Figurative Language in Michif

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ABSTRACT

The present study is a qualitative analysis of figurative language in Michif. Michif is an endangered and understudied Indigenous language of the Métis/Michif people, now found mainly in the Canadian prairie provinces and the state of North Dakota. It is a contact language two primary source languages: Plains Cree and Michif French. Much of the research on Michif continues to increase, much of it focuses on the areas of phonology, syntax, and morphology, leaving a knowledge gap regarding semantics and pragmatics. The purpose of this study is to address that knowledge gap by providing an overview of figurative language in Michif, including conceptual metaphors, similes, and metonymical expressions. The major research question is: What kind of figurative (i.e., non-literal) expressions exist in Michif, and how are they formulated? The results of the study are divided into broad categories such as animal similes, conceptual metaphors based on body-internal and body-external experiences, and expressions whose figurativeness relies on manipulating the grammatical animacy of nouns or verbs. A secondary aim of the study is to identify whether certain expressions may have been inherited from Plains Cree or Michif French, or whether they may be novel Michif expressions; while a great deal of figurative language in Michif appears to have been influenced by its ancestral languages, there exist both lexical and semantic differences between Michif and its sources languages with respect to certain figurative expressions. This study provides a starting point for future research into semantics in Michif.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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To my supervisor, Dr. Olga Lovick, your initial support and help with networking is what allowed this thesis research to come together. It is thanks to you that I was able to connect with Brousse – and Chantale – in the first place. Words cannot express how much I appreciate your down-to-earth guidance and sincere support, especially when I was confused about whether I could even go through with this research project.

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<td>AF</td>
<td>abstract final</td>
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<td>ANIM</td>
<td>animate noun</td>
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<td>BEN</td>
<td>benefactive</td>
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<td>causative</td>
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<td>conjunct</td>
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<td>COND</td>
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<td>copula</td>
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<td>DEF</td>
<td>definite</td>
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<td>DET</td>
<td>determiner</td>
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<tr>
<td>DISTR</td>
<td>distributive</td>
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<tr>
<td>EPEN</td>
<td>epenthesis (sound insertion)</td>
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<tr>
<td>EXCL</td>
<td>exclusive</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>feminine noun</td>
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<tr>
<td>FUT</td>
<td>future</td>
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<tr>
<td>GNZR</td>
<td>generalizer (non-specific goal)</td>
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<td>HAB</td>
<td>habitual action</td>
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<td>IMP</td>
<td>imperative</td>
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<td>inanimate noun</td>
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<td>inchoative</td>
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<td>INCL</td>
<td>inclusive</td>
</tr>
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<td>IND</td>
<td>independent order (main clauses/indicative)</td>
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<td>INDF</td>
<td>indefinite</td>
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<td>INV</td>
<td>inverse (switch reference)</td>
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<td>intransitivizer</td>
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<td>masculine noun</td>
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<td>negation particle</td>
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<td>nominalizer</td>
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<td>object</td>
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<td>perfective</td>
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<td>stem form of a verb</td>
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<td>topic</td>
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<td>TSL</td>
<td>translocative</td>
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<td>VAI</td>
<td>animate intransitive verb</td>
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<td>VTA</td>
<td>animate transitive verb</td>
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<tr>
<td>VTI</td>
<td>inanimate transitive verb</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>inanimate or indefinite subject</td>
</tr>
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<td>2</td>
<td>second person</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>third person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>other third person (e.g., “she hit him”)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
TURTLE MOUNTAIN SPELLING KEY

The pronunciation guide below indicates how certain letters and combinations of letters are pronounced; the letters are followed by International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) transcriptions¹ and example Michif words. It must be noted that these are approximations, as there may be differences among speakers/communities. For example, some speakers may pronounce the question marker *chee* with a nasalized vowel, whereas others may pronounce it without nasalization (B. Flammand, personal communication, July 9, 2022). Furthermore, not every letter is listed in the spelling key; letters not listed below follow conventional English pronunciation (e.g., the letter ‘g’ is always pronounced /ɡ/, the letter ‘t’ is always pronounced /t/, and so forth). Not every letter combination listed below occurs in the data, but the list is as complete as possible for the sake of readers who may wish to look at the Turtle Mountain Dictionary (TMD).

Readers may notice some sound overlap or inconsistencies with this spelling system, a number of which are discussed by Rhodes (2013). For example, the Michif translation for ‘good’ may be rendered as *boon* or *boun* under different dictionary entries, and the letter combination *ou-* itself may be pronounced /ʊ/, /u/ or /o/ depending on the word and/or speaker. In spite of these inconsistencies, the Turtle Mountain spelling conventions are used throughout this thesis because the TMD uses this system and it is also the most familiar to Brousse Flammand, the speaker who was interviewed for this study.

¹ Readers who are unfamiliar with IPA symbols may wish to visit Wikipedia’s IPA vowel and consonant chart pages, as they both contain audio samples to help familiarize the symbol-to-sound correspondence.
a - /a/ as in pakamaha ‘hit’ /pakamaha/

ae - /æ/ or /a:/ as in taesh ‘spot’ /tæʃ; /e/ as in nimistawtaen ‘I’m sorry’ /nɪmɪhtaten/

aw - /a:/ as in tawnshi ‘how’ /tɑːnʃi/ or /a/ as is lawng ‘language’ /lɑːŋ/

ay - /e:/ as in pimouhtay ‘walk’ /pɪmohˈteː/

ayw – /eː/ as in shashkitayw ‘s/he ignites it’ /ʃaʃkɪtəw/

e - /ɛ/ as in bet ‘stupid’ /bɛt/

ee - /iː/ as in keeshpin ‘if’ /kɪʃpən/

eu - /juː/ as in cheu ‘tail’ /tʃuː/

i - /ɪ/ as in pishchi ‘accidentally’ /pɪʃki/.

n - /n/ in Algonquian or English words; in French-origin words, word-final n indicates nasalization on the preceding vowel, e.g., la maen ‘hand’ /la mɛː/ (except for the singular indefinite feminine determiner, en, which is pronounced /eːn/)

nn - indicates word-final /n/ rather than vowel nasalization in French-origin words, as in rasinn ‘root’ /rɑːsɪn/

o - /ɔ/ as in portray ‘picture’ /pɔːrtrɛ/

oo - /ʊ/ as in koutoo ‘knife’ /kʊtʊ/ or /u/ as in roozh ‘red’ /ruːʒ/

ou - /ʌ/ as in atoushkay ‘work’ /ətʃʊskɛl/; /ɔ/ as in koutoo ‘knife’ /kʊtʊ/; /oː/ as in pikou-ishpee ‘whenever’ /pɪkʊɨʃpi/.

oe, ueu - /œ/ as in boer ‘butter’ /bʊər/

ow - /aw/ as in pahkihitnow ‘discharge’ /pahkihtnəw/

s - /s/ in French and most Cree elements; may be realized as /h/ in Cree words where it occurs before /t/, as in nimistawtaen ‘I’m sorry’ /nɪmɪhtaten/

u - /ʊ/ as in pashikoowuk ‘they get up’ /pɑʃɪkʊwʊk/.

uy - /ʌj/ as in kaykwuy ‘what’ /kækwuːj/

y - /j/ as in ni-miyo-ayawn ‘I’m doing well’ /nɪ-mɪjɔː-ajəːn/

zh - /ʒ/ as in roozh ‘red’ /ruːʒ/
1. INTRODUCTION

The goal of this thesis is to analyze metaphors and semantic creativity in the Michif language through the framework of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) as developed by Lakoff and Johnson (2003/1980). Michif is an Indigenous language of North America whose speakers are now mostly scattered across the Canadian prairie provinces and the US states of North Dakota and Montana (Mazzoli, 2020, p. 48). Just like other Indigenous languages, Michif was suppressed, and intergenerational transmission ceased in the face of racist colonial policies and attitudes that were prevalent in Canada throughout the 20th century. As a result, much remains undocumented about the language even as efforts are underway to revitalize it.

In recent decades, there has been an increasing amount of research into Michif, mostly in the areas of syntax, morphology, phonetics and phonology, as linguists seek to describe the grammar and sound system. While such data is important, it appears that very few studies have focused on areas like semantics, pragmatics, or discourse in Michif. The purpose of this thesis is to contribute to our qualitative understanding of Michif by examining conceptual metaphors and non-literal expressions in the language. In doing so, I hope to not only highlight some of the expressions that Michif speakers use to talk about concepts like emotions, morality, or other abstract concepts, but also document some creative language use that has been overlooked or left unexplained in research that focuses on the phonological or grammatical structure of Michif.

The remaining sections of this chapter are divided as follows: Section 1.1 provides an overview of conceptual metaphors and figurative language; section 1.2 provides an overview of the Michif language; with the background information thus established, section 1.3

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2 The word Indigenous is capitalized throughout this thesis as a means of signifying that it refers to those languages and cultures who have not only existed in a certain place for millennia, but who also have been colonized by other cultures to the extent that their languages and lifeways are currently under threat, and they have minimal political recognition in the context of colonization (Weeber, 2020). In using this terminology, I am not claiming that there is any linguistic likeness among the vast number of cultures/languages that may be described as Indigenous around the world; rather, I am simply acknowledging that Michif does fit this description.

3 The Michif people and their culture are also known as “Métis,” although this latter term has historically been used to refer to “all descendants of mixed marriages between men of European descent and First Nations women” (Gagnon, 2016, para. 2). It is important to note that the focus of this thesis is the specific groups of people who developed their own culture and languages; they do not identify as First Nations or European, rather they “have one foot in both worlds, but belong to neither” (B. Flammand, personal communication, October 23, 2021). Many such people who live on the Canadians prairies have ancestral ties to the Red River settlement in what is now Winnipeg, Manitoba (Flammand, 2021; Gagnon, 2016; Gaudry, 2016). To avoid confusion, the term “Michif” is used exclusively throughout this thesis.
contextualizes the thesis and section 1.4 outlines the thesis and research questions.

1.1 Overview of metaphor and figurative language

Given that the term “metaphor” has different meanings for different people, it seems prudent to clarify this notion. I understand that the word “metaphor” itself may be problematic or off-putting for some people, perhaps because it seems like a highly technical or esoteric concept; I have thus tried to avoid overusing that word throughout the thesis, and variously refer to this phenomenon as “figurative language,” “semantic creativity,” or “creative language use.” To put it succinctly, this study deals with non-literal language use in Michif. If a word or phrase is not to be understood literally, then it is valid data for the purposes of this thesis.

It is also important to note that conceptual metaphors need not involve fanciful or poetic language; there are plenty of normal, everyday conversation topics that are facilitated through conceptual metaphors. A common example found in English is the framework HAPPY IS UP.\(^4\)

Through this conceptual framework, we can talk about happiness (or lack thereof) by using distinctions like up/down or high/low, as in “things are looking up” or “that was a low point for me.” These and other related expressions are quite common in English, and there is really nothing fanciful about them. In fact, it is these seemingly mundane figures of speech that are of interest in this thesis, because they can reveal something about the way that Michif speakers frame certain everyday concepts and, consequentially, how these concepts are lexicalized.

In some instances, it is fairly easy to distinguish between literal and non-literal language, such as when someone says: “My boss is a real snake.” Nobody would take this to mean that the boss is a limbless, venomous reptile. Rather, it would be understood as a figurative expression that applies the perceived (behavioural) characteristics of a snake to a human being. On the other hand, some expressions are more difficult to analyze in this way, either because they are so strongly lexicalized that the semantic creativity is lost on most people, or because the exact phrasing makes it difficult to tell. For example, if someone says: “the price of food is going up,” many English speakers would not necessarily consider this figurative language, because the connection between MORE and the direction UP is so ingrained in human experience: If we pour

\(^{4}\) It is customary to represent concepts involved in metaphors by using small capital letters.
water into a glass or collect dirt in a pile when digging a hole, we can see the level of these substances increasing vertically. A comparison of phrases like those in (1) through (4) below can help to demonstrate why such ideas should nevertheless be considered metaphorical:

(1) She is going up.
(2) She is increasing.
(3) The price of food is going up.
(4) The price of food is increasing.

If we take (1) literally and assume that “she” refers to a person or animal, we might visualize them walking up a flight of stairs or climbing a tree. However, if we are talking about this same person in (2), it is hard to imagine a context where the sentence would be grammatical. Conversely, the meanings in (3) and (4) are congruent: they both refer to an increasing amount rather than physical vertical movement. While (4) may be taken literally, it would be difficult to argue that “going up” means the same in (3) as it does in (1). We can account for this discrepancy by saying that (3) uses the metaphor MORE IS UP, which allows English speakers to use words like “rise, raise, elevate, go up” to describe an increase in the amount of a substance, whether it is a physical object like water, or an abstract concept like prices.

One major argument against interpreting such phrases as metaphorical is based on polysemy, which refers to when one word or phrase may have multiple senses or meanings (V. Evans, 2009). Such arguments encourage us to simply imagine that phrases like “go up” have potentially dozens of different meanings, and in some cases, it may be difficult to see a connection between one meaning and the next. As V. Evans (2009) notes, however, polysemy often comes about when a word or phrase is consistently used in a semantically creative way to the point where it becomes lexicalized; if a word is used in a new figurative sense enough times and over a long enough period, speakers will eventually just come to think of the word as having multiple unconnected meanings, even though the process began with a creative extension of the original meaning. That said, there are cases of homophony, a phenomenon where two unrelated words may sound the same but have likely never had any sense connection. A good example of this in Modern English is the noun “pitch” referring to tar or resinous substances, and the verb “pitch” meaning to throw or toss an object: while these words probably had different pronunciations in Old English (Harper, 2022), over time their pronunciation converged. The
existence of homophones underscores the importance of etymology in determining whether
dpolysemy has arisen out of sense extension, as in the case of “go up,” or out of chance
convergence as in the case of “pitch.”

In addition, there are certain figurative expressions known as “dead” metaphors, which
Lakoff and Johnson describe as being “idiosyncratic, unsystematic, and isolated” (2003, p. 56);
what this means is that the expression either does not form part of a larger framework, or it is
unproductive in the sense that the metaphor is not apparent to speakers and therefore not readily
extended beyond one or two isolated examples. Despite being labelled as dead, such metaphors
are of value to this thesis because they can still reveal something about semantic creativity in
Michif.

Another type of figurative language included in this study is known as metonymy.
Metonymy differs from metaphor in that the “mapping” aspect occurs within a single domain
rather than the cross-domain mapping that characterizes metaphor (Sato, 2017). As Lakoff and
Johnson put it, metaphor involves “conceiving one thing in terms of another” in order to aid
understanding, whereas metonymy “allows us to use one entity to stand for another,” and its
primary purpose is to facilitate reference to the entities in question (2003, p. 37). Typical
examples of metonymy include the part for the whole or the whole for the part, giving rise
to expressions like that in (5) below:

(5) keep your nose out of my business.

This phrase draws on a subset of the part for the whole metonymy, namely the face for the
person, and exhibits what V. Evans refers to as “alignment” between source and target (2010, p.
640); rather than being a literal statement, one’s nose is a figurative representation of oneself by
virtue of the fact that it is a part of one’s body, specifically one’s face.

In addition to the concepts noted above, there is one more type of figurative language that
is important to this study. Similes, which are sometimes considered separate from metaphors, can
reveal just as much about speakers’ thoughts as other kinds of figurative language might. In
terms of how they are represented in English, the difference between a metaphor and a simile is
superficial: it seems to depend merely on the addition of function words such as “like” or “as.”
Some may argue that similes are literal language; I will follow Fishelov (2007) in counting them
as figurative language. Fishelov refers to simile as the “sister” of metaphor, noting that the major difference lies in the fact that similes always explicitly mention both the source and target domains, whereas metaphorical expressions often lack specific reference to the source domain (2007, pp. 71–72). The figurative nature of similes is illustrated below by comparing the metaphor in (6) with the simile in (7):

(6) He is a porcupine.
(7) He is like a porcupine.

If the referent of both sentences is a person, there is no reason to assume that (7) is a literal statement just because it contains the preposition “like.” In other words, if both sentences are meant to describe a human being in terms of the behavioural characteristics of a porcupine – rather than its appearance – then neither (6) nor (7) are literal statements. It follows that if similes such as (7) constitute non-literal language use, then they are important to the present study. In addition, our ability to interpret the exact meaning of expressions like those above depends largely on cultural context (Fishelov, 2007). Whatever it might mean to be “like” a porcupine in English is not necessarily the same as what it means to be “like” a porcupine in Michif, which is a good reason to inquire about similes. Because of this, similes make up a substantial part of the research data presented in this thesis.

