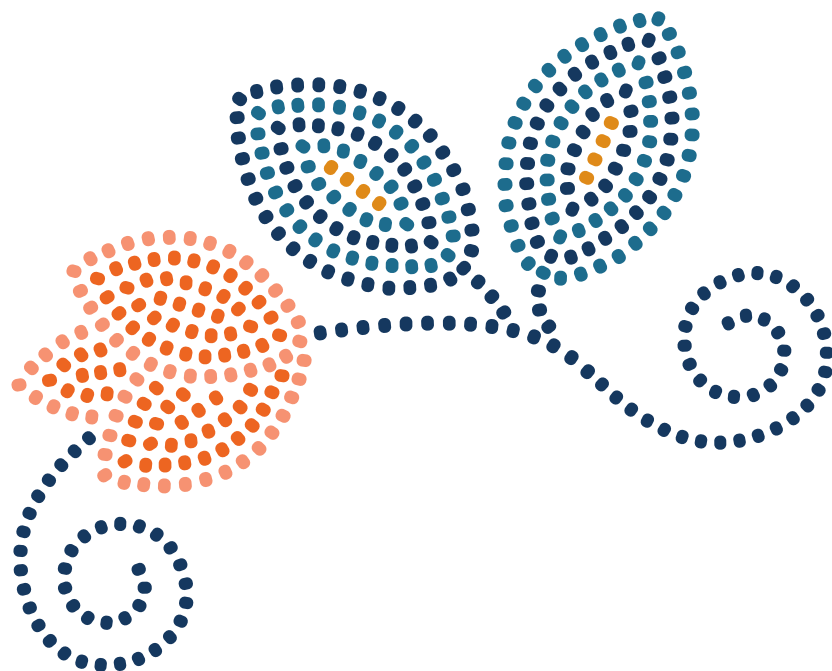
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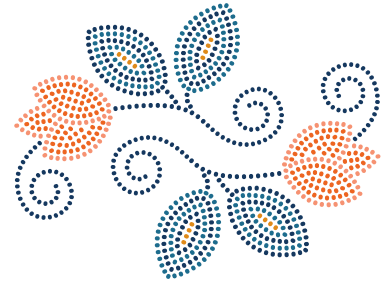
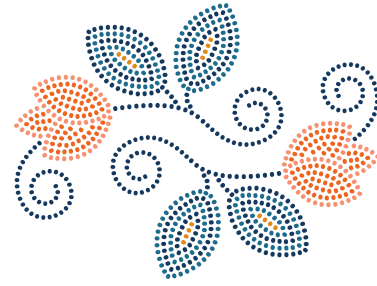
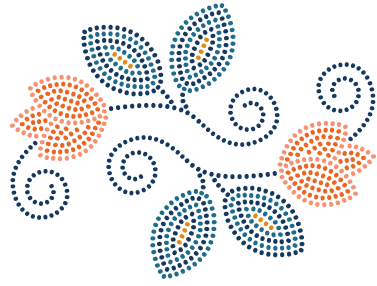
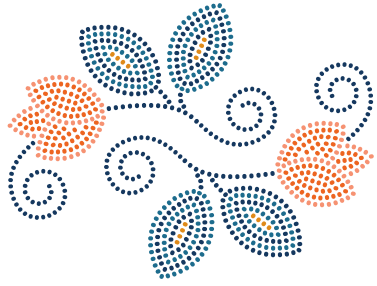
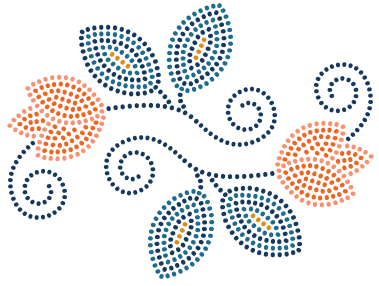
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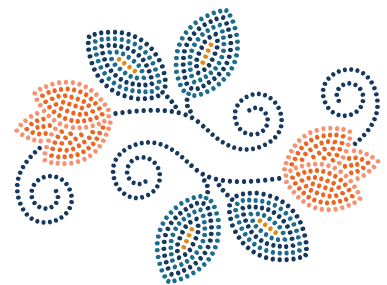
