Michif – English Transcript:

Elders Rita Ducharme and Norman Fleury talking about language, identity, and language shift

Literal translation:

[xxx] Piikishkwaychik,	**Koohkoom Rose**	**namakaykway**	**Koohkoom Pchit Rose**	**namoo ahpoo**
[xxx] As they spoke,	(and) Grandma Rose	nothing	Grandma Pchit Rose	not even

aen moo	**kii kashkihtawuk**	**piikishkwaychik**	**aan Aanglay**	**Wiiyawow.**
one word	they could do it	speaking	in English	they/them

Namoo	**kii kashkihtawuk hmm,**	**Pchit Rose**	**aykwaa?**
no/not	they could do it, hmm,	Pchit Rose	too?

Toot	**lii vyay**[1]
All/every	the old ladies.

Apray	**kii maachi kashkihtowuk**	**lii zaanfaan**	**kii kishinahamaakowuk**	**zhi paans.**
After	They started to be able to do it	the children	they taught them	I think.

Apishiish, yeah.
A little bit, yeah.

Foulay	**kitootachik**	**aan Aanglay**	**lii pchi zaanfaan.**	**Aatiht**
It was necessary	talking to them	in English	the little kids.	Some (people)

namoo gii maachi…	**gii waanihkewuk;**	**Namoo gii waanihkaywuk.**	**Namoo ahpoo kii kashkihtowuk**	**chi piikishkwaychik.**
did not start to…	they forgot;	They did not forget.	They were not even able	to speak.

[1] The Michif equivalent of "Elders" is **lii vyeu moond** or **lii vyeu pi lii vyay**, literally "The old people; the old men and women" In Michif culture, being called an "old person" is not a bad thing, as it means you have lived long enough to see and learn so much that you can now help younger people navigate the complexities of life.

Leu paraan	**namoo**	**aykooshi**	**kii piikishkwayiw;**[2]	**Kii waani…kii waanihtawuk**
Their parents	no/not	like that	(people) spoke	They…they lost it.

Ahpoo mii seur,	**'moo**[3] **ahpoo kashkitowuk**	**chi piikishwaychik.**	**Apishiish nishtoohtamwuk,**
Even my sisters,	they aren't even able	to speak.	They understand a little bit,

Apishiish?
A little bit?

Mhm, yaenk apishiish.
Mhm, only a little bit.

Niiyanaan[4]	**ita kaa kii paynihtawakiyaahk**	**daan la [xxx], aen pchit farm**	**kaa kii ayaahk –**
We	(the place) where we came to be born	in the [xxx], a little farm	that we had –

Kiiyapich	**mii niveu**	**tipayhtamwuk,**	**anima la pchit farm –**
Still	my nephews	they own it,	that little farm –

yaenk aan St. Lazare	**kii piikishkwaywuk**	**aan Michif**	**aykooshpii.**
Only in St. Lazare	they spoke	in Michif	at that time.

Maaka,	**[xxx] noohkoomipan**	**– maamaa omaamaawa –**	**namoo gaa kii kashkitinaan**
But,	[xxx] my deceased grandma	– my mom's mom –	we could not

[2] The form **piikishkwayiw(a)** signifies that the speaker is distinguishing between two different third-person referents (i.e., the children vs. the children's parents); in linguistics, this is called *obviation***.** but is perhaps best thought of as the "fourth person".

[3] **'moo** represents a contracted form of **namooya**, 'no; not', which is reflected in the English gloss as *aren't.*

[4] Michif, like Cree, has two "we" forms: **niiyanaan** which means "we, but not you, the listener" and **kiiyanaan**, which mean "we, including you, the listener."

ishinaaht	**chi piikishkwayaahk.**	**Niiyanaan**	**i foulay**
see them	speaking	We (but not you)	had to

chi kitootayaahk	**aan Michif.**	**Namoo kii piikishkwew.**	**l'Aanglay**
we speak to her	in Michif.	She didn't speak	English.