In summary, the “figurative language” that is of concern in this thesis includes the following: Metaphors that suggest an extension of meaning from a source domain to a target one (e.g., “They dragged my name through the mud,” which entails that a reputation is a physical object and further that clean is good, dirty is bad); similes that have the form “A is like B” or “A is as...as B”; metonymy, the intra-domain mapping wherein one entity stands for another; and “dead” metaphors, those which have become conventionalized to the point where the semantic creativity is lost on modern speakers. In essence, I wish to keep the definition of figurative language as broad as possible because the research deals with an understudied language, and too strict a definition would diminish the contributions of this thesis to the literature on both figurative language and Michif.
1.2 Overview of Michif

Michif is a contact language, more specifically a mixed language (discussed further in section 2.1 Contact Languages) that is rooted in the Fur Trade era of Canada’s colonial history. It is inextricably tied to the genesis of Michif culture, which formed when French fur traders and First Nations women began forming families (Bakker, 1997; Papen, 2013). The offspring of such couples would have grown up hearing varieties of French from their fathers and Algonquian – especially varieties of Plains Cree or Saulteaux – from their mothers, leading to the synthesis of a new culture with its own linguistic aptitudes. It likely began to form in the late 18th century, solidifying into a distinct and recognizable language by the middle of the 19th century (Barkwell, 2017). It is most often described as a synthesis of French and Plains Cree grammar, syntax and lexicon (Mazzoli, 2020). It is important to note that where the term “French” is used to refer to the source language of Michif, it refers specifically to the variety of French as spoken by some Michif, one which originated from the vernacular of the French fur traders and which exhibits both phonological and structural influences from Algonquian languages like Cree and Saulteaux (C. Cenerini, personal communication, June 27, 2022).

The traditional homeland of the Michif is extensive, covering not only the prairie provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta, but also large parts of western Ontario, eastern British Columbia, the southern reaches of the Northwest Territories, and large parts of Montana and North Dakota, as shown in Figure 1 below:

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5 For a discussion on other languages spoken among the Michif, see Bakker (1997), Barkwell (2017), or Cenerini (2022).
The map in Figure 1 also indicates major cart trails and fur trade routes (the grey and red lines, respectively), which speaks to the integral role that Michif occupied during the Fur Trade.

The language is said to consist mostly of noun phrases (NP) derived from French, and verb phrases (VP) derived from Plains Cree, although there are exceptions in both cases (Bakker, 2004; Gillon & Rosen, 2018). The examples below illustrate typical French-source NPs and Plains Cree VPs, as well as the exceptions. The French-source elements and their grammatical/semantic equivalents in English are set in bold text:

(8) *Api, paray dawn ta maezoun.*

*api, paray dawn ta maezoun*

*sit.IMP same in your home*

‘Make yourself at home.’  

(Flammand & Cenerini, 2020a, p. 2)
(9) **Li vaend takwahiminanawa ka-oushtanawn.**

*li vaen-d takwahiminanawa ka-oushta-nawn*

**DET.DEF.M wine-PART chokecherries FUT-make-1PL.EXCL**

‘We’ll make chokecherry wine.’  
*(Laverdure & Allard, 1983, p. 61)*

(10) **not lawnginawn**

*not lawng-inawn*

**our language-1P.POSS**

‘our language’  
*(Bakker, 2004, p. 78)*

(11) **Arawnzhee lee tart diseu la taeb shi-atawwawkahk.**

*arawnzhee lee tart diseu la taeb shi-atawwawka-hk*

**arrange.IMP DET.DEF.PL pie on DET.DEF.F table CNJ-sell-CNJ.0**

‘Arrange the pies on the table for sale.’  
*(Laverdure & Allard, 1983, p. 26)*

Example (8) is typical in that it contains a Cree-derived VP with a French NP. (9) provides an example of a Cree noun, *takwahiminanwa* ‘chokecherries’ and (10) demonstrates how Cree possessive morphology attaches to possessed French nouns in the language. (11) illustrates one of the handful of French verbs in Michif, which seem to belong to one of two categories: Those that denote concepts that were not already lexicalized in Cree (Bakker, 1990, p. 31), or those that denote simple, frequently-used concepts and which also tend to have an equivalent Cree-derived expression. In the case of *arawnzhee* ‘arrange’ in (11), the Cree-based verb *ashtaw* ‘put; place; set’ can express a similar action:

(12) **Kwayesh ashtaw lee bwet.**

*Kwayesh ashtaw lee bwet.*

**rightly place.IMP DET.DEF.PL box**

‘Arrange the boxes.’  
*(Laverdure & Allard, 1983, p. 26)*

Michif also has lexical and phonological traits from Saulteaux (Western Ojibwe), which belongs to the same Algonquian language family as Cree, in addition to a number of words borrowed from English (Bakker, 1991). Table 1 below shows how Michif appears to pattern more closely with Saulteaux rather than Plains Cree in some ways:

---

6 It is also worth noting that some French-source verbs actually use Cree morphology. For example, the verb *jeur-ipayin* ‘to harden’ is composed of French-source *jeur* ‘hard’ and the Plains Cree inchoative suffix *(i)payin).*
Table 1: Saulteaux elements in Michif with approximate IPA transcriptions (adapted from Bakker, 1991)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plains Cree</th>
<th>Michif</th>
<th>Saulteaux</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>nîmihito-</td>
<td>neemi-</td>
<td>nîmi-</td>
<td>dance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/ni:mihto/</td>
<td>/nim/</td>
<td>/ni:m/</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>masinahikê-</td>
<td>oushpayikay-</td>
<td>ošipîkê(n)-</td>
<td>write</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/masinahike:/</td>
<td>/ojpe:jike:/</td>
<td>/ozip:ke:/</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kiyânaw</td>
<td>kiyanawn</td>
<td>kiyanân</td>
<td>we (inclusive)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/kija:naw/</td>
<td>/kijana:n/</td>
<td>/kijana:n/</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While the word *oushpayikay-* is used to refer to writing in general, the Michif to Go App also lists *mashinah-* as a translation for the English phrasal verb ‘write [it] down,’ which bears more resemblance to the Plains Cree form in Table 1 above (Gabriel Dumont Institute, 2019). In addition, the online Plains Cree dictionary *itwêwina* (Alberta Language Technology Lab, 2022) contains entries such as *nîmiw* (‘s/he dances’) and *osipêham* (‘s/he writes it with ink’), which are similar to the Michif/Saulteaux forms. While this may detract somewhat from the examples given above, Bakker (1997) nevertheless notes that many Michif speakers themselves have said they are aware of an Ojibwe/Saulteaux influence on their language, and he devotes an entire chapter to outlining the historical context that brought French, Cree and Ojibwe-speaking peoples into sustained contact. It may therefore be more accurate to describe Michif as a mixture of French and Plains Cree with considerable Ojibwe (and English) elements (Bakker, 1997).

There is currently no universally accepted orthography for Michif, although much work has been done in this regard (see Papen, 2013, for a discussion on Michif orthography). The Turtle Mountain spelling system is used throughout this thesis, as that is not only the one used in Laverdure & Allard’s *Turtle Mountain Dictionary* (hereafter TMD) (1983), but it is also the one most familiar to Michif Elder Brousse Flammand (hereafter Brousse), with whom all of the research interviews were conducted. An overview of the Turtle Mountain spelling system can be found on page ix.
1.2.1 Nouns

Nouns in Michif all have two different properties: grammatical gender, the feminine vs. masculine distinction inherited from French, and grammatical animacy, the animate vs. inanimate distinction inherited from Cree.

Just as in French, noun gender in Michif is divided into masculine and feminine. Gender is overtly marked on the determiners and possessive pronouns that precede singular nouns, as in (13) and (14), as well as French prenominal adjectives, shown in (15).

(13) Indefinite determiners:
(a)  
\[ \text{aen} \quad \text{koutoo} \]
DET.INDEF.M knife
‘a knife’
(Flammand & Cenerini, 2020b, p. 1)

(b)  
\[ \text{en} \quad \text{chouyayr} \]
DET.INDEF.F spoon
‘a spoon’
(Flammand & Cenerini, 2020b, p. 1)

(14) Possessive pronouns:
(a)  
\[ \text{soo} \quad \text{froon} \]
3S.POSS forehead
‘his/her forehead’
(Flammand & Cenerini, 2020a, p. 2)

(b)  
\[ \text{sa} \quad \text{boush} \]
3S.POSS mouth
‘his/her mouth’
(Flammand & Cenerini, 2020a, p. 3)

(15) Prenominal adjectives:
(a)  
\[ \text{aen} \quad \text{vyeu} \quad \text{malamaen} \]
DET.INDEF.M old.M dislikeable.person
‘crotchety old man’
(Laverdure & Allard, 1983, p. 109)

(b)  
\[ \text{la} \quad \text{vyay} \quad \text{fasoon} \]
DET.DEF.F old.F manner
‘old-fashioned’
(Laverdure & Allard, 1983, p. 200)

While gender agreement can be observed in determiners, possessive pronouns, adjectives, and adjectival nouns, it plays no role in the verbal domain; on the other hand, grammatical
animacy is integral to verb formation in Michif. In most cases, grammatical animacy in Michif is linked to semantic animacy, just as in most Algonquian languages: all humans and animals are grammatically animate, and many non-living entities are grammatically inanimate, though there are a number of exceptions in this regard (e.g., la tart ‘pie,’ is grammatically animate) (Flammand & Cenerini, 2020b). Not only does the inherent animacy of nouns affect the shape of the verb on a fundamental level, but there are cases where it is apparently possible to shift the grammatical and/or semantic animacy of a noun in Algonquian languages; doing so affects the connotation, as shown in the Ojibwe examples (16) and (17), as well as the Michif example in (18):

(16) Ojibwe

\begin{verbatim}
wiiyaas
meat.INAN
‘meat’
\end{verbatim}  (Rhodes, 1985, p. 166)

(17) wiiyaas

\begin{verbatim}
meat.ANIM
‘a sexual object’
\end{verbatim}  (Rhodes, 1985, p. 166)

(18) Michif

\begin{verbatim}
Kisheewawshiw li tapee.
Kisheewawshi-w li tapee.
be.angry.AI-3S DET.DEF.M rug.INAN
‘The rug needs cleaning.’ (lit. ‘the rug is angry.’)
\end{verbatim}  (MM.BF.20211009)

The only difference between (16) and (17) is that the noun for ‘meat’ is grammatically inanimate in (16), and grammatically animate in (17); this animacy manipulation alters the denotation of the noun.\(^7\) In (18), the inanimate noun denoting ‘rug’ is used with a verb that is normally only used with animate subjects. One way to account for this phrase is to assume that the animacy is being manipulated for stylistic or semantic purposes; there is a special verbal affix (-maka, discussed in more detail in Section 4.2 The animacy-converting morpheme -maka and its role in metaphor/metonymy) that licenses animate verbs to take inanimate subjects, and its absence in (18) suggests that the rug is being personified in a novel way. Examples like those above

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\(^7\) Brousse noted that a similar distinction is possible in Michif as well (personal communication, July 9, 2022).
illustrate how noun animacy may be manipulated to produce non-literal expressions.

### 1.2.2 Verbs

The vast majority of Michif verbs and verbal morphology come from Plains Cree, an Algonquian language that is mainly found across large parts of Saskatchewan and Alberta (Figure 2).

![Figure 2: A Map of the Cree language in Canada (Image adapted from E Pluribus Anthony, transferred to Wikimedia Commons by Kaveh (log), optimized by Andrew pmk. (Own work) [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons) (Koole & Lewis, 2018, p. 5)](image)

Algonquian languages are highly synthetic. What this means is that they have complex words that may consist of many morphemes (i.e., separate “units” that convey different information), to the effect that complete sentences can be formed in a single word. Various affixes can be attached to the verb to indicate a wealth of information like the animacy and number of subjects/objects, verb tense/mood/aspect, and even adverbial information (i.e., the manner in which an action is done). Synthetic languages contrast with isolating languages, in which individual words tend to have a limited number of morphemes, and “limited word-formation strategies as measured by a ratio of meaningful elements (or ‘morphemes’) per word” (Wolvengrey, 2011, p. 21), in addition to grammatical information being shown by unbound morphemes; that is, morphemes that do not need to be attached to another word in order to
convey meaning. Mandarin Chinese is often cited as examples of an isolating language (e.g., see Ramoo, 2021).

Among synthetic languages, there is also a distinction to be made between agglutinative versus fusional. Agglutinative languages (e.g., Korean, Turkish) are those in which one morpheme tends to represent one unit of grammatical information, and they remain recognizable even when multiple morphemes are stacked together. Example (19) illustrates agglutination in Media Lengua:

(19) Media Lengua  
*Corremujurkanishnaca.*  
corre-mu-ju-rka-ni-shna-ca  
run-TSL-PROG-PST-1-SEM-TOP  
'It was like I came running to'  
(J. Stewart, personal communication, July 3, 2022)

In fusional languages, on the other hand, one morpheme may convey several pieces of information (e.g., Spanish; see Ramoo, 2021) or morphemes may blend together so that the individual morphemes become unrecognizable, as in the example from Upper Tanana in (20) below:

(20) Upper Tanana  
*Ndzijh ‘a’.*  
n-ch’ts’d-aa-j-h’a’  
DISTR-INDEF.0-1PL.S-QUAL-CGJ-PFV-H-sing:PFV  
‘We sang.’  
(O. Lovick, personal communication, July 28, 2022)

The top line set in italics indicates how this expression is realized when all the morphemes are combined. The second line in italics shows the underlying form of each individual morpheme before they are combined, illustrating just how complex this aspect of fusion can be in some languages.

It is important to keep in mind that the linguistic labels described above all occur on a spectrum; some languages show strong tendencies for one or the other characteristic, whereas others may integrate elements of both. Due to its Algonquian influence, Michif is highly synthetic and appears to have agglutinative tendencies, with exceptions, as most of the morphemes remain recognizable even after being combined:
(21) *Pashikoo*
   get.up.AI-STEM
   ‘get up’

(22) *Kakwaypashikoowuk.*
   kakway-pashikoo-wuk
   try-get.up.AI-3PL
   ‘They try to get up.’

(23) *Kakakwaypashikoowuk.*
   ka-kakway-pashikoo-wuk
   FUT-try-get.up.AI-3PL
   ‘They will try to get up.’

The examples above illustrate that, regardless of how many morphemes are stacked onto one another, their shapes all tend to remain relatively stable: the AI stem *pashikoo-‘get up’* in (21) is unchanged, even in (23) where a tense marker, a preverb (*kakway-‘try’*) and 3rd-person plural suffix -wuk have been added. The preverb *kakway-‘try,’* added in (22), also remains unchanged in (23) even with the addition of a tense marker before it. Even French elements tend to remain identifiable after combining with Cree morphology, as in examples (24) and (25):

(24) *Il i jeur la tayr.*
   *il i jeur la tayr*
   COP hard DET.DEF.F ground
   ‘The ground is hard.’ (Laverdure & Allard, 1983, p. 125)

(25) *Li simawn ka-li jeur-ipayin.*
   *li simawn ka-li-jeur-ipayi-n*
   DET.DEF.M cement FUT-COP-hard-INCH-3
   ‘The cement will harden.’ (Laverdure & Allard, 1983, p. 125)

Even when the French-source adjective *jeur* ‘hard’ is turned into a verb and surrounded by a tense marker and inchoative morpheme, it remains recognizable.

In Algonquian languages like Cree, property concepts are expressed as verbs rather than what we know as adjectives in English, which is demonstrated in Table 2 below. While Michif

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8 Examples (21) through (23) are my own.
makes use of some French adjectives, they appear to be mostly limited to simple object properties like size, colour, texture, and qualities like good, bad, or beautiful. Since Michif inherited the verbal expression of property concepts from Plains Cree, English sentences like “it is white” can be translated through a conjugated verb:

Table 2: Basic verb conjugation in Michif with English translations (Adapted from Bakker, 2004, p. 65)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PERSON</th>
<th>MICHIF</th>
<th>ENGLISH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st - singular</td>
<td>Ni-wawpishi-n</td>
<td>I am white</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd - singular</td>
<td>Ki-wawpishi-n</td>
<td>You are white</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd - singular</td>
<td>Wawpishi-w</td>
<td>He/she is white</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st - plural (inclusive)</td>
<td>Ni-wawpishi-nawn</td>
<td>We are white (including you)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st - plural (exclusive)</td>
<td>Ki-wawpishi-nawn</td>
<td>We are white (excluding you)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd - plural</td>
<td>Ki-wawpishin-awaw</td>
<td>You guys are white</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd - plural</td>
<td>Wawpishi-wuk</td>
<td>They are white</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd – possessed object</td>
<td>Wawpishi-yiwa</td>
<td>His/her X is/are white</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 also illustrates how first and second person can be marked by prefixes, ni- and ki- respectively, as an additional means of clarification since some of the suffixes are identical (i.e., first-person singular versus second-person singular, and first-person plural inclusive versus exclusive).