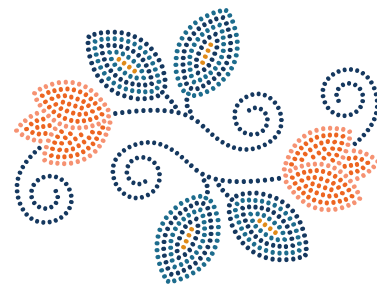
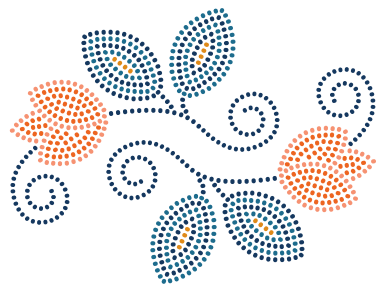
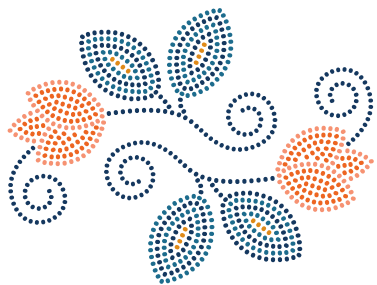
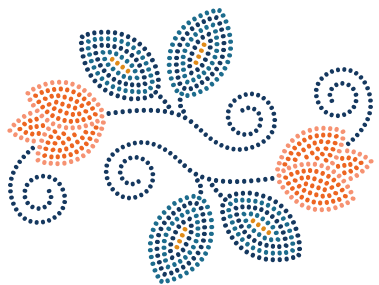
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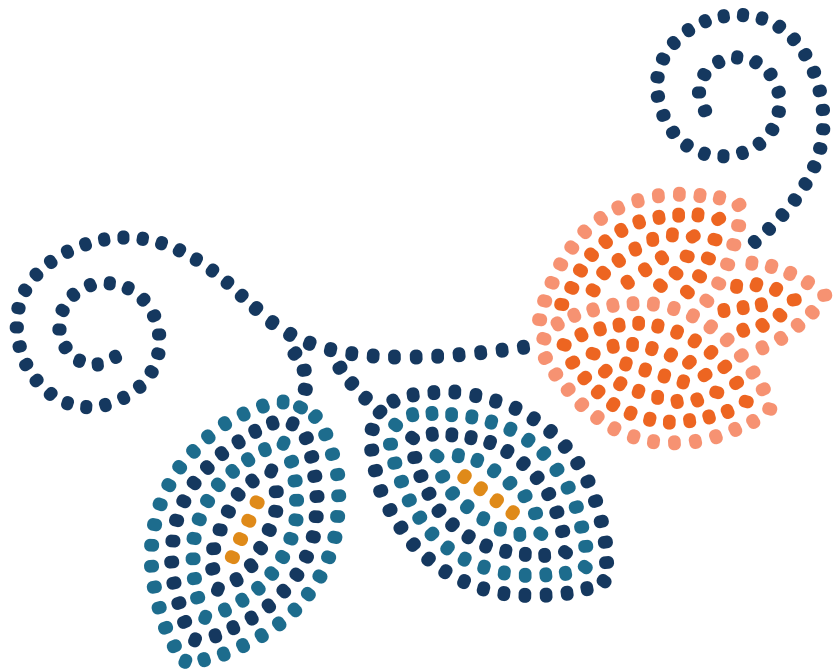
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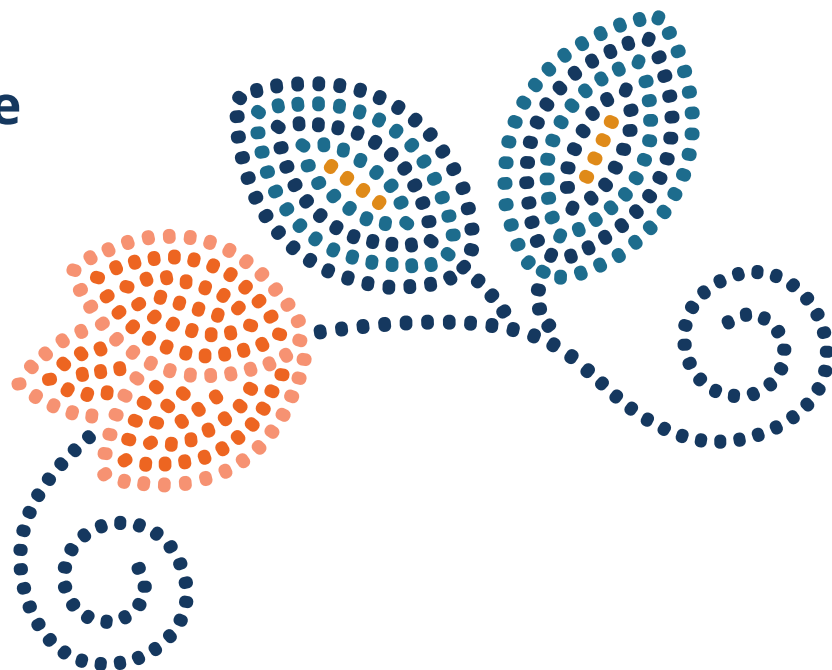