Namoo aan Fraansay	**gii kitootikonaan**	**"Namoo kiiyawow lii Kanayaen," itwew.**	**"Lii Michif ooma kiiyawow."**
Not in French	she addressed us.	"You're not French," she says.	"You're Michifs."

"Maachihkashooyayhk	**aykwaa."**	**"Taanishi…taanayhki**	**aykooshi**
"Start acting that way	also."	"How…why	like that

kaa tootamayk	**aykwaa ihkashooyayk?"**	**"l'Aanglay ihkashooyayhk**	**oobaendoon**
that you're behaving	and acting?"	"Acting English	or

lii Kanayaen ihkashooyayhk?	**Lii Michif ooma kiiyawow"**	**ditikonaan.**
acting French?	You're Michifs"	she says to us.

Mooshoom	**wiishta,**	**Mooshoom Pete.**
Grandpa	him too,	Grandpa Pete.

Aykooshi	**kii itikowow**	**wiishta?**
Like that	he spoke to you all	him too?

Aenhaenk.	**"ka kischiitayimoon;**	**kaaya**	**waanihkay**
Uh huh.	"You are proud;	don't	forget

ta laang."	**Mhm.**
your language.”	Mhm.

Kaahkiyow li moond,	**la plupaar di moond**	**kaa paykiiwookaychik**	**kiikiwahk**
Everybody,	most people	who came to visit	at your place

maana kimooshoom	**pi, ayi,**	**koohkoom**	**yaenk aan Michif**
generally, your grandpa	and, well,	your grandma	only in Michif

kii piikishkwaywuk	**aykooshpii.**	**Namoo…**	**Site raar,**
they spoke	in the past.	no…	It was rare,

lii visiteur	**pahkaan aen laang**	**kaa paypiikishkwaychik**	**aykootay kaa wiikiyayhk**
visitors	a different language	that they came speaking	there where you all lived

kiiyawow.	**Maaka**	**kaa paypiihtikwakoyayhk**	**awiyuk aan Fraansay**
you guys.	But	as s/he brought you all in	someone in French

kimooshoomipan	**kii kashkitow**	**wiiya.**
your deceased grandpa	he could do it	him.

Mhm, Koohkoom	**wiishta**
Mhm, (my) grandma	him/her too.

Koohkoom	**aan Fraansay**	**kii piikishkwaychik.**
Your grandma	in French	they spoke.

Mhm. Nimaamaa wiishta	**apishiish kii piikishkwew**	**li Fraansay**	**wiishtawow.**

Mhm. My mom, her too	a little bit she spoke	French	them too.

Li Fraansay	**apishiish?**
French	a little bit?

Mhm.
mhm.

Ayish	**site**	**payek leu laang**	**anima,**
Because	it was	one of their languages	that one,

wiiyawow	**aan Fraansay**	**kaa piikishkwaychik.**	**Maaka l'Aanglay,**
them	in French	that they spoke.	But English,

zhamayn	**kii paypayhten**	**l'Aanglay.**
never	you came to hear	English.

Noo, noo.
No, no.

Ninoohkoomipan,	**'moo ahpoo**	**aen moo**	**gii kitootow**
My deceased grandpa	not even	a word	I spoke to him

aan Aanglay	**niiya.**
in English	me.

Niishta -
same here -

'maahpoo	payek	aen moo.	Ayish
not even	one; single	a word.	Because

ga kii laensultiin.	Ga kii wiihtamat:	"Taanayhki	anima
it would insult him.	He would tell me:	“Why	that

kaa piikishkwayen	aan Aanglay?"	Taanishi ishpayin	kaa kii itik?
that you’re speaking	in English?”	what is happening	that s/he says that to me?

Akooshchi	namooya	gii kitootawuk.	Nimaamaa,
So; therefore	no/not	I spoke to them.	My mom

site jifaraan,	nimaamaa.	Lii deu laang	gii kitootow
it was different,	my mom.	The two languages	I spoke to her

nimaamaa ipan.	Aashkow	aan Fraansay miina	kii piikishkwew.
my deceased mom.	Sometimes	in French too	she spoke.