The examples below demonstrate how certain affixes can change the aspect of the verb or provide adverbial information. (26) is a simple intransitive sentence, whereas (27) includes the affix shki- which implies habitual behaviour. Mazzoli notes that this morpheme (which she refers to as “accrescitive”) can be used in the sense of doing something too much or too often (2021, p. 118):

(26) Maytawayw.
    maytaway-w
    play-3s
    ‘S/he plays.’

(Bakker, 2004, p. 73)
In (28) we see another simple intransitive sentence, whereas (29) contains the same verb with the affix *keemoochi-* to mean that something is done secretly:

(28) *Payhoow.*
    *payhoo-w*
    wait-3s
    ‘S/he waits.’

(29) *Keemoochipayhoow.*
    *keemoochi-payhoo-w*
    secretly-wait-3s
    ‘S/he lurks.’ (lit. ‘S/he waits in secret.’) (Laverdure & Allard, 1983, p. 167)

As mentioned in the previous section, Michif has also inherited grammatical animacy from Plains Cree, so that every noun has the property of being either animate or inanimate. This is important because the verb paradigm in Cree (and Michif) is built not only around transitivity, but animacy as well. The major classes of verbs are Animate-Intransitive (VAI), Animate-Transitive (VTA), Inanimate-Intransitive (VII), and Inanimate-Transitive (VTI) (Gillon & Rosen, 2018; Sammons, 2019). The examples below demonstrate how the animacy of direct objects can change the shape of the verb:

(30) *Shashkaham.*
    *shashka-h-am*
    ignite-TI-3S>4S.INAN.OBJ
    ‘S/he ignites it.’ (Adapated from Laverdure & Allard, 1983, p. 155)

(31) *Shashkahwayw.*
    *shashka-h-wayw*
    ignite-TA-3S>4S.ANIM.OBJ
    ‘She sets him/her on fire.’ (Adapted from Laverdure & Allard, 1983, p. 155)

In (30), the verb *shashka-* ‘ignite; kindle’ takes shape as a VTI, suggesting that the referent of ‘it’ is an inanimate entity. On the other hand, (31) illustrates how the same verb takes
a different ending when it is used as a VTA, where the referent catching fire is animate. Given the sheer amount of information that can be conveyed in Michif verbs, it is probable that some metaphors and figures of speech can be expressed through verbal morphology alone.

The following section, 1.3 Situating the thesis, describes the research goals and hypotheses. The section finishes with an introduction to the Michif speaker who was interviewed for the research and my own positionality statement.

1.3 Situating the thesis

The main purpose of this study is to look at Michif from a qualitative perspective; given the pervasiveness of conceptual metaphors in human language, they provide a suitable framework in which to look more closely at semantics in Michif. This thesis is exploratory and heuristic in nature; in other words, short of the expectation that some widespread conceptual metaphors would appear in the data, there was really no way to predict what kinds of concepts or expressions might come up in the interview sessions. This is beneficial in itself, because it can serve to broaden the repertoire of language data that has thus far been documented in Michif.

Thus, the specific aim of this research is to add to the body of knowledge on Michif expressions and their semantic/pragmatic implications. One additional aim is to determine whether a given figurative expression seems to be influenced by one of Michif’s source languages.

Since most Michif nouns originate from French and most Michif verbs originate from Plains Cree, I hypothesize the following: There will be some metaphors that are found in both source languages (i.e., concepts grounded in physical/bodily experience such as ANGER IS HEAT or MORE IS UP), some that are found only in one and not the other, and there will also be semantically creative expressions that do not appear to be influenced by either of the source languages. For the metaphors that exist in one parent language and not the other, word class should largely predict which parent language shares the conceptualization: With the exception of similes, figurative language that relies mostly on nouns and French origin vocabulary are more likely to be found in French, and those that rely more on verbal morphology are more likely to turn up in Cree.
An important concept mentioned throughout this thesis is the term *calque*. A calque, also known as a loan translation, is a lexical borrowing that is translated word-for-word from one language into another (Harper, 2022). An example of this in English is the word “brainwashing” – this noun was translated literally from Chinese during the Korean War (Harper, 2022), even though it might have just as easily been expressed by an English phrase like “mind control,” given what it refers to. Without historical linguistic data, it can be difficult to determine whether a particular expression is a calque or whether it in fact exists in both languages independently.

Laverdure and Allard’s TMD (1983) is the major lexical source for this research. The entries are all listed in English, followed by a Michif translation and, in most cases, example sentences. It is a useful and insightful resource for learning Michif, but there is no way to know how much of it is based on English calques, especially where figurative language is concerned. Barkwell (2017) points to orthography as being the main drawback of the TMD, though I argue that the problem is deeper than that. Translation is not an easy process to begin with, and this is exacerbated with Michif because the language had been suppressed for nearly a century prior to the creation of the dictionary. As a result, certain colloquial expressions could have been forgotten, so that translating colloquial English might have been difficult without resorting to calques, especially given that all modern-day Michif speakers are fluent in English. While there is nothing inherently bad about calques, the point of this thesis is to explore metaphors and semantic creativity that are a natural part of Michif. Therefore, words and phrases suspected of being English calques are not treated in the same depth as expressions that appear to be more natural in Michif.

The TMD was published in 1983; it contains numerous example sentences, however many of them may lack sufficient context to help learners understand the semantics of certain words or phrases, or how they may be used in novel utterances. By asking native speakers to analyze and elaborate on certain entries in the TMD, context can be added, and related expressions – documented or undocumented – may come up. This is an important endeavour for keeping the TMD relevant in the present day and expanding on its usefulness as a major Michif lexical resource.
I was fortunate enough to connect with one Michif speaker, Misyeu Brousse Flammand. Brousse was born in 1945 and grew up in the Michif community of Crescent Lake, Saskatchewan (Figure 2), also known as “Tokyo” by community members (Barkwell, 2011; B. Flammand, personal communication, November 2020).

![Figure 3: Map of Saskatchewan with blue pin showing the Michif community of Crescent Lake (Google, 2022)](image)

Brousse describes his childhood as “unassimilated”; his parents were born in the 1920s – only 40 years removed from the Battle of Batoche and the end of the Northwest Resistance in 1885 – and his grandparents were young children at the time of the Resistance. Everything that he knew and was taught as a child was thus rooted in the traditional Michif worldview, and he still maintains these traditional views and values. In terms of his knowledge of the ancestral languages of Michif, he is “quite fluent in Plains Cree…understand[s] French quite well and can even speak some basic Saulteaux” (B. Flammand, personal communication, July 9, 2022). While his generation was the last to be brought up in the traditional Michif ways of thinking and living, they were also among the first to be put through a school system that espoused Western views and values with complete disregard and disdain for Indigenous knowledge and attitudes, a system which Brousse went through as a teenager. Over the years, he has spent a great deal of

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9 From French *monsieur* ‘mister’
time and energy promoting Michif language, culture, and rights, which is perhaps best described on his personal website. We first met when I attended a Michif class that he led in the winter of 2020, where he not only shared his knowledge of the language but also connected it to his personal experiences. When I approached him with the idea for this research project, he welcomed the idea and consented to the use of his name in this thesis. In this way, he can receive full recognition for his contributions and the knowledge that he has shared.

For my part, I am a graduate student in Applied Linguistics at the University of Saskatchewan (USask) in Saskatoon and have been fascinated with language ever since pursuing my undergraduate degree in Linguistics and Languages there. I do not identify as Indigenous, but my wife is Michif: her ancestors, the Boyer family, hail from the village of St. Louis, a traditional Michif community in central Saskatchewan. As I saw her discover her own roots throughout her time in the Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education Program (SUNTEP) at the University of Saskatchewan, the linguist in me was naturally drawn to Michif, and this is where my fascination with the language began.

The next section provides an outline for the thesis. The research questions are laid out, along with an overview of the study’s limitations. The major interview topics are noted, followed by a brief description of the remaining chapters in the thesis.

### 1.4 Outline of the thesis

This thesis is framed around two main research questions. First and most importantly, what kinds of figurative expressions exist in Michif and how are they formulated? One way to answer this question is by looking into the kind of vocabulary Michif speakers use when talking about abstract concepts like emotions or morality, or the contexts in which they might use linguistic devices like similes or personification. Example lines of inquiry include: What kind of words or ideas come to mind when speakers hear a phrase like *tawpiskooch aen foutroo* ‘like a mink’? What are some different ways to express lying and hiding the truth? How might one interpret a phrase like *la vil ahkoushimakan* ‘the town is ill’? The interviews with Brousse were

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10 Brousse has shared his thoughts and knowledge on different topics through his website, *Lii Michif Niiyanaan | Thinking in Michif*: [https://thinkinginmichif.family.blog/](https://thinkinginmichif.family.blog/)
essential in this regard, as they provide a sample of the kind of mental associations among different words that a Michif speaker may have.

The second research question this thesis aims to address is: is it possible to say whether a given figurative expression appears to be influenced by either of Michif’s source languages? The best way to answer this question would of course involve interviews with speakers of French, Plains Cree or even Saulteaux on the topics addressed in Michif. Unfortunately, it was not possible to connect with speakers of these languages during the course of this thesis, and so it was necessary to rely on dictionaries and my own knowledge of French to draw such cross-linguistic comparisons. This goes hand in hand with the fact that I was unable to interview more than one Michif speaker for this study, as some of them may also be fluent in one of the parent languages of Michif. These limitations are not only because of the time constraints of producing a master’s thesis, but also the profound effect that COVID-19 had on our ability to meet new people and sustain those relationships. At the very least, all of this means there is plenty of room to continue and expand upon this line of research in the future.

Throughout the interview sessions, Brousse shared his knowledge of the language and contextualized it with examples and cultural information. He stressed on multiple occasions that, given the history of dispersal and isolation among Michif-speaking communities, certain expression may be understandable for most speakers, though different Michif communities could easily have different expressions to refer to the concept in question, or different understandings of a particular phrase. While this may be true of almost any language community, the effects of community isolation are quite pronounced in Michif for historical reasons: In the aftermath of the Northwest Resistance in 1885, many Michifs began to hide their language and culture, with many of them passing themselves off as Europeans, in order to avoid discrimination (Flammand, 2021; Gaudry, 2016). These events only increased the isolation between Michif-speaking communities, and this could have led to certain colloquial expressions being localized rather than shared across the Michif homeland. Considering this, the best scenario would involve interviews with multiple speakers representing different communities.

Nevertheless, Brousse and I were able to explore a variety of topics together: Animal similes, discussed in section 4.1 Figurative expressions featuring animals; the use of a front/back distinction to talk about trustworthiness (section 4.3.1 External bodily experiences) is present in
Michif, and appears to originate from French; the animacy-converting morpheme -maka (section 4.2 The animacy-converting morpheme -maka and its role in metaphor/metonymy), inherited from Cree, appears to be quite versatile in allowing speakers to be semantically creative, although questions remain around its application or possible limitations.

The remaining chapters in this thesis are laid out as follows: Chapter 2 provides more in-depth information about Michif, Conceptual Metaphor Theory, and previous research on metaphors in Indigenous languages; some of that research relates directly to Algonquian languages like East Cree or Ojibwe, and some is related to Dene languages such as Upper Tanana and Beaver. In chapter 3, the interview process with Brousse is described, as well as the major methodological considerations for this study, such as how to go about identifying figurative versus literal language. Chapter 4 contains the results, and chapters 5 and 6 lay out the discussion and conclusion, respectively.
2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides an overview of the literature that informs this thesis. Section 2.1 Contact Languages begins with a discussion of contact languages in general, before moving into a more detailed look at the present state of Michif and previous research on the language. Section 2.2 Conceptual Metaphors is an in-depth look at Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) and the different ways of categorizing metaphorical/figurative language. The chapter finishes with an overview of previous research on metaphors in Indigenous languages.

2.1 Contact Languages

Contact languages, as the name suggests, come into being when there is sustained contact between two groups of people who speak different languages or language varieties. They are divided into three main categories: creoles, pidgins, and mixed languages. Pidgins and creoles have mainly arisen as a result of colonization and the slave trade (Bartens, 2013; Parkvall & Bakker, 2013), and thus they share certain characteristics: the members of each language group tend to only be fluent in their respective L1, and there exists an imbalance in the power/prestige of the language groups in question, so that the language of the dominant group forms the basis of the pidgin or creole (Winford, 2008). Thus, these two types of contact languages tend to form because there is a need for a common language to facilitate communication.

Michif is an example of a mixed language, which, unlike the other two types of contact languages, is the linguistic by-product of mixing social/cultural groups who already have knowledge of both source languages (Stewart & Meakins, 2022). Unlike pidgins and creoles, mixed languages tend to manifest for “expressive purposes” rather than communicative needs (Meakins, 2013a, p. 181). It is important to note that the category of mixed language is not monolithic; mixed languages exist on a spectrum related to the type and extent of mixing, as well as the social factors that led to the manifestation of the language in the first place (Meakins, 2013a). For example, Michif arose from sustained intermarriage between French voyageurs and First Nations women, and the mixing is based around having verbs from one source language and nouns from the other, otherwise known as a verb-noun mixed language (Stewart & Meakins, 2022). The mixed language known as Media Lengua, on the other hand, primarily mixes Spanish lexicon and Quichua (an Indigenous language spoken in Ecuador) grammar and arose primarily
as Quichuan men started speaking more Spanish (Meakins, 2013b; Muysken, 1994), implying a shift from the ancestral language (Quichuan) toward the introduced one (Spanish).

One major aspect of contact language research involves what are known as conflict sites: Conflicting areas of convergence between the source languages. These conflict sites can be tested both experimentally and empirically to ascertain whether a feature from a given source language takes precedence (Rosen et al., 2019). Indeed, a number of studies on Michif have examined phonological and syntactic conflict sites, some of which is covered in more detail in Section 2.1.3 Previous Research on Michif (for an overview of potential conflict sites in Michif, see Rosen (2008)).

### 2.1.2 Present State of the Language

Michif speakers are now mainly found in the Canadian provinces of Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Alberta, as well as the state of North Dakota, where the Turtle Mountain Reservation is located (Bakker, 1997; Mazzoli, 2019). Figure 4 below is a map showing the approximate range of where the language is now spoken. It is important to note that not every community within the highlighted boundary has Michif speakers, and that some speakers live outside of this range; it is merely meant to give a broad indication of the area in which most speakers currently reside,\(^\text{11}\) or where speakers living typically originate from:

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\(^{11}\) For a more detailed map of communities with attested Michif speakers, see Mazzoli (2021).
As is the case with so many Indigenous languages in North America, Michif is highly endangered. Statistics can be somewhat confusing in this regard, with numbers ranging from 150 up to 640 speakers as per the Statistics Canada 2016 census (Mazzoli, 2020, pp. 49–50). The higher number includes not only non-fluent speakers, but likely also speakers of Michif varieties of French or Cree, a result of ambiguous terminology (Rosen, 2007). The lower estimate reflects the number of remaining native speakers, i.e., those who were born in Michif-speaking communities and who grew up using the language with friends and family.

Regardless of what the actual number of Michif speakers is, there is no substantial intergenerational transmission taking place (Rosen, 2007; Sammons, 2019). Indeed, many among the last generation of native speakers, all of whom are now over the age of 70, did not regularly speak the language with their own children (B. Flammand, personal communication, October 23, 2021). This is due to the stigmatization and suppression of the language and culture throughout late 19th century and much of the 20th century, which is sadly an all-too-common experience among Indigenous peoples in North America.

Figure 4: Map displaying the approximate range in which most Michif speakers reside today (Google Maps, 2022)
For the Michif, this stigmatization began in earnest after the end of the Northwest Resistance and the hanging of Louis Riel in 1885 (Barkwell, 2017; Gaudry, 2019). Michif people largely hid their identity from this point on and tried to blend into the Eurocentric society they found themselves in, because openly showing one’s ‘Michif-ness’ could expose them to racism (Gaudry, 2019). Younger generations were told not to speak Michif outside of their home for this very reason, or simply were not taught the language by their parents; it is this period, termed the “underground years” or “forgotten years,” that led to the decline and endangerment of Michif (Flammand, 2021; Iseke, 2013).