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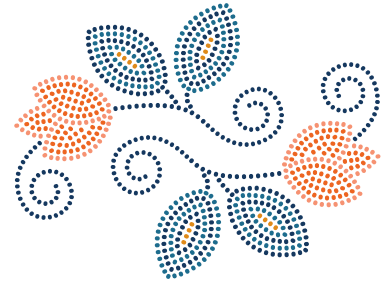
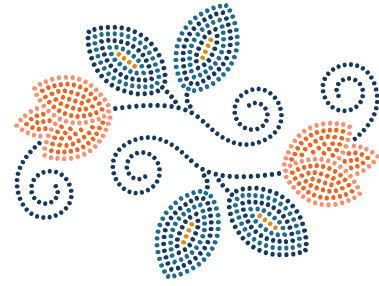
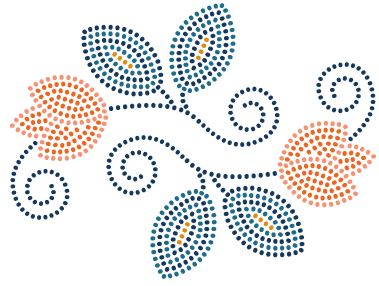
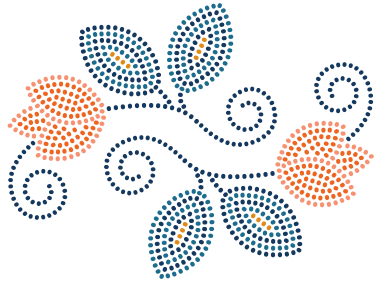
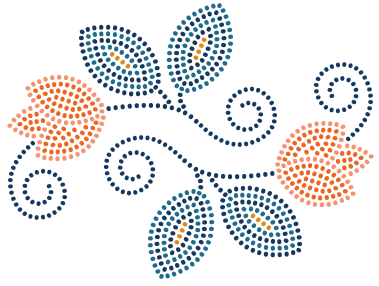
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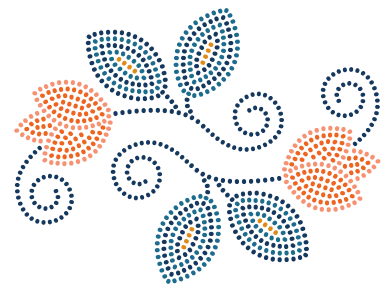
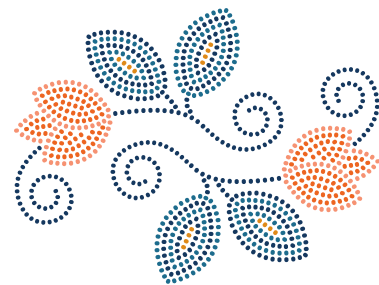