Maaka	la plupaar di taan	site aan Michif.	Baendoon…
	most of the time	it was in Michif.	Or…

Kaa paykiiwookayt	awiyuk	lii zaanfaan	ooshishimak,
When someone came to visit	someone	children	grandchildren,

aan Aanglay	**kii piikishkwew.**
in English	she spoke.

Polii	**atikway.**
it is polite	I suppose.

Wii.	**Akooshchi**	**Paahkaan**	**gii waapahtaynaan [xxx],**
Yes.	So…	it is/was different	we saw it,

ootshapahtamaahk	**paahkaan.**	**Aykwaa**	**maachi waanihtayaahk,**
as we foresaw it	it is/was different.	And	we were starting to lose it,

akooshpii,	**nutr laang.**	**Gii mooshihtanaan**	**aashay.**
at that time,	our language.	We felt it	already.

Aashay. Ayi	**l'ikol**	**kaa itoohtaychik**	**lii zaanfaan**
Already. Well/hmm…	(at) school	that they went	children

l'Aanglay	**kii piikishkwaywuk.**	**Kaa kiiwaychik**	**aykwaa**
English	they spoke.	When they came home	and

l'Aanglay	**akooshchi**	**atikway.**	**[xxx] Nutr laang**
English	so; therefore	I suppose.	[xxx] Our language

kaykaach toot	**kii waaniihkanaan, eh?**
almost all	we have forgotten, eh?

[xxx] taapway	**atikway.**
[xxx] that's true	I suppose.

Dynamic Translation:

RD: [sound cut out]…speaking, and Koohkoom Rose, they couldn't speak a lick of English.

NF: They couldn't eh? Not even Pchit Rose?

RD: None of the Old Ones could.

NF: Once they learned to speak English, they taught their children I guess.

RD: A little, yeah.

NF: They had to speak English with their kids. Some of them (the kids) never started to…it was as if they forgot [Michif], but they didn't forget, they just weren't able to speak it. Their parents never spoke it to them, so it was lost.

RD: Even my sisters, they can't even speak [Michif]. They understand a little bit.

NF: A little bit?

RD: Mhm, just a little bit.

NF: The place where we were born, we had a (?) little farm. My nephews still own it, the little farm where we were born. All the Michifs in St. Lazare only spoke Michif back then.

But my maternal grandmother, we couldn't speak anything else with her. We had to address her in Michif; she didn't speak English, and she never addressed us in French (even though she could speak it). She'd say "You're not French, you're Michifs, start acting like it. How…Why would you act as if you're English or French? You guys are Michif."

RD: My grandpa (was like that) too, Grandpa Pete.

NF: He also (?) like that?

RD: Mhm. "Be proud, don't forget your language."

RD & NF: Mhm.

NF: Everybody…most people who visited your house, like your grandpa and, well, your grandma, spoke only in Michif in those days.

RD: Right, only in Michif.

NF: There were no…it was rare for visitors to come who spoke a different language, around where you guys lived. But, if someone welcomed you in French, your dad, er, deceased grandpa could speak French.

RD: Mhm, grandma too.

NF: Your grandma too, they both spoke French?

RD: Mhm. My mom could too, a little bit; the three of them could.

NF: A bit of French?

RD: Mhm.

NF: Because it was one of their languages, your family spoke French.

RD: Mhm.

NF: But English, you never happened to hear English, did you?

RD: No, no.

NF: My grandpa, I couldn't even use one word of English with him.

RD: Me either…

NF: Not a single word, because he would consider it an insult. He'd say: "Why are you speaking English? What's going on with you?" So, I never spoke (English) to them.

But with my mom, it was different. Sometimes I spoke French with her, but for the most part we spoke Michif. Or, if some kids came to visit, grandkids, she'd speak English.

RD: Just to be polite, I guess?

NF: Right. So, from that point we could see that things were different, that we were starting to lose our language. We could already sense it.

RD: Already. Well, kids that were going to school were speaking English. When they came home, then, [they would continue with] English, I guess that's the reason. [xxx] almost all of us have forgotten our language, eh?

NF: [xxx] that's true, I suppose.