Despite this period of devastation, the sociopolitical landscape in Canada began to change toward the beginning of the 21st century, such that Michif culture and languages began to experience a kind of reawakening (Gaudry, 2019). The last couple of decades have seen numerous efforts to revitalize Michif. Organizations such as the Gabriel Dumont Institute (GDI), Louis Riel Institute (LRI), and smaller community-level organizations have produced digital & print resources (e.g., YouTube videos, smartphone apps, dictionaries, flash cards, storybooks, and memoirs) and hosted events (e.g., language classes, celebrations at Christmas/New Year’s/Louis Riel Day) aimed at revitalizing the culture and languages spoken among the Michif.

2.1.3 Previous Research on Michif

The following section provides a brief overview of previous research on Michif, although it is by no means exhaustive. Linguistic analysis of Michif began in earnest in the 1970s through the works of John C. Crawford and Richard Rhodes, whose detailed descriptions of the language brought it to the attention of the broader linguistics community. Throughout the 1980s, linguists began to draw on examples from Michif as a means of examining certain phenomena related to contact languages (see Andrella, 1989; Bakker, 1989; Rhodes, 1986). An important question at the time, which has since been settled, was whether Michif constituted a creole or a mixed language (Bakker 1989, 1997).

Bakker’s book, *A Language of Our Own* (1997), is an in-depth look at the various factors that would have led to the genesis of Michif and its variability in different communities; it also provides a grammatical overview of the language and the contributions of its source languages –
including the Saulteaux influence – in this regard, Barkwell’s annotated bibliography (2017) categorizes and summarizes Michif documentation, research, and language learning materials, as well as some of the literature on mixed languages in general. Together, Bakker (1997) and Barkwell (2017) provide a substantial amount of background information on Michif.

For the sake of clarity, the remainder of this section is organized by linguistic domain: phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics.

2.1.3.1 Phonology

Rhodes (1977) compares the morphology and syntax of Plains Cree and Michif and points out some of the phonological changes that differentiate Michif from French or Cree, while also postulating that the language maintains two separate phonological systems based on its source languages; to this day, the stratification hypothesis remains one of the biggest topics in Michif phonology. Bakker (1997), Bakker and Papen (1997), and Papen (2019) all support the stratification hypothesis, the latter based on the occurrence of schwa-deletion and elision that only affect French elements in the language. There has, however, been a considerable amount of research that appears to contradict this hypothesis, outlined below.

D. Evans (1982) looks at the phonology of the French and Cree items in the language, noting evidence for both the maintenance of separate phonological systems and also phonological convergence, where the Cree and French phonologies have influenced one another. D. Evans discusses the phenomenon known as French liaison, which involves the pronunciation of an otherwise-silent linking consonant between two words if the first one ends with a consonant – observable in Standard French orthography – and the following word begins with a vowel (1982, p. 161). She notes that liaison historically affected the French elements of Michif, but not the Cree elements, and points out that this process has led to many words being reanalyzed in Michif depending on the sounds that commonly followed them:
As the IPA transcriptions show, the word for ‘egg’ has been reanalyzed in Michif so that even in the singular, it contains a /z/ phoneme, whereas in French, the /z/ is only pronounced when it is preceded by a word ending in ‘s,’ such as the definite plural determiner les. Furthermore, (b) shows that there is variability in terms of how French words may be reanalyzed in Michif; in the translation for ‘egg white’ the word for ‘egg’ is /dəf/ rather than /zaf/, likely owing to the frequency of this collocation. This variability of noun reanalysis in Michif is also something D. Evans (1982) notes.

An example of phonological convergence offered by D. Evans is a phenomenon she terms sibilant (i.e., sounds such as /s/, /z/, /ʃ/ or /ʒ/) levelling. She notes that many dialects of Cree – including Plains Cree – underwent a process whereby the Proto-Algonquian\(^{12}\) phonemes */s/* and */ʃ/* merged so that the exact pronunciation may be somewhere in between the two; this process has not fully taken hold in some eastern dialects of Cree, but even in those dialects there is apparently an assimilation rule whereby */ʃ/* becomes */s/* if the next consonant is also */s/* (D. Evans, 1982, p. 168). It is thus possible that an assimilation process also affected Michif as the

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\(^{12}\) Proto-Algonquian refers to a hypothetical parent language from which all modern Algonquian languages developed; the asterisks next to the phonemes are meant to indicate that they are hypothetical, since it is impossible to know with 100% certainty the phoneme inventory of any proto language.
language was forming, which could explain why its Cree-origin vocabulary normally has /ʃ/, and the occurrence of /s/ is negligible. This is even indicated in the orthography, where words of Cree origin are almost always spelled with sh- (e.g., compare Plains Cree sipwê- with Michif shipway- ‘leave, depart’). This sibilant levelling process is thus assumed to have initially come from Cree, but its effects can also be seen in words of French origin. Table 3 below illustrates how in French words that contain two distinct sibilants, one of those sibilants has undergone assimilation in Michif:

Table 3: Effects of sibilant levelling on French-origin vocabulary in Michif (adapted from D. Evans, 1982, p. 168)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French word</th>
<th>French IPA</th>
<th>Michif IPA</th>
<th>English translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>chaise</td>
<td>/ʃɛz/</td>
<td>/ʃɛʒ/</td>
<td>‘chair’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>châssis</td>
<td>/ʃɑsi/</td>
<td>/sɑsi/</td>
<td>‘window’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sèche</td>
<td>/seʃ/</td>
<td>/ʃeʃ/</td>
<td>‘dry’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This process of sibilant levelling is thus taken as evidence of phonological convergence, wherein a phonological process from Plains Cree has affected the phonology of French-origin words in the language.

Rosen’s (2007) dissertation is an analysis of Michif phonology, though it also includes a detailed description of Michif morphology so as to examine the interplay between these two domains. She suggests that her findings do not offer much evidence for the stratification hypothesis, and indeed may point to the opposite (Rosen, 2007). Prichard and Shwayder (2014) use statistical modelling of the Michif vowel inventory to test the stratification hypothesis and also examine the occurrence of French liaison with non-French words in Michif; their findings also contradict the stratification hypothesis, and they suggest that Michif should be regarded as having a single phonological system.

A recent study by Rosen et al. (2019) provides more evidence against the stratification hypothesis. The researchers examined voice onset timing (VOT) in Michif, a measure of the time it takes after the release of a stop consonant (e.g., /p/, /k/, /t/) to the onset of voicing in the vowel that follows it. Their results suggest that the VOT of French-derived elements in Michif is more in line with that of Plains Cree, which would not be the case if there were phonological
stratification (Rosen et al., 2019). Results from a subsequent study by Rosen et al. (2020) measuring vowel formant frequencies and duration suggest that vowels have merged with phonetically similar vowels from Cree, yielding one system rather than two.

2.1.3.2 Morphology & syntax

As noted earlier, the morphology of Michif is highly complex. Mazzoli (2021) provides a detailed overview of derivational morphology in Michif verbs. Following the literature on Algonquian languages, she examines the processes of primary versus secondary derivation, describing it thus:

…primary derivation is affixation of categorizing items…to lexical roots…it is mostly unavailable to speakers as a conscious process, and non-productive, while…so-called secondary derivation is canonical derivation of affixes deriving autonomous stems (Spencer 2015), it is available to speakers and productive. (p.1)

Noting that many linguists have simply presented the Michif verb template as being identical to that of Plains Cree, she proposes a unique template with 12 slots, each of which convey different kinds of syntactic or semantic information. I have provided a simplified version of Mazzoli’s verb template (Table 4 below) because it is not necessary to go into extensive detail on all of the verbal morphology for the purposes of this thesis.

The example morphemes in each slot are not exhaustive. Of the 12 positions, only 4, 5 and 7 (and 3 to a lesser extent) are important in this thesis because they are the positions which convey the largest degree of semantic information, as opposed to grammatical/syntactic information found in the others. The central part of the verb, the stem, occupies positions 4 (‘initial’) and 5 (‘final’); (Mazzoli, 2021, pp. 94–95). These two slots each convey different fundamental information. The initial position, also known as the root, is where most of the semantic information (i.e., the fundamental sense/meaning) lies; the final, slot 5, indicates in/animacy and in/transitivity of the verb stem, though some of them may also carry some semantic information about the meaning of the verb as well (Mazzoli, 2021). Position 7 is where secondary derivation takes place: The morphemes in this spot can change the valency (i.e., the number and type of subjects/objects a verb has) or animacy of a verb, or show causation, benefaction, accompaniment, or other such concepts. Animacy conversion is of particular
interest in the present study and is discussed in more detail in section 3.2 Identification of figurative language.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRONOUN</th>
<th>or</th>
<th>CNJ</th>
<th>TENSE</th>
<th>MOOD</th>
<th>PRE-VERB STEM</th>
<th>INITIAL STEM</th>
<th>STEM</th>
<th>FINAL STEM</th>
<th>THEME 1</th>
<th>THEME 2</th>
<th>THEME 3</th>
<th>THEME 4</th>
<th>THEME 5</th>
<th>THEME 6</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1P</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>i</td>
<td>aya</td>
<td>k</td>
<td>-hi</td>
<td>-hi</td>
<td>-hi</td>
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<tr>
<td>2P</td>
<td>k</td>
<td>i</td>
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<td>k</td>
<td>-aw</td>
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<tr>
<td>CONJ</td>
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<td>CNJ</td>
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<tr>
<td>PRONOUN</td>
<td>12</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Michif verb template (adapted from Mazzoli, 2021, p. 89)
Although the remaining verb slots are of little importance for this thesis, I provide a brief overview here. Position 1 can be filled either by first- or second-person pronoun prefixes, or by what is called the conjunct (CNJ) complementizer. The conjunct mode occurs with embedded clauses or content questions. Slot 2 indicates past/future tense, and slot 3 contains pre-verbal morphemes that can provide adverbial information (miyo- ‘well’; machi-/mayi- ‘poorly/badly’), act like auxiliary verbs (mawchi- ‘start’; pooni- ‘quit’; kahkwe- ‘try’), or indicate directionality (payi- ‘this way/hither’; papam- ‘around’; Bakker, 2004; Mazzoli, 2021). Slots 6 and 8 include what are called theme signs, which provide information about objects that occur with optionally transitive verbs (e.g., “I see” versus “I see it”) or ditransitive verbs (e.g., “I gave it to him”). The -yi affix in slot 9 indicates a possessed subject (e.g., “his gloves”) and slots 10 - 11 convey information about person/number agreement. Slot 12 is reserved for a conditional marker, -i (Mazzoli, 2021). Based on the table, it is possible to take a root such as atoushk- ‘work’ and add morphemes one by one, changing the meaning each time:

(34) atoushkay  
    atoushk-ay  
    work-STEM  
    ‘work’

(35) Kitatoushkawn.  
    ki-t-atoushk-awn  
    2-EPEN-work-S  
    ‘You work.’

(36) Ki-nohte-atoushkawn.  
    ki-nohte-atoushk-awn  
    2-want-work-S  
    ‘You want to work.’

(37) Ki-nohte-atoushkiw-htawaw.  
    ki-nohte-atoushkiw-htaw-waw  
    2-want-work-BEN-3S  
    ‘You want to work for him/her.’

13 Examples (34) through (37) are my own.
The template is meant to more accurately reflect the morphological processes that take place in Michif which differentiate it from Plains Cree and other Algonquian languages (Mazzoli, 2021). In particular, Mazzoli argues against the inclusion of what are called medial morphemes in the verb stem (i.e., the basic part of the verb that provides the fundamental semantic sense of a verb), as outlined below:

(38) Kitohpwayshtikwawnawn.
    
    ki-t-ohpway-shtikw-aw-n-awn
    2-EPEN-up-head-AI-IND.2-PL
    ‘Your hair is disheveled.’

The template is adapted from Mazzoli (2021, p. 94).

In the case of (38), the morpheme -shtikw ‘head’ would be analyzed as a medial morpheme in Plains Cree and thereby separate from the stem-final -aw (AI) morpheme that follows it. However, Mazzoli suggests that “synchronic evidence for assigning to the Michif element -shtikw- the status of morpheme is scarce, and the complex formative -shtikwa[w] could be analyzed as a concrete AI final” (Mazzoli, 2021, p. 94; emphasis in original). Analyzing the Michif verb in this way means ohpway- ‘aloft’ is the initial and -shtikwa[w] ‘head’ is the final morpheme, yielding a complete stem that may roughly translate to ‘head hair is aloft’ (i.e., windblown); thus Mazzoli’s verb template only includes slots for initial and final stem morphemes.

Weaver (1982) examines obviation, a common phenomenon among Algonquian languages that allows the speaker to distinguish between two animate third-person referents. Obviation is a means of syntactically signalling which third-person referent is the subject of the utterance. Since word order in Michif is relatively free, the obviative marker in (39) below indicates that “grandmother” is not the subject:

(39) La fee kee-wawpamayw oohkouma.
    
    la    fee    kee-wawpa-m-ayw    oohkoum-a
    DET.DEF.F girl PST-see-ANIM-3S grandmother-OBV
    ‘The girl saw her grandmother.’

The girl saw her grandmother. (Adapted from Weaver, 1982, p. 211)

Even if these nouns were switched around in the sentence or the context were unclear, the syntactic relationship between the nouns would be evident to the listener. Weaver conducted elicitation sessions with several speakers and gathered from her results that obviation is less
prevalent in Michif than a language like Plains Cree, as it is marked by some speakers but not by others (Weaver, 1982).

Gillon and Rosen (2018) provide an in-depth analysis of Michif nouns and determiner phrases (DPs). They analyze articles, demonstratives, gender, plurality, and the mass/count distinction in Michif and compare their findings to the nature of these same topics in French and Plains Cree. They argue against the use of labels like “mixed” to describe languages like Michif, because it seems to suggest that such languages behave differently than non-mixed languages. They offer English as a comparison, noting that it “has a Germanic core with extra lexical items, features and structures from French” (Gillon & Rosen, 2018, p. 171), yet nobody categorizes English as a mixed language in the same vein as Michif or Media Lengua (a contact language consisting of Spanish and Quechua; Muysken, 1997). Specifically, they contend that describing Michif as having French DPs is a mischaracterization, since there are numerous elements of Plains Cree syntax observable in Michif DPs (Gillon & Rosen, 2018), such as how the Plains Cree possessive plural marker may even attach to French nouns, an example of which is provided in (40):

(40) Outinatawk not michininawn.

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{outina-} & \text{not} & \text{michin-inaw} \\
\text{Take-1PL.INCL.IMP} & \text{our} & \text{medicine-1PL.INCL.POSS} \\
\text{‘Let’s take our medicine.’} & \text{Flammand & Cenerini, 2020a, p. 3}
\end{array}
\]

In light of this, they argue that it would be more accurate to consider Michif an Algonquian language with heavy French influence (Gillon & Rosen, 2018).

Kitaoka and Strader (2017) examine discontinuous quantifiers in Michif, noting that such quantifiers undergo movement in the phrase as a means of shifting the focus. Below is an example:
We wouldn’t have thought, but we caught a lot of fish.’
(adapted from Kitaoka & Strader, 2017, p. 7)

‘There aren’t very many old time tramps.’
(Laverdure & Allard, 1983, p. 383)

They take (41) to contrast with (42) in that the former indicates an outcome contrary to expectation, indicated by the use of *mischayt*, versus *mawchi*, which supposedly just indicates a change of state (Kitaoka & Strader, 2017). It is worth noting that they have taken a translation from Laverdure and Allard (1983), and assigned *mawchi* to the status of a discontinuous quantifier comparable to that of *mischayt*. I am unable to find any other examples in the dictionary sources where *mawchi* is glossed as ‘many’; it rather appears to be the preverbal morpheme that means ‘begin,’ so that the sentence may be more akin to saying: “There’s starting to be fewer tramps and hobos.” While this may not ultimately change their conclusion, it illustrates why it is helpful to have Michif speakers re-examine and elaborate upon entries in the TMD.