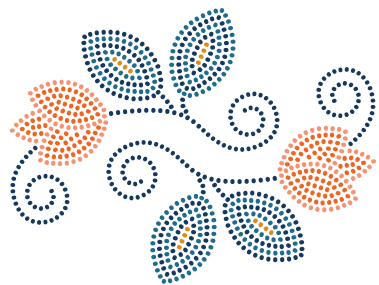
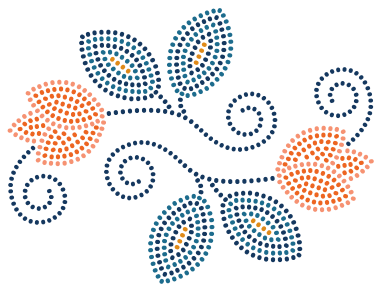
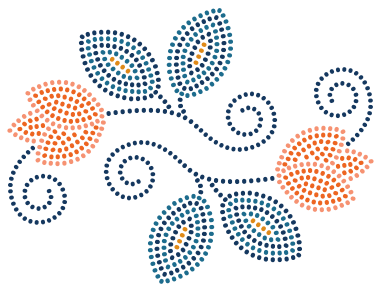
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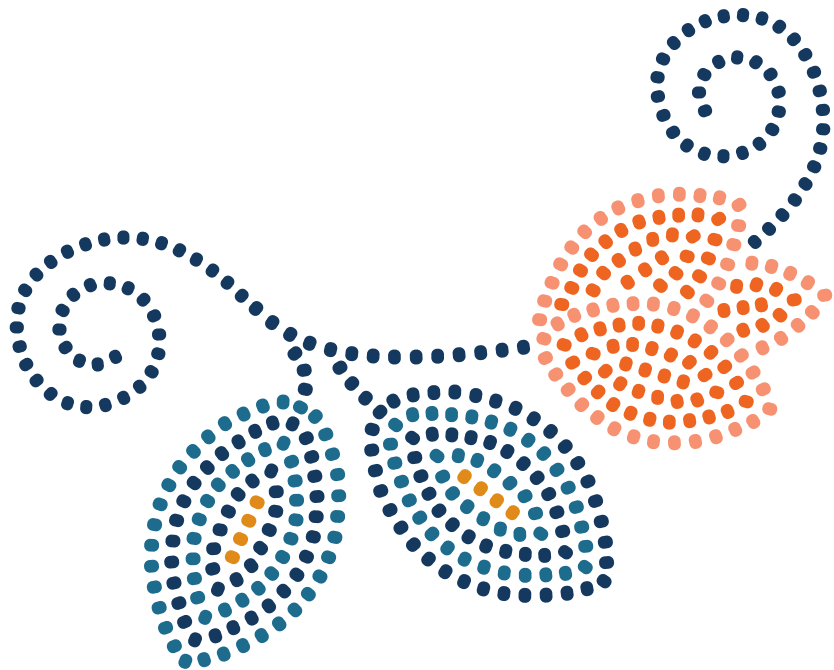
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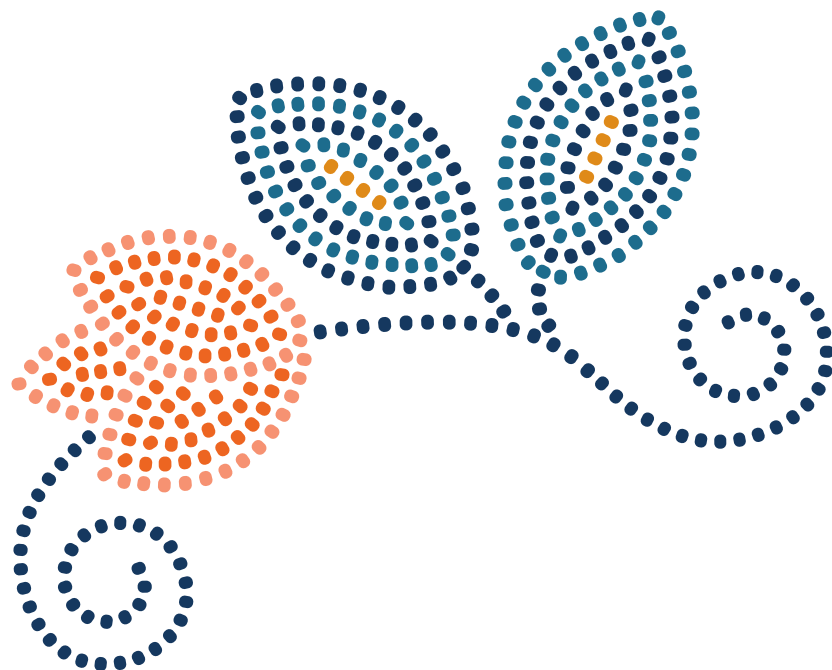
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because of boarding school."*