In her study on Michif nominal classification, Sammons (2019) concludes that the grammatical distinctions of animacy and gender (from Cree and French respectively) have largely been inherited intact, such that this particular conflict site has given rise to two separate nominal systems in the language. This claim rests upon the notions that every noun in the language, even modern borrowings, must be assigned grammatical gender and animacy values, and these are largely shared by speakers with few exceptions (Sammons, 2019). Her work lends some support to Gillon and Rosen’s (2018) hypothesis that gender is less stable than animacy in Michif, and that arbitrary feminine gender may be eroding since masculine gender seems to be
the default for most borrowings (Sammons, 2019, p. 238). With respect to the variability of gender, wherein some speakers may consider a specific noun masculine while others consider it feminine, Rosen (2020) notes that Michif is in a unique position, since there is relatively little “prescriptive pressure” (i.e., concerted efforts to define language standards) in comparison to languages like French (p. 156). Example (43) below demonstrates an acceptable variability, with (44) demonstrating a restriction on this phenomenon:

(43) ae’n/en takwahiminawn
DET.DEF.M/F chokecherry
‘a chokecherry’

(adapted from Gillon & Rosen 2018: 105)

(44) ae’n/*en yawmoo
DET.DEF.M/F bee
‘a bee’

(Gillon & Rosen 2018: 105)

Gillon & Rosen suggest that the acceptability of (43) may be due to the fact that chokecherries are rarely ever referred to in the singular, whereas this is not the case with the word for “bees” in (44) (Gillon & Rosen, 2018). Where discrepancies of noun gender exist among speakers, Rosen (2020) suggests that such cases should be viewed as a part of the inner makeup of Michif itself rather than possible speaker errors, a point that is bolstered by Brousse’s comments on linguistic variation across different Michif communities (personal communication, 2021).

2.2 Conceptual Metaphors

We will now turn to an overview of conceptual metaphors, as that forms the basis of the present research on Michif. It is not hyperbole to say that almost every linguistic study about metaphors in the past 40 years has drawn inspiration from Lakoff and Johnson’s highly influential book, Metaphors We Live By (1980/2003). They were by no means the first linguists to take an interest in metaphor (Black, 1954; Reddy, 1972), but their Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) brought the study of metaphor into mainstream linguistics and demonstrated the sheer extent to which metaphors are integral to our ability to understand and talk about abstract concepts. While CMT has necessarily been built upon and refined since its inception in 1980, it is often taken as the starting point for the majority of modern metaphor research (Gibbs, 2017; Kövecses, 2008; Steen, 2010).
Lakoff and Johnson state that metaphor involves “understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another” (1980/2003, p. 6), which builds upon Burke’s description of metaphor as “a device for seeing something in terms of something else” (1945, as cited in Cameron, 1999, p. 3). This is about as basic a definition one can find for what we mean when we talk about metaphors: taking words, phrases and concepts associated with concept ‘A’ and using them to talk about concept ‘B’. This is frequently referred to as conceptually “mapping” the source domain, ‘A’, to the target domain, ‘B’ (Kövecses, 2021b; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980/2003; Steen, 2009). One example of this source-to-target mapping can be seen in the framework CLEAN IS GOOD, DIRTY IS BAD. In this framework, the source domain of CLEANLINESS is mapped onto the target domain of GOODNESS, which allows us to understand expressions like “a clean bill of health” or “a spotless reputation” as good and desirable, whereas “a stain on my reputation” or “a dirty mind” are understood as being bad and undesirable.

CMT describes how metaphors are more than just creative language use; they can be systematic and provide a framework within which we are able to talk about abstract concepts. Lakoff and Johnson (1980/2003, p. 4) give the example of ARGUMENT IS WAR:

(45) Your claims are indefensible.
(46) He attacked every weak point in my argument. His criticisms were right on target.
(47) I demolished his argument.
(48) I’ve never won an argument with him.
(49) He shot down all of my arguments.

As the italicized words show, the conceptual metaphor ARGUMENT IS WAR is not just something we say. By mapping the characteristics of the source domain (WAR) onto that of the target domain (ARGUMENT), we generate a framework that allows us to describe the experience of arguing (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980/2003), but it is more than just a matter of language; this conceptual mapping reflects the way that we conceive of and experience arguments. Anyone who has been in intense arguments would probably agree that there is some degree of

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14 it is standard practice to use small capital letters when defining a metaphorical framework or “schema,” as Lakoff and Johnson call them (1980/2003).
experiential overlap between *argument* and *war* in terms of the stress and adrenaline they can give rise to, and we all know that some verbal arguments do in fact degenerate into physical violence. We can say that *war*, by its very nature, is a physically grounded experience, making it an ‘ideal’ candidate for mapping its characteristics onto the concept of arguing.

While the *argument is war* framework draws our attention to the adversarial aspects of this activity, it simultaneously obscures any cooperative or otherwise positive outcomes from arguing; this is what Lakoff and Johnson refer to as “highlighting” and “hiding” (1980/2003, p. 10): a given metaphor may highlight some characteristics of an activity while hiding others. In other words, conceptual metaphors, by their very nature, are only partial. They do not reveal all possible characteristics of an object or activity, and so different cultures/languages may preferentially select different conceptual frameworks for a given activity or process. For example, in her 2002 study, Kövecses asked 20 Americans and 20 Hungarians to write a short essay on the meaning of life; her results suggest that while both Americans and Hungarians can use and understand metaphors like *life is a journey*, *life is a game*, or *life is a struggle*, the Hungarian participants tended to conceptualize *life* using the third option, whereas American participants tended to use another option entirely, *life is a precious possession* (as cited in Hegedűs, unpublished manuscript, p. 13). This speaks to the fact that there is not only a great degree of overlap, but also an equally great degree of variation in metaphors across the world’s languages (Kövecses, 2004).

The systematicity of conceptual metaphors does not simply involve mapping 100% of the source domain to the target domain. Only *some* aspects of the source domain are mapped onto the target domain, to the extent that some words/phrases can participate in metaphors, whereas synonyms and other related words may not. A corpus-based study by this author looked at the metaphorical use of the synonyms “raise,” “lift,” and “elevate,” in the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) and the ways in which these words can instantiate metaphors like *more is up* or *removal is up* framework. Using the compare function in COCA, a list of collocations was compiled for the three verbs mentioned above; collocates that were literal (i.e., not abstract) in nature were discarded, leaving a list of metaphorical collocations among the three verbs. The results suggest that even though these words are close synonyms in a literal sense, they cannot always replace each other in conceptual metaphors. There is minimal difference if
we say, for example, “raise your leg” versus “lift your leg,” but if we take an abstract noun like “embargo,” then “lift” is used 99.5% of the time, and “raise” is only used 0.5% of the time (Hala, unpublished manuscript). Examples like this demonstrate the importance of exploring conceptual metaphors across languages: If conceptual metaphors are as pervasive in human language as suggested by the literature, then describing what kinds of metaphors exist and how they are lexicalized (or violated, for that matter) is a valuable part of the language documentation process.

As with most theories, CMT has been adapted and refined over the years. In particular, members of the Pragglejaz Group have demonstrated the frequency, systematicity, universality, and variability of metaphors across human languages (see (Cameron & Deignan, 2006; Deignan, 2003; Kövecses, 2004, 2008; Steen, 2004, 2010), even going so far as to develop a Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP) which can be used to identify metaphors in discourse (though it must be noted that they do not claim that MIP can help identify broad, conventionalized categories of conceptual metaphor; Pragglejaz Group, 2007, p. 2). An important point supported by some of the Pragglejaz Group’s work is that certain metaphors seem to be more widespread (e.g., MORE IS UP, ANGER IS HEAT) than others; these widespread ones are usually very broad in scope, and may be referred to as generic metaphors (Kövecses, 2008, p. 55). As Kövecses notes, these generic metaphors exist “at an extremely general level...[they do] not specify many things that could be specified...the metaphor constitutes a generic framework that gets filled out by each culture that has the metaphor” (2004, p. 264; emphasis in original). Tracing the generic to the specific can demonstrate how even near-universal human experiences are conceptualized and thus lexicalized differently across cultures.

Other non-literal expressions may be more novel, such as THE MIND IS A MACHINE, which encompasses English expressions like “I’m running out of steam” or “Boy, the wheels are turning now!” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980/2003, p. 27; see Boussaid, 2019; Hegedüs, 2015; or Kuczok, 2014 for further examples & discussion on this). This is one of the major reasons for undertaking the present research: There are likely to be some metaphors in Michif which are found in other languages as well, and it is helpful to analyze how such metaphors are realized in the language regarding different processes (recall the English example of the metaphorocity of raise vs. lift from the previous paragraph). There may also be figurative expressions unique to Michif which need to be documented and discussed because they represent a unique part of the
language in the same way that syntax or phonology do. Furthermore, it has been Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, Democratic (WEIRD) societies (Doğruyol et al., 2019) which have served as the basis for much of the literature on metaphors and figurative language (O. Lovick, personal communication, June 12, 2022); any claims about the potential universality of certain generic metaphors should be tested on non-WEIRD languages, Michif being one of them.

2.2.1 Categories of Conceptual Metaphor

Lakoff and Johnson (1980/2003) separate conceptual metaphors into several categories. While these are useful in their own right, more recent work on metaphor tends to largely forego many of those distinctions, and indeed the adjective “conceptual” is often omitted (Cameron, 1999; Cameron & Deignan, 2006; Grady, 2005; Heywood et al., 2002; Kövecses, 2008; Pagani et al., 2014; Steen, 2010). Nevertheless, since this study appears to be the first analysis of figurative language in Michif, it can be useful to categorize the results according to the categories laid out in the original iteration of CMT. What follows is an overview of these categories.

2.2.1.1 Orientational Metaphors

Orientational metaphors are those that draw from our physical experience of directions and directional change in the world, giving rise to frameworks like MORE IS UP, LESS IS DOWN (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980/2003). In English, this frequently involves the use of prepositions like up or down, as in the following examples:

(50) The price of gas is going up yet again.

(51) Interest rates went down.

These types of metaphors tend to be more widespread than others precisely because they rely on our human experience of what it means to have a body and orient it within space, thereby largely superseding culture (Kövecses, 2008). Comparing the examples given above to (52) and (53) below shows that languages from different families, such as English and Korean, both make use of the metaphor framework MORE IS UP, LESS IS DOWN because the experiential basis here is our

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15 Examples (50) and (51) are my own.
ability to see the level of a substance go “up” in its container when more is added, or “down” when the substance is removed (Kövecses, 2008; Pagani et al., 2014). Culture has little or no bearing on this kind of human experience:

(52) Korean
팔을 올리다.

\begin{verbatim}
pal-eul     oll-i-da
arm-ACC    raise-INF
\end{verbatim}
‘Raise [one’s] arm.’ (NAVER Dictionary, 2017)

(53) 온도를 올리다.

\begin{verbatim}
ondo-reul    oll-i-da
temperature-OBJ  raise-INF
\end{verbatim}
‘Increase the temperature.’ (NAVER Dictionary, 2017)

Despite the large amount cross-cultural overlap in the use of orientational metaphors, an important point must be made here: translating orientational metaphors is hardly a matter of one-to-one correspondence, which is a major reason why it is important to look at metaphorical frameworks in under-described languages like Michif. The Korean examples in examples (54) and (55) below demonstrate that where English uses a framework like HEALTH IS UP, SICKNESS IS DOWN in the phrase ‘fall ill,’ a word-for-word translation into Korean is ungrammatical (indicated by the asterisk in (54)). In fact, the grammatical sentence in (55) uses a different metaphor altogether, which may be described as SICKNESS IS AN AGENT, an entity that can catch us:

(54) *그 사람은 병에 빠졌어.

\begin{verbatim}
*keu  saram-eun  byeong-ae  bbajyeo-ss-eo
DET  person-TOP  illness-LOC  fall-PST-CGJ
\end{verbatim}
‘S/he fell ill.’

(55) 그 사람은 병에 걸렸어.

\begin{verbatim}
keu  saram-eun  byeong-ae  geolyeo-ss-eo
DET  person-TOP  illness-LOC  be.caught-PST-CGJ
\end{verbatim}
‘S/he fell ill.’ (lit. ‘That person was caught in illness.’) (NAVER Dictionary, 2017)
While unrelated languages like Korean and English both use frameworks like MORE IS UP, LESS IS DOWN and have lexicalized them in a similar manner, other frameworks (e.g., HEALTH IS UP, SICKNESS IS DOWN) are not necessarily shared or lexicalized in the same way; we should expect there to be differences like this in Michif as well.

### 2.2.1.2 Metonymy

Metonymy is considered to be a linguistic process that is separate yet related to metaphor (Kövecses, 2013; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980/2003; Steen, 2005). It is perhaps best described as a substitution process which utilizes part-for-whole or whole-for-part distinctions (Panther et al., 2009; Rice, 2012). While metaphors emphasize connections between two unrelated domains, metonymy involves substituting one item for another within the same domain (Kövecses, 2013; Steen, 2005). Rhodes and Lawler (1981) suggest that metonymy is a useful process because it appears to be “an effective cohesive device, and its value may often exceed that of redundancy” (p. 22). A simple example is the way in which we talk about nations and their governments. Instead of saying: “A certain subset of the politicians who were elected to serve in the government of Canada passed a new law,” we can simply say: “Ottawa passed a new law”; such expressions can only be understood through a metonymic framework like THE PART FOR THE WHOLE or, more specifically, THE PLACE FOR THE INSTITUTION. Those with a firm grasp of the English language and relevant contextual knowledge would understand that in this case, Ottawa (the capital city of Canada) stands for some of the people currently governing the country.

Examples (56) through (58) illustrate metonymy in other languages:

(56) Korean

청와대는 온는 5 월 문을 엽니다.

Cheongwadae-neun oh-neun 5-weol mun-eul yeomnida

The.Blue.House-TOP come-ADV 5-month door-OBJ open.PRS

‘The Blue House\(^{16}\) opens its doors this coming May’

(NAVER Dictionary, 2017)

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\(^{16}\) The Blue House is the executive office and official residence of the Republic of Korea's head of state.
In (56), the Blue House is the South Korean equivalent of the White House in the USA; the house itself cannot open the doors, so it must be interpreted through the metonymical framework THE PLACE FOR THE INSTITUTION. The Michif example in (57) illustrates THE OBJECT FOR THE USER (as per Lakoff & Johnson, 1980/2003), since it is not the shoes themselves that perform the action of running. Example (58) appears to fall under THE PRODUCT FOR THE PRODUCER, since books cannot speak. As the examples show, metonymy is also a cross-linguistic phenomenon, and one that allows language users to contextualize ideas in an efficient manner; it is therefore worth noting instances of metonymy in Michif as well.

### 2.2.1.3 Ontological Metaphors

This category of metaphors may be best described as giving concrete properties to abstract concepts. Perhaps because of this, ontological metaphors seem to offer the greatest amount of variability both within and across cultures. One example of an ontological metaphor can be found in how frequently cancer – and disease in general – collocates with words like “battle” or “aggressive” in English; the examples shown below in Figure 5 demonstrate how English speakers can and do conceptualize cancer/disease as an adversary. Further to this point, there is surely no shortage of news headlines over the last two years about “fighting” and “beating” COVID-19, or its “wreaking havoc” on our healthcare systems and economies.
Conceptualizing disease as malicious actors seems to be a useful way of encompassing the idea that disease is undesirable and something we should be vigilant about. Another example is provided in (59), which can be considered a part of the ontological metaphor THE MIND IS A MACHINE (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980/2003):

(59) German

\[\text{Mein Deutsch ist eingerostet.}\]

\text{my German be.3S.PRS rust.PTCP}

‘My German skill has declined.’ (lit. ‘My German is rusty.’)

The expression in (59) is one that happens to be shared in English: rust on tools or machines is an indication that they may not function as well as they ought to. In this way, mapping the source domain of MACHINE to the target domain of MIND provides a framework for describing and understanding the function – or malfunction – of mental faculties.

Personification falls under this category as well; while we may not often think of personification as a type of metaphor, there is a clear source domain (humans) and target domain

\[\text{\textsuperscript{17} Example (59) is my own.}\]
(non-humans). Personification helps us to conceptualize and talk about the behaviour or characteristics of non-human entities. Furthermore, this linguistic process shows great variability across languages, and I would add that the related process of describing humans in terms of culturally observed animal characteristics is equally as important for these reasons. Examples (60) demonstrate personification in Korean, with (61) and (62) showing it in Michif:

(60) Korean

돈이 돈을 낳는다.

\begin{verbatim}
don-i don-eul nah-neun-da
\end{verbatim}

Money-SBJ money-OBJ give.birth-IT-INF

‘Money begets money.’ (lit. ‘Money gives birth to money.’)  

(NAVER Dictionary, 2017)

(61) Michif

\begin{verbatim}
Geeenakeenawn den vil aynipoomakuhk.
gee-nakee-nawn den vil ay-nipoo-maka-hk
\end{verbatim}

1.PST-stop-PL.EXCL in town.F.INAN CNJ-die-AC-CNJ.0

‘We stopped in a ghost town.’ (lit. ‘We stopped in a town that had died.’)  

(Laverdure & Allard, 1983, p. 110)

(62) Mee souyee shoohkaypahtohwmakan.

\begin{verbatim}
mee souyee shoohkay-pahtohw-maka-n
\end{verbatim}

my.PL shoes powerful-run-AC-0

‘I can run fast with these shoes.’ (lit. ‘My shoes run fast.’)  

(MM.BF.20211106)

The examples in (61) and (62) also reveal something about the way in which Michif – and other Algonquian languages – can personify non-human entities: the morpheme -maka changes the animacy of a verb from animate to inanimate, which is discussed in greater detail in section 4.2

The animacy-converting morpheme -maka and its role in metaphor/metonymy.

2.2.1.4 Dead Metaphors

First of all, the irony of this category’s name should not be ignored: the idea that semantic concepts like metaphors can “die” is itself a kind of ontological metaphor. Deignan (1999) describes how this notion of dead metaphor can refer to “…any metaphor which is not completely innovative…[or] to lexical items whose metaphorical origins are no longer
detectable…” (p. 182). Because of this, some may argue that they are merely cases of polysemy rather than metaphor (Deignan, 1999; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980/2003) (refer to section 1.1 Overview of metaphor and figurative language for an overview of polysemy). Lakoff and Johnson provide the example “the foot of a mountain,” which they ascribe to the framework A MOUNTAIN IS A PERSON (2003, p. 55). In this example, the structure of a mountain is compared to the structure of a human/animal body, such that the “foot” refers to the lowest part, that which touches the ground. They contend that this conceptualization of A MOUNTAIN IS A PERSON rarely extends beyond this particular expression (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980/2003),18 which fits Deignan’s description of the non-innovative, unproductive metaphor.

Another example of a dead metaphor can be found in English names for various flora, such as the use of “toadstool” to refer to various kinds of poisonous mushrooms. It could be argued that the term toadstool is part of a conceptual framework like PLANTS ARE IMPLEMENTS FOR NON-HUMANS, especially in light of similar examples like “devil’s club” (oplopanax horridus), “fairy bells” (prosartes spp.) and “foxglove” (digitalis spp.; MacKinnon et al., 2016), as well as a particular group of inedible mushrooms known colloquially as “elves’ saddles” (Kroeger, 2012). In addition to these English terms, there are similar examples found in Plains Cree and Upper Tanana:

(63) Plains Cree

ayîkitâs
ayîki-tâs
frog-pants
‘pitcher plant [Sarracenia purpurea]’ (lit. ‘frog pants’)

(Alberta Language Technology Lab, 2022)

(64) ayîki-nônâcikan
ayîki nônâcik-an
frog suck-NMLZ
‘mushroom’ (lit. ‘frog soother; frog sucker’) (LeClaire & Cardinal, 1998, p. 367)

18 There is at least one other common expression that can be said to belong to this framework: “rock face” as it is used to refer to a “bare vertical surface of natural rock” (Oxford English Dictionary, 2022).
(65) Upper Tanana

\[
\begin{align*}
taatsq' & \quad tsay' \\
raven & \quad ochre:POSS
\end{align*}
\]
‘puffball mushroom’ (lit. ‘raven’s ochre’) \hfill (Kari, 2019, p. 357)

(66) lahlil \quad tth'aal'

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{butterfly} & \quad \text{cradle-POSS}
\end{align*}
\]
‘shrubby cinquefoil’ (lit. ‘butterfly’s cradle’) \hfill (Kari, 2019, p. 206)

In English at least, this may be considered a dead metaphor because the framework is no longer productive; in other words, the metaphor is generally not used by English speakers to identify new or unfamiliar species of plants that they are seeing for the first time, and the systematic nature of naming flora in this way would probably not be apparent to many modern-day speakers of English.

One possible example of a dead metaphor in Michif is the word foutroo ‘mink.’ According to Le Glossaire acadien, an etymological dictionary of Acadian French, this word – as it was originally used in France – referred to a kind of small boat (Poirier, 1993). It just so happens that minks are adept swimmers, so for anyone who has seen a mink swimming, it is not hard to imagine why early French explorers might have decided to use this term to refer to these animals; they move quite smoothly through the water, and their long, narrow bodies could be said to resemble the shape of a boat, though the potential origins of this word may not be discernable to modern-day speakers of Michif. Instances like this demonstrate the value of studying conceptual metaphors across human languages: It can reveal something about the variability and creativity of human cognition, and even though foutroo may be a dead metaphor, it shows how human perception of the natural world – particularly animals – potentially constitutes a rich source of semantic creativity. This latter point is discussed in more detail in Section 3.2 Identification of figurative language.

2.2.1.5 Conceptual metaphors in the context of language learning

Norafkan (2013) notes that grammatical fluency and conceptual fluency in a language are different, and that learners who are considered grammatically fluent may still fail to grasp meaning in contexts that are heavily dependent on conceptual metaphors. That is, in order to
“think like a native speaker,” one ought to receive some level of instruction related to the conceptual metaphors that undergird a given language (Norafkan, 2013, p. 4). Given that one of the goals of language documentation is to preserve the culture and worldview woven into the language, the study of conceptual metaphors in endangered languages is of considerable importance, especially while L1 speakers are still around to share this information.

Studies such as those done by Norafkan (2013) and Hilliard (2017) found that explicit instruction in metaphor and metonymy can prove both interesting and beneficial for language learners by improving their communicative competence. A number of researchers (Hilliard, 2017; Kövecses, 2004; Lakoff & Johnson, 2003; Norafkan, 2013; Steen, 2005) contend that figurative language and metaphors are crucial to linguistic competence and cultural expression. Furthermore, my own experiences with language learning and teaching have led me to believe that this is an area worthy of research and documentation, one which I hope will assist in the effort to revitalize Michif. My ultimate purpose is to identify enough about conceptual metaphors in Michif that the information could be incorporated into future Michif language classes.

To illustrate the importance of metaphor in learning and understanding, Foley (1997) cites a study by Gentner and Gentner (1982) related to how metaphorical models can affect humans’ understanding of the world. The study examined the test performance of two groups of students who had learned two different metaphors to explain how parallel resistors control the flow of electricity. Each group did better on certain questions than others, which is attributed to the fact that they were taught to understand electricity using different metaphors (1982, as cited in Foley, 1997, p. 181): “The moral of the Gentners’ landmark study is that such folk theories or models constitute people’s understanding of phenomena…and thereby constrain people’s inferences about phenomena, especially novel phenomena…” Indeed, the results from Gentner and Gentner’s (1982) research lend support to one of the central ideas of CMT put forth by Lakoff and Johnson (1980/2003): metaphors are more than just fancy language; they are connected to ways of thinking and knowing.

While the specific example of parallel resistors may be somewhat esoteric, the underlying notion of metaphors as a means of structuring knowledge is central to this thesis, because it raises the question: How might Michif speakers think and talk about various abstract concepts? To date, most research on Michif has focused on phonology, morphology, and syntax; of course,
these are very important areas of study, but it would be unwise to overlook the importance of semantics, particularly conceptual metaphors. They can be of great value that not only adds to our overall understanding of Michif but may also serve to help learners of the language.

2.3 Overview of previous work on metaphor in Indigenous languages of North America

While there appears to be no detailed analysis of conceptual metaphors in Michif to date, there exist some studies on metaphor in other Indigenous languages in North America, which are described in the following sections. Sections 2.3.1 Metaphor research looks at research done by Rhodes (1985, 1986) on metaphor in Ojibwe, an Algonquian language that is closely related to Cree. Section 2.3.2 Figurative language in East Cree presents research on semantic creativity in East Cree, a dialect spoken in parts of Quebec and Ontario. Section 2.3.3 provides a brief overview of research on figurative language in Beaver (Dane-Zaa), Dënesųłıné, and Upper Tanana, three Dene languages spoken in northern North America.

2.3.1 Metaphor research in Ojibwe

Some of the first work to approach metaphors in Algonquian languages through CMT appears to be Rhodes’s 1985 paper on metaphors in Ojibwe. The paper opens with Rhodes chastising linguists who had postulated that many Indigenous languages simply do not contain metaphors. It is worth mentioning that in some instances, speakers of Indigenous languages have themselves iterated similar notions (see Rice, 2012, for a discussion of this in Dene languages). Such notions may have to do with the term “metaphor” itself and the baggage it seems to come with, which is why I have tried to variously refer to this phenomenon as “figurative language,” “semantic creativity,” or even “non-literal language” as mentioned in section 1.1 Overview of.

Rhodes mentions a number of metaphorically structured concepts such as RELATING IS MANIPULATING which is seen in expressions like daapnaad ‘accept someone’ (lit. ‘pick someone up’) or webnaad ‘break up with someone’ (lit. ‘throw someone away’); 1985, p. 164). Rhodes also provides data that relate to the framework SEX IS HUNTING (1985). According to his glosses, the Ojibwe word wiiyaas ‘meat’ may be construed as food or “a sexual object” depending on whether it is rendered as grammatically inanimate (literal) or animate (figurative) (Rhodes, 1985,
Various uses of the word “meat” to refer to sex or the human body in a sexual sense are attested in English too (Harper, 2022), which may also be demonstrated in the syntax through pronouns (e.g., “it’s a piece of meat” versus “she’s a piece of meat”). Keeping in mind that Michif draws its vocabulary and grammar largely from two different source languages, this raises the question of how metaphors are construed in Michif: what kinds of metaphors rely on verbal morphology, and what kinds rely more on nouns and noun phrases?

A subsequent paper by Rhodes examines the metaphoricity of Ojibwe verbs that denote different ways of speaking. He provides examples like nwazmaad that may be translated as ‘disagree with someone about something,’ however his morpheme-by-morpheme breakdown reveals the metaphorical sense of ‘grab someone with words’:

(67) Nwazmaad.

\begin{verbatim}
    nawad-im-Ø-aa-d
    grab-use.words-AF-3OBJ-3SBJ
\end{verbatim}

‘Confront someone with something.’ (lit. ‘Grab someone with words.’)

(Rhodes, 1986, p. 17)

Rhodes notes that by some standards, such verbs of speaking could be considered dead metaphors because of their degree of lexicalization, though he counters this by saying that bare translations like nwazmaad = ‘disagree’ are unsatisfactory to native speakers of the language because they “lack a pragmatic component” that specifies the nature of the disagreement in question (Rhodes, 1986, p. 7). This outlines a potential problem for the present study as well: A large part of the data comes from Laverdure and Allard’s (1983) dictionary, and a number of entries therein lack the kind of semantic/pragmatic information that could reveal conceptual patterns to learners of Michif.

2.3.2 Figurative language in East Cree

Scott (1989) examines the metaphorical framework applied to goose hunting in East Cree, emphasizing the stark contrast in how Cree and European cultures conceptualize the relationship between the human and animal worlds; it seems that the latter tends to view humans as being above animals, whereas in the former, as Scott (1989) notes, humans are conceptualized as existing within nature:
One might observe that a consequence of the sort of analogical thinking that I have been describing would be to anthropomorphize animals, but that would be to assume the primacy of the human term. The animal term reacts with perhaps equal force on the human term, so that animal behaviour can become a model for human relations. Preston (1978: 152) has suggested that the goose as exemplar of Cree ideals of social coordination, grace and composure may be "better" than humans. (p. 198)

Scott describes how several hunting-related words can have a sexual connotation, echoing Rhodes’ description of the sex is hunting metaphor; he provides examples such as mitwaaschaaau, ‘he shoots/ejaculates’; paaschikan ‘shotgun/penis’; pukw ‘gunpowder/sperm’; and spichinaakin ‘gun sheath/condom’ (1989, p. 197); it is unclear from Scott’s description whether the domain of hunting is extended to sex or vice versa, but the shared vocabulary nevertheless seems to indicate a metaphorical framework. According to the itwèwina dictionary, the slang use of ‘gun sheath’ to mean ‘condom’ is also present in Plains Cree (Alberta Language Technology Lab, 2022). Scott (1989) also discusses the figurative use of the noun for ‘pet’ among East Cree hunters, who use it to refer to wild species of animals which they are “privileged to kill with unusual success,” and how this stands in opposition to a mythical character known as Chischihp who is tricked into killing his pets (i.e., wild animals) and ends up turning into a kind of waterfowl that may be hunted by humans (p. 197).

Junker (2003) examines metaphors in East Cree related to the mind and thinking. Since Cree is a polysynthetic language, the metaphors that she focuses on are derivational constructions built around a classifier morpheme, -eyi-, which appears in words that indicate thinking, knowing, wanting and feeling (Junker, 2003). She offers examples that belong to the metaphor thinking is object manipulation as in the example below:

(68) wepeyihtam.
  wep-eyi-ht-am
  sweep-think-TI-3SG
  ‘S/he forgives it.’ (lit. ‘S/he sweep-thinks it.’) (Junker, 2003, p. 14)

A related expression is also attested in Plains Cree, which does not include the classifier morpheme that translates as ‘think’ but nevertheless conveys the same metaphor:
(69) Plains Cree

kâsînamâtowak.
kâsîna-m-âto-wak
wipe-TI-RCP-3PL

‘They forgive one another.’ (lit. ‘They wipe/erase something for one another.’)

(Alberta Language Technology Lab, 2022)

Examples such as these are valuable to the present study, since they indicate potential Algonquian-based conceptualizations that can be explored in Michif as well. Indeed, a similar construction appears to exist in Michif as well and is discussed in more detail in section 4.3.2 Internal bodily experiences.

2.3.3 Semantic creativity in Northern Dene languages

Pasamonik (2012) discusses metaphors in Beaver (Dane-zaa), a Dene language spoken in British Columbia and Alberta, focusing on metaphorical expressions of emotion involving body parts. Many of the world’s languages make use of bodily organs to talk about emotions (Kövecses, 2008) and Beaver is no exception to this. Pasamonik presents various examples of how Beaver speakers conceptualize bodily organs as SEATS OF EMOTION, such as the heart representing not only life or death, but also excitement or fear in expressions like madzée’ da’atl’is ‘S/he is excited or scared,’ (lit. ‘his/her heart stopped dancing’; 2012, p. 84). Pasamonik also shows how an interplay between metaphor and metonymy gives rise to frameworks like SEAT OF EMOTION FOR PERSON, so that the meaning of an expression like sîjdyé’ tsééle ‘my mind is evil’ is actually more akin to saying ‘I’m grumpy’ (Pasamonik, 2012, p. 92). Such examples provide yet more evidence for the rich cross-cultural variation of metaphor, and how even basic phrases to talk about one’s mood may make use of such language.

Rice (2012) offers an extensive list of metaphorical and metonymical terms from Dënesųłiné, a Northern Dene language spoken in the prairie provinces of Canada as well as the Northwest Territories. The breadth of her examples are meant to impart that (1) the small verb-stem inventory of a polysynthetic language like Dënesųłiné (and other Dene languages by extension) seems to necessitate the use of metaphorical and metonymical extension as a way to add new words to the language, and (2) that the culturally-defined nature of metaphor and
metonymy means their documentation in endangered Indigenous languages is important: “…the cataloguing and analysis of metaphors and metonyms with speakers of indigenous languages is a sure-fire way of engaging them linguistically with phenomena having deep cultural, cognitive, and language revitalization import” (Rice, 2012, p. 72).

Lovick (2012) discusses the use of animal idioms in Upper Tanana. She states that such idioms in Upper Tanana fall into two basic categories: those based on observed characteristics of animals in real life, and those based on mythology and stories about certain animals (Lovick, 2012). Research such as this not only demonstrates how animals and the natural world constitute a rich source of figurative language (i.e., metaphors), but also the degree of cross-cultural variability that is possible with such domains. For example, she provides a comparison of how calling someone a “dog” in Upper Tanana has the underlying connotation of being undisciplined or a poor listener, whereas no such connotation exists in a language like German (Lovick, 2012).