Emile Janvier






"We had nothing to play with in the yard. Not even a ball, not even a football or anything. We never went to town or anything, we don't buy nothing, we never get out of the yard. This is a true story. It's just like jail where I went to school."

Pat Desjarlais





"I was abused at one time, but I was so young that in my mind I try to figure out what actually happened. It's like I had suppressed it for so long that I can't even make a figure of who it was."

Antoinette LaFleur



Truth & Reconciliation Day Experiences in Residential Schools

Appendix 3:

Criteria	Level 4 Excellent (4)	Level 3 Proficient (3)	Level 2 Developing (2)	Level 1 Beginning (1)
Understanding of Métis-Specific Experiences (SS9 – IN9.2, RW9.1)	Demonstrates deep and insightful understanding of Métis-specific experiences in residential schools. Connections to historical and social context are thorough and thoughtful.	Demonstrates clear understanding of Métis-specific experiences with some relevant connections to historical context.	Demonstrates partial or surface-level understanding. Limited connections to historical or social context.	Demonstrates minimal or inaccurate understanding of Métis-specific experiences or history.
Creativity & Expression (ELA9 – CC9.6)	Response is original, compelling, and powerfully communicates emotions and ideas. The chosen format enhances the message.	Response is creative and clear; the chosen format effectively communicates ideas.	Response shows some creativity but may lack clarity or impact. Format may not fully suit the message.	Response is unclear or lacks creativity. Format chosen does not support communication of the message.
Empathy & Emotional Impact (ELA9 – CR9.2, AR9.1)	Demonstrates deep empathy and emotional insight into Métis survivors' experiences. Engages the audience meaningfully.	Shows empathy and some emotional insight. Audience can connect with the message.	Some empathy shown, but emotional depth is limited or underdeveloped.	Lacks empathy or emotional engagement with the topic.
Communication & Clarity (ELA9 – CC9.6)	Ideas are clearly and effectively communicated. Structure, language, and tone are appropriate and polished.	Ideas are mostly clear. Structure and language support understanding. Some minor errors.	Communication is uneven; ideas may be unclear or disorganized in places. Frequent errors may distract.	Communication is unclear; language and structure significantly hinder understanding.
Connection to Focus Question <i>"How were the Métis specifically impacted by residential schools?"</i>	Thoroughly addresses the focus question with detailed evidence from the lesson (e.g., documentary, testimony).	Addresses the focus question with supporting details.	Some attempt to answer the focus question, but lacks development or supporting evidence.	Little or no connection to the focus question is made.





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Appendix 4:

Heritage Michif Pronunciation Guide

English	Michif	Pronunciation
<i>Title</i>	aen shinihkatayk	ay SHIN-ick-a-TAKE
<i>Grade ("year of school")</i>	l'aanii d'ikol	la-KNEE dee-COL
<i>Subject ("explaining what is being learned")</i>	Kaykwy kaa kishkayhtamihk	cake-WHY kah kish-KAY-tuh-MICK
<i>Topic ("specifically what we're talking about")</i>	ispray kaa piikishkwatamihk	iss-PRAY kah PEEK-ish-KWAH-tuh-MICK
<i>Overview ("talking about what is being learned")</i>	wiihtamakayhk kaykwy kaa kishkayhtamihk	wee-TUM-a-CAKE cake-WHY kah kish-KAY-tuh-MICK
<i>Assessment ("How it will be measured")</i>	taanishi aen tipahamihk	taan-SHIH ay tip-AH-ha-MICK
<i>Time</i>	li taan	lih TAH
<i>Curriculum Outcomes ("what should happen")</i>	kaykwy chi kii ishpaiyhk	cake-WHY chih KEY ish-pah-YICK
<i>I Can Statement ("I can do it")</i>	Gashkihtaan	Gahsh-kih-TAHN
<i>Materials Needed ("Things needed to do this")</i>	lii zafayr poor chi ooshitaahk ooma	lee za-FAIR pohr chih oh-sh-TAHCK oh-MA
<i>Lesson Description ("How to do it")</i>	taanishi aen ishi ooshihtaahk	taan-SHIH ay ishih oh-sh-TAHCK

*Capital letters indicate stressed syllables