Lovick’s work also raises an important point about the documentation of metaphors in endangered languages in general: first, language attrition and endangerment makes the elicitation and documentation of metaphors more and more difficult as time goes on, such that “[o]nce a language stop to be used on a daily basis, a special effort needs to be made to document and even notice figurative speech” (2012, p. 118). She also points out that figurative language is more easily observed in colloquial conversations, although language documentation researchers may not be able to witness such speech because of language loss (Lovick, 2012). While the focus of her research is Upper Tanana Dene, this is no less true of other endangered Indigenous languages. This speaks to why the work of identifying conceptual metaphors in a language like Michif should be a concern in regard to language preservation and revitalization: if semantic creativity in Michif remains undocumented or poorly described, a significant part of the language and culture will eventually be lost; thus, a special effort must be made to have native speakers share their knowledge of figurative expressions in the language. The next chapter provides a description of the major data sources and methodological considerations that inform the research.
3. DATA & METHODOLOGY

This section outlines the data as well as the methods used to collect them. Section 3.1 Data sources is an overview of the main data sources, while section 3.2 Identification of discusses the importance of collaboration between the researcher and interviewee(s) in identifying cases of conceptual metaphors. Section 3.3 Identifying conceptual metaphors in written sources provides a brief overview of how the dictionary sources were utilized in the research, and 3.4 Interview process & equipment used describes the format of the interviews with Brousse.

3.1 Data sources

The data involved the use of dictionary-type resources and oral interviews with Brousse. The written resources came from a variety of formats, including:

- A hard copy of Laverdure and Allard’s Turtle Mountain Dictionary (1983)
- The online Michif Talking Dictionary (2022) created and maintained by the Prairies to Woodlands Indigenous Language Revitalization Circle using the Mother Tongues dictionary software developed by Aiden Pine
- Mazzoli’s (2021) paper on Michif verbal derivation, which includes a glossed text of the Michif story La Pchit Sandrieuz (Cinderella)
- The smartphone app Heritage Michif to Go (Gabriel Dumont Institute, 2019)
- The Michif Dictionary developed by the Algonquian Dictionaries Project (2022)

The TMD was produced with editorial support from John Crawford, one of the first linguists to offer a linguistic description Michif. Many of the entries in the TMD provide both single-word translations as well as example sentences, making it a useful resource for anyone studying or learning the language. The Michif Talking Dictionary is basically an electronic version of the TMD, with many of the entries containing voice recordings by Verna DeMontigny and Grace Zoldy, two Michif speakers from Manitoba. Mazzoli’s (2021) paper provided the basis for the interest in the animacy-converting -maka morpheme, as well as a general guide for teasing apart the many morphemes in certain semantically creative expressions.
The *Heritage Michif to Go* app (Gabriel Dumont Institute, 2019) is similar to the *Michif Talking Dictionary* in that the search engine will display partial matches, so it is possible to find words or phrases containing particular verb stems or even derivational morphemes such as -<i>maka</i>. All entries on the app contain voice recordings by Michif speaker Norman Fleury. The *Michif Dictionary* (Algonquian Dictionaries Project, 2022) is another online dictionary that allows the user to search for partial matches of text in either English or Michif. It contains a number of entries not found in the other resources, and the data comes from six Michif speakers: Verna DeMontigny, Mervin Fleury, Norman Fleury, Victoria Genaille, Harvey Pelletier, and Grace Zoldy. The *Michif Dictionary* also indicates the French or Cree cognates for many of the entries – a feature not found in the other sources – though the number of audio recordings is relatively small in comparison to the TMD. It appears that the lexical resources mentioned above were compiled from lists of English vocabulary and phrases that were then translated into Michif by native speakers. These resources informed a great deal of the questions that came up during the oral interviews, as Brousse and I spent a substantial amount of time analyzing entries from these different resources. The interview process itself is covered in greater detail in section 3.4 Interview process & equipment used.

### 3.2 Identification of figurative language

Before attempting to find examples of figurative language in Michif, it is important to have a clear methodology for identifying what is or is not an instance of figurative language. As Low (1999) states:

> Essentially, any research report needs to include overt discussion of the extent to which the reader can be confident about the nature of the data which has been selected or omitted from the study, about the techniques of analysis and categorisation used, and about the extent to which the data support the conclusions proposed. It must, however, be admitted that, when it comes to applied language research, this is not always quite as simple a demand as it may at first sight appear. (p. 48)

Low discusses the merits and drawbacks of the metaphor identification process in terms of <i>who</i> is doing the identification, noting three possibilities: the researcher decides unilaterally; the
interviewee identifies their own metaphors after the interview; or, a third party decides (Low, 1999). The next two sections describe these possibilities in more detail.

3.2.1 Rationale for the researcher to identify metaphors

The most common approach is for the researcher to unilaterally decide on what constitutes metaphor, though this is not without its pitfalls (Low, 1999). The first and most obvious issue is that the interviewees themselves may not consider certain expressions to be metaphoric, even if the researcher does. For example:

(70) Li feezee katalhiskawchikaymakan pawshkishikayhki.

\[
\begin{array}{llll}
\text{ DET.} & \text{DEF.M} & \text{gun} & \text{FUT-kick-INT-AC-0.IND} \\
\text{feeze} & \text{e} & \text{ka-tahkhiskaw-chikay-maka-n} & \text{pawshkishikay-hk-i} \\
\end{array}
\]

‘The gun will recoil when fired.’ (lit. ‘The gun will kick if fired.’) (Laverdure & Allard, 1983, p. 255)

The use of the intransitive verb tahkishkawchikay- ‘kick’ to describe the recoil of weapons or tools also appears to have a parallel in Plains Cree, according to the Alberta Elders’ Cree Dictionary, albeit with different morphology:

(71) Plains Cree

\[
\begin{array}{llll}
\text{ DET.} & \text{DEF.M} & \text{something} & \text{FUT-kick-INT-FIN-0.CNJ} \\
\text{kikway} & \text{ka} & \text{tahkiskâ-cike-payi-k} & \text{kick-INT-FIN-0.CNJ} \\
\end{array}
\]

‘recoil’ (lit. ‘when something kicks’) (LeClaire & Cardinal, 1998, p. 399)

Where Michif is concerned, there does not seem to be any other documented expression to describe this process, at least not in the dictionary sources. If there is indeed no alternative expression to describe the reactive resistance of tools and weapons during use, speakers may not see it as metaphorical. However, it is the view of this researcher that the presence of the animacy-converting -maka morpheme hints at the potential for this to be non-literal language use, given that morpheme’s function of licensing AI verbs to take inanimate subjects. It is curious that the Plains Cree expression in (71) does not include the equivalent morpheme; the presence/absence of the animacy-converting morpheme is discussed further in sections 4.2 The animacy-converting morpheme -maka and its role in metaphor/metonymy and 4.2.1 The absence of the -maka morpheme. Concerning the Michif verb tahkishkaw- ‘kick,’ there is evidence that
this verb has a basic sense of ‘poke/jab/stab with one’s foot’: The *itwêwina* Plains Cree dictionary (Alberta Language Technology Lab, 2022) and the electronic version of the TMD (*Michif Talking Dictionary* | *Li Liivr Di Moo Aan Michif*, 2022) both allow users to search for individual morphemes; searching for *tahk*- or *tahk* brings up results (set in bold text for the sake of clarity) such as:

(72) Plains Cree

*tahkamêw.*

*tahka-m-êw*

*stab*-TA-3S

’S/he stabs someone.’

(Alberta Language Technology Lab, 2022)

(73) *tahkinêw.*

*tahki-n-êw*

*poke*-by.hand-3S.TA

’S/he pokes someone with a finger, elbow, etc.’

(Alberta Language Technology Lab, 2022)

(74) Michif

*Kee-tahkamitouwuk lee soldaw avik lee bayonet.*

*kee-tahka-m-itou-wuk lee soldaw avik lee bayanet*

PST-*jab*-TA-RCP-3PL DET.DEF.PL soldier with DET.DEF.PL bayonet

‘The soldiers bayoneted each other.’

(Laverdure & Allard, 1983, p. 36)

In addition, the following examples from Michif show how the -(i)shk morpheme can indicate actions done by foot in a literal sense, with the -(i)shk morpheme set in bold:

(75) *Kawya ouhpwayshka la pousyayr.*

*kawya ouhp-way-shk-a la pousyayr*

NEG.IMP upward-throw-*by.foot*-2.IMP DET.DEF.F dust

‘Don’t kick up dust.’

(Laverdure & Allard, 1983, p. 154)

(76) *Peekoushkawayw.*

*peekou-shk-aw-ayw*

break-*by.foot*-TA-3S

’S/he breaks it with a foot.’

(Bakker, 2004, p. 73)

---

19 Not to be confused with the identical morpheme *-shk* that is used to indicate habitual actions (Bakker, 2004).
In addition to the evidence from examples (72) through (77), Brousse stated that Michif takhishka- does not have other literal senses outside of ‘kick,’ as the literal action of jabbing or poking with another body part or utensil would require a different verb. Thus, it seems reasonable to assert that the basic sense of takhishka- can be approximated as ‘poke or jab with one's foot,’ supporting the idea that its sense extension to firearm recoil is a kind of metaphor.

Furthermore, a phenomenon like the recoil of a gun could theoretically constitute one of the cases that Bakker (1997) mentions where there was no sufficiently equivalent expression in Plains Cree around this new technology, so it is curious that an alternative like French reculer (“recoil”) is unattested in the major lexical sources. Based on this, I would argue that it is a conceptual metaphor that maps the sensation of kicking (or being kicked) to the experience of powerful mechanical reactions, even if native speakers do not see it as such.

One potential issue with the interviewer identifying metaphors is the so-called recency effect, wherein “metaphor researchers are likely to have a heightened sensitivity to metaphors with which they have been working in the recent past…[which] may lead to consistently over-interpreting expressions which are only peripherally relatable, or just about relatable with hindsight” (Sayce, 1953, p. 60, as cited in Low, 1999, p. 49; emphasis in original). In other words, researchers of metaphor may become overly zealous with trying to squeeze the data into a particular metaphorical framework because of their fascination with that framework, constituting a kind of confirmation bias. This problem may be controlled by including the interviewees in the metaphor identification process.

Having the researcher decide what constitutes metaphor is necessary to some extent, because the researcher brings an understanding of the framework of metalinguistics and conceptual metaphor. Furthermore, as Low states, a certain amount of pre-contextualization or discussion of the “intentions, plans and expectations” (1999, p. 53) for the interview is necessary in order to validate what the speaker says. In terms of the present study and others like it, this requires the interviewer to ask some targeted questions that draw on the linguist’s knowledge of
generic-level metaphors, which are the basic form of a metaphor that subsequently undergoes cultural/linguistic adaptation (Gibbs Jr, 2017; Kövecses, 2021a). The importance of this becomes clear if we consider that there are some categories of metaphor that seem to be nearly universal, such as MORE IS UP or THE ANGRY PERSON IS A PRESSURIZED CONTAINER (Kövecses, 2004). It may be that English speakers would not consider phrases like “gas went up again” as a metaphor, perhaps because it is ingrained in human experience; indeed, it is ingrained to the point that it may be considered a dead metaphor, though the framework itself is quite productive and used in myriad contexts. Should that then invalidate such expressions in metaphor studies? I would argue not, because there are other ways of expressing notions of increasing/decreasing that do not necessarily use a vertical axis, such as words that denote “shrinking” or “expanding.” Such metaphors are worth examining in a language like Michif because, as noted previously, they are generic-level metaphors that may be specified differently in different languages (Kövecses, 2004).

In light of this, there should be an intention on the part of the researcher to ask questions like “How do you say ‘the price of gas went up’ in Michif? Can the same expression be used to talk about temperature or the population of a city?” or “What are some different expressions for ‘anger’ that you know of? Can you use words related to heat/temperature to talk about emotions?” and so forth. The interviewee would then be asked if the given expressions could be extended to other situations, as a means of clarifying the literal vs. figurative meaning of a word or phrase. The importance of this kind of targeted questioning is further underscored by the fact that even between Michif and Cree, there may be lexical variation in how metaphors are expressed, or differences in how cognate verbs are used in figurative expressions. For example, the Cree verb kâsînâ[m] (‘wipe [it]’), discussed in section 2.3.2 Figurative language in East Cree, can be used in a figurative sense to mean ‘forgive’ (Junker, 2003, p. 14). On the other hand, the Michif cognate kawsheena may be used figuratively to talk about forgetting:

(78) Plains Cree
kâsînâmâtowak.
kâsînâ-m-âto-wak
wipe-TI-RCP-3PL
‘They forgive one another.’ (lit. ‘They wipe/erase something for one another.’)

(Alberta Language Technology Lab, 2022)
(79) Michif

Waypina kawsheena ka-ityayhtaman.

waypin-a kawsheen-a ka-ityhta-m-an
throw.away-2.IMP wipe-2S.IMP CNJ-think-TI-2S.CNJ

‘Worry about it later; forget about it.’ (lit. ‘throw away and wipe what you’re thinking.’)

The examples above suggest that the source domain CLEANING is extended to the target domain of FORGIVING in Plains Cree and FORGETTING in Michif. Even if speakers of these closely related languages do not identify these expressions as metaphors, there are clear source and target domains; in such instances, the researcher can at least attempt to identify potential patterns or frameworks that may then be used to explore the language further.

3.2.2 Rationale for the interviewee to identify metaphors

The second possibility discussed by Low (1999) involves the interviewee deciding which of their utterances are metaphorical and which are not, which also comes with its benefits and drawbacks. Problems may arise if the interviewees attempt to provide answers that they think the researcher wants to hear, or simply from the fact that different people have different ideas about what constitutes a metaphor (Low, 1999). Some people may consider it merely “an ornamental extra in language” with no connection to human cognition (Mahon, 1999, p. 69), yet others – usually researchers of metaphor – tend to recognize it as a fundamental part of human language that is in some ways tied to cognition. Consider the following examples related to the personification of dogs:

(80) English

You dog!

‘You scoundrel; you cad!’

---

20 It may be that the verb for ‘wipe’ can be used to talk about both forgiving and forgetting in both languages, though this would have to be confirmed by speakers.
(81) Michif

\[ \text{Si koum en shyenn.} \]
\[ \text{si koum en shyenn} \]
\[ \text{COP like IND.DET.F dog} \]
‘She gets a lot of attention from men.’ (lit. ‘She’s like a dog [in heat].’)  

(MM.BF.20220115)

(82) Korean

기름 먹어 본 개 같다.

\[ \text{gireum meogeo bon gae gatda} \]
\[ \text{oil eat.CGJ see.AUX dog be.similar.INF} \]
‘S/he cannot get enough of it.’ (lit. ‘S/he is like a dog that has tasted grease.’)  

(등대약사의 점자사전, 2018)

(83) Upper Tanana

Łįį (k’e) uht’iin ahlįį.

\[ \text{liį (k’e) uht’iin ahlįį} \]
\[ \text{dog (like) people 2PL.S-be} \]
‘You guys don’t listen.’ (lit. ‘You guys are [like] dog people.’)  

(Lovick, 2012, p. 104)

From a Western cultural perspective, there is a source domain (animal characteristics) and a target domain (human behaviour), even when the language under consideration is itself non-Western – as in (81) through (83) – since Western cultures typically see humans as different from other animals. In this way, the data in (80) through (83) may be taken as metaphorical. However, the duality of humans versus animals does not hold for all cultures. Viveiros de Castro (1998) discusses this perspectivism in the context of Indigenous cultures of Amazonia, noting that some cosmological perspectives understand animals as being no different than humans: They have their own cultures and their own attitudes towards humans and other phenomena in the world. Scott (1989) describes a similar view among East Cree goose hunters, wherein the distinction between “nature” and “culture” is practically non-existent; this in turn nullifies the literal versus figurative distinction when it comes to comparisons between human and animal behaviour. In such systems, it could be argued that examples in (80) through (83) above do not involve any cross-domain mapping, since humans and other animals are simply different beings within the same conceptual domain.

In spite of such possible discrepancies, the benefits of involving the interviewees in identifying metaphors seem to outweigh the potential problems, since they have insight into the
language that a non-native researcher often does not. For example, during the interview sessions in the present study, there were occasions where Brousse responded to my queries with: “No, we would not say that in Michif,” or “It would be understood if you said that, but you would be getting pretty fanciful” (personal communication, November 6, 2021). This was very helpful for reaching a final decision on whether certain expressions are worth including in the data. For Brousse, this was primarily a language documentation project, and whether metaphors came up or not was of secondary importance; he had no incentive to over-report metaphors, allowing us to avoid the potential problem of the overly eager interviewee described by Low (1999).

The third method is to have a third party review the data and decide which utterances are metaphorical and which are not, although this comes with the same set of benefits and problems as asking the interiewnees themselves (Low, 1999). The point in all of this is that none of these methods are perfect on their own; it is best to strike a balance between them according to the circumstances, which I sought to do by asking Brousse whether certain expressions are literal or figurative in addition to offering my own take on such matters. A good example of this came up in relation to (84) below:

(84) *Keeshashkahwayw.*

\begin{verbatim}
kee-shashka-h-wayw
\end{verbatim}

\begin{verbatim}
PST-ignite-TA-3S>4S.ANIM.OBJ
\end{verbatim}

‘She kindled his anger.’ (lit. ‘She lit him on fire.’) (Laverdure & Allard, 1983, p. 155)

When I came across this phrase in the dictionary, I took it as a figurative expression based on the English translation offered in the TMD (the literal translation is my own). I then brought it to Brousse’s attention and asked if he thought this was literal or metaphorical, to which he responded: “Both. It could be literally burning or lighting someone on fire, but it could also be a figure of speech about making someone mad” (personal communication, April 23, 2022). This kind of collaboration was extremely fruitful in terms of giving Brousse the opportunity to expand on certain dictionary entries and even offer related expressions.
3.3 Identifying conceptual metaphors in written sources

After establishing a method for identifying conceptual metaphor, the next task involves developing a strategy for identifying language that can then be analyzed through this method. For the dictionary sources, this involved first identifying a set of concepts and possible English vocabulary that would fit into those concepts. To take a simple example, the conceptualization that ANGER IS HEAT, or THE ANGRY PERSON IS A PRESSURIZED CONTAINER provided a starting point to look up expressions in the dictionaries such as ‘burn,’ ‘fire,’ ‘flare up,’ and so forth. Given how pervasive this metaphor is in English, it is not surprising that the Michif Talking Dictionary (2022) contains an English entry for ‘flare up (anger),’ and there is also an entry for ‘flare up (fire).’ The question thus becomes: Can similar lexical items be used to invoke the same metaphors in Michif? In other words, to what extent do the semantically creative English entries in the lexical resources have a figurative form in Michif, and vice versa?

In addition to verifying the meaning of ambiguous dictionary entries with native speakers, the online Plains Cree dictionary itwêwina (Alberta Language Technology Lab, 2022) provides a valuable tool for cross-referencing.21 After identifying shikwachi- as being derived from Plains Cree sisikwac ‘sudden’ and looking at more Michif examples containing this element, it appears that the Michif entry for “flare up (anger)” may not actually be part of the ANGER IS HEAT metaphor:

(85) Shikwachikishiawshiw.
    shikwachi-kishiawshi-w
    suddenly-be.angry-3s
    ‘flare up [anger]’ (lit. ‘S/he suddenly gets angry.’)  (Laverdure & Allard, 1983, p. 97)

(86) Shikwachishashkitayw.
    shikwachi-shashki-t-ayw
    suddenly-ignite-II-3s
    ‘flare up [fire]’ (lit. ‘[it] suddenly ignites.’)  (Laverdure & Allard, 1983, p. 97)

21 While Michif and Cree orthography are quite different, an understanding of the equivalent sounds between Plains Cree and Michif enables the learner to search for relevant Plains Cree morphemes using the itwêwina dictionary (e.g., where Michif has ‘sh’ Plains Cree has ‘s’).
It is worth noting that the stem initial *kishi-* appears in verbs related to anger, as in 0, and also in verbs related to heat, as in *kishitayw* ‘it is hot [to the touch]’ (J. Stewart, personal communication, July 3, 2022). That may suggest a fundamental connection between ANGER and HEAT, though when asked if there was a discernable connection between the two, Brousse said he was unsure (personal communication, July 9, 2022). At the very least, it may be said that the figurative nature of the Michif expression *Shikwachi-kishiwawshiw* ‘suddenly become angry’ is not as evident as its English translation because the preverbal element *shikwachi-* has nothing to do with heat or fire; if it did, we should expect (87) to also have a translation related to heat/fire. There are several such ambiguous entries in the dictionary sources, and some of them ended up constituting invalid data because neither Brousse nor I consider them figurative language; they are nevertheless extremely helpful in formulating the interview questions themselves because they can serve as a jumping-off point for exploring abstract topics in more detail. For example, the expression in (88) below sparked a conversation about nerve pain:

(88) *Mee nerv ni-noocheehikon.*

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{mee} & \quad \text{nerv} & \quad \text{ni-noocheeh-iko-n} \\
\text{my} & \quad \text{nerve.PL} & \quad 1\text{-beat/whip.TA-INV-1S}
\end{align*}
\]

‘I’m nervous/embarrassed.’ (lit. ‘My nerves are beating me.’)  

(Algonquian Dictionaries Project, 2022)

When asked about this expression, Brousse said that it could be taken both literally and figuratively. While the figurative sense is related to being nervous/embarrassed, the literal sense would be related to experiencing nerve pain. As both he and I have suffered bouts of sciatica, we discussed other expressions for describing the intense pain associated with that condition. He offered the following simile as a result:

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This matter is further complicated by the fact that an identical stem initial appears in the word *kishinaw* ‘the weather is cold.’ More research with Cree and Michif speakers would be needed to ascertain whether there is indeed a connection between ANGER and HEAT.

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22 This matter is further complicated by the fact that an identical stem initial appears in the word *kishinaw* ‘the weather is cold.’ More research with Cree and Michif speakers would be needed to ascertain whether there is indeed a connection between ANGER and HEAT.
It's like lightning.

In this way, we were able to explore a number of topics and expand on conversations that were initially based solely on dictionary entries.

3.4 Interview process & equipment used

The interviews were carried out using a Focusrite Scarlett Solo USB audio interface recorded through Audacity software version 3.0.2 (Audacity Team, 2021). The sample rate was 44.1kHz, captured through a 40mm Scarlett Studio condenser microphone with a windsock.

There was a total of 10 in-person interview sessions lasting 90 minutes each. A wide variety of topics were covered, including: the personification of animals, dating/romance, honesty and forthrightness, courage, time/making progress, good/evil, and emotions such as love, anger, jealousy, sadness, and fear. In certain instances, questions were framed around conceptual metaphor frameworks commonly found in other languages such as more is up, or the future is forward. Some of the questions were focused on analyzing conceptual metaphors found in Cree and Ojibwe such as thinking is object manipulation (based on the literature mentioned in section 2.3 Overview of previous work on metaphor in Indigenous languages of North America), to see if similar metaphors are present in Michif.

Part of the interview process also involved a kind of third-party verification which was slightly different from what Low (1999) mentions; in this case, Brousse was presented with data from the dictionary-type sources and asked to elaborate. This was crucial for addressing an issue with the dictionaries themselves: The TMD contains a number of incomplete or insufficiently clear entries that may confuse language learners (B. Flammand, personal communication, November 6, 2021). While it is possible to search for English metaphors in these resources, the results of searching for such metaphors often presents the learner with literal translations in Michif.
For example, my own search for the English term “deception” in the Michif Talking Dictionary turned up different forms of the Michif verb *keemoochi*-, translated into English as ‘outfox,’ ‘slip one over,’ ‘undermine,’ ‘beguile’ or ‘deceive’ (*Michif Talking Dictionary | Li Liivr Di Moo Aan Michif*, 2022). Three of these translations appear to be metaphors (‘outfox,’ ‘slip one over,’ and ‘undermine’), and the remaining two are not. When asked if *keemoochi*- is somehow metaphorical, Brousse said no, because *keemochi*- just means to perform an action secretly. The problem is that the dictionaries do not indicate this, as the Michif examples are decontextualized phrases. If the learner is left with no context and no alternative expressions, they may think they are using a strongly metaphorical expression when indeed they are not. While this does not hinder the language learning process, it means that the real conventional metaphors in Michif, along with their underlying conceptualizations and speaker attitudes, remain obscure and undiscussed (see Schäffner, 2004 for a discussion on the implications of metaphor translation).

The next chapter details the major results of the study. The figurative expressions themselves are provided, along with comments on their non-literal nature. Where possible, parallel examples from French or Cree are noted as a means of highlighting whether the metaphors were perhaps influenced by either of the source languages.

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23 Given that I was unable to consult with speakers of Michif French for this research, or to even acquire a Michif French dictionary, there may well be vernacular expressions from that language which then influenced Michif, but which are not documented here.
4. RESULTS

This chapter discusses the major findings of the research. Section 4.1 Figurative expressions featuring animals deals with animal similes and other figurative expressions involving animals; Section 4.2 The animacy-converting morpheme -maka and its role in metaphor/metonymy provides an overview of the morpheme -maka, which acts as a so-called “animacy converter” and appears to be a productive way of invoking metaphor and metonymy; Section 4.3 Metaphors based on bodily experience deals with semantically creative expressions that are based on bodily experiences, both external (4.3.1 External bodily experiences) and internal (4.3.2 Internal bodily experiences). Where it was possible to do so, the metaphors have also been connected to similar conceptualizations found in either French or Cree for the sake of lexical/semantic comparison. Furthermore, much of the commentary on the examples involves comparisons with English expressions. This is primarily a means of highlighting universality and cross-cultural variation for some of the concepts under discussion, though it comes with a major caveat: the development of the TMD was such that even if a phrase is comprehensible to a native speaker, that does not preclude the possibility of it being a calque (B. Flammend, personal communication, April 23, 2022; H. Souter, personal communication, April 19, 2022).

4.1 Figurative expressions featuring animals

This section provides some figurative expressions in Michif that involve animals. In the interview sessions, the data occurred as similes preceded by the prepositions tawpiskooch, koum, or paray, meaning ‘like,’ as in the English “he eats like a pig.” The first form, tawpiskooch, is Plains Cree in origin, and the other two forms are French in origin, yet they are all used in the same manner to create similes or draw comparisons. The interview elicitations in this section do not show up in the lexical sources and could not be cross-referenced with another native speaker; Brousse himself stated that some of the animal similes – as well as other expressions – might only have been used in his home community of Crescent Lake, Saskatchewan, and that other Michif-speaking communities may well have different ideas/expressions about the topics under consideration here.
(90) Si paray aen foutroo.

si paray aen foutroo
COP like DET.INDF.M mink
‘I’m doing great; I’m getting plenty of [sexual] action.’ (lit. ‘[I’m] the same as a mink.’) (MM.BF.20211005)

(91) Tawpiskooch lee kwarnay.

tawpiskooch lee kwarnay
like DET.DEF.PL crow
‘They are predictable.’ (lit. ‘They are like the crows.’) (MM.BF.20220115)

(92) Si koum en koulayv.

si koum en koulayv
COP like DET.INDF.F snake
‘S/he is sinister and untrustworthy.’ (lit. ‘S/he is like a snake.’) (MM.BF.20211005)

(93) Tawpiskooch en blet.

tawpiskooch en blet
like DET.INDF.F weasel
‘S/he is sneaky.’ (lit. ‘S/he is like a weasel.’) (MM.BF.20211205)

(94) Si paray aen portipik.

si paray aen portipik
COP like DET.INDF.M porcupine
‘S/he is a loner or hermit.’ (lit. ‘S/he is like a porcupine.’) (MM.BF.20220115)

(95) Si koum en shyenn.

si koum en shyenn
COP like DET.DEF.F dog.F
‘She gets a lot of attention from men.’ (lit. ‘She’s like a dog [in heat].’) (MM.BF.20220115)

(96) li mawzhee’d koulayv

li mawzhee’-d koulayv
DET.DEF.M food-POSS snake
‘toadstool’ (lit. ‘snake’s food’) (Laverdure & Allard, 1983, p. 335)

(97) Tawpiskooch aen noor.

tawpiskooch aen noor
like DET.DEF.M bear
‘S/he is in a foul mood.’ (lit. ‘S/he is like a bear.’) (MM.BF.20211005)
Expressions like those in (92), (93), (97), (99) and (100) would likely be familiar to speakers of either English or French. According to Brousse, the characterization of snakes found in (92) (*si koum aen koulayv* ‘s/he is sinister and untrustworthy’) stems from the strong influence that the Catholic church has had on certain aspects of Michif identity (personal communication, October 23, 2021). The expression about weasels in (93), *tawpiskooch en blet* ‘s/he is sneaky’ (lit. ‘like a weasel’) is a familiar concept for English speakers, though Brousse was quick to point out that weasels are perceived as relatively harmless, so the Michif expression in (93) is not quite as negative as its direct English translation. Example (97), *tawpiskooch aen noor* ‘s/he is in a foul mood’ (lit. ‘S/he is like a bear.’) draws on the idea of bears as unpredictable or moody creatures, so one should keep their distance and remain vigilant when they are around. In talking about this expression, Brousse gave the example of angry drunks at a party: you do not want to go near them, but you should not turn your back either, because they might come for you next (personal communication, October 9, 2021).

The example in (90) is a tongue-in-cheek phrase used among young men in response to a greeting such as *Tawnshi kiya?* ‘How are you?’ and not a phrase that one would use in polite conversation with older family; minks are viewed as very promiscuous and virile little creatures, hence the connotation of that phrase (B. Flammand, personal communication, October 9, 2021):
As mentioned in Section 1.2.1.4, the word foutroo itself is probably a dead metaphor derived from the French word *fûtreau* that refers to a type of small boat used on the Loire River (Poirier, 1993). This connection may be lost on speakers of Michif since the boats themselves are not found in Canada. However, many of the settlers coming from France throughout the 17th and 18th centuries would likely have known about them.

Example (91) is also quite novel:

(91) *Tawpiskooch lee kwarnay.*

\[
\begin{array}{ccc}
\text{tawpiskooch} & \text{lee} & \text{kwarnay} \\
\text{like} & \text{DET.DEF.PL} & \text{crow} \\
\end{array}
\]

‘They are predictable.’ (lit. ‘They are like the crows.’)  

Humans seem to have a particular fascination with crows and ravens, perhaps because of their observable intelligence and the fact that these corvids exist almost everywhere that humans do (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2016). Aside from Edgar Allen Poe’s *The Raven* (1845/2018), ravens are featured in Norse mythology as the servants of the god Odin, for whom they fly around the world and provide him with information (Sturluson, ca. 1200/1916); in Upper Tanana Dene, Raven is a character who appears in many stories; sometimes he is portrayed as a trickster, sometimes he embarrasses himself, and other times he is shown as a kind of creator (Lovick, 1990).

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24 This raises a question about why these early settlers did not simply use the term *vison*, a common French word for minks; Le Glossaire acadien states that “…les colonisateurs de l’Acadie, aussi bien que ceux du Canada, n’avaient pas vu de vison avant de passer en Amérique” […] the French colonisers of Acadia, as well as those of Canada, had not seen minks before coming to America (Poirier, 1993, p. 219). This could certainly have been the case for most of them, as the European mink population was approaching extinction in western Europe by the 19th century (Maran & Henttonen, 1995), so their numbers surely began to dwindle well before that. Furthermore, it cannot be assumed that every Canada-bound French explorer was familiar with every single animal native to France; even if some of them were familiar with European minks, the two species do differ somewhat in their appearance: American minks are larger, have longer tails, and lack the white chin stripe that is characteristic of their European counterparts (Youngman, 1990). Whatever the reason for calling this animal *foutroo*, it represents vocabulary unique to varieties of French within Canada, along with its figurative connotation in Michif as represented in (90).

25 *Corvid* is the scientific term denoting the family to which crows, ravens, magpies and other related birds belong.
2012). Raven is also a fixture in many stories among the Haida, one of which portrays him as a creator (MOA at UBC, 2003).

Below is but one example of a simile from Upper Tanana which, rather than being grounded in stories and mythology, draws on observable characteristics of the animal itself:

(101) *Taatsąq’ k’e h̓q̓oheey.*

*taatsąq’*  *k’e*  *h̓q̓oheey*

raven  like  they.talk

‘They are telling old-time stories.’ (lit. ‘They talk like ravens.’) (Lovick, 2012, p. 107)

The Michif phrase in (91), *tawpiskooch lee kwarn* ‘like crows,’ while obviously different from the Upper Tanana example above, also draws on observable characteristics of a common corvid. It is meant to reflect how crows in the Michif homeland are perceived as being among the first to migrate for the winter and among the first to return in the spring - as opposed to ravens, who remain throughout the winter. In this way, they can be seen as very consistent or predictable creatures. If someone is usually the first to partake in something (e.g., predictably the first one to arrive at or leave from a party), they could be described as *tawpiskooch lee kwarn*, although it is generally not said directly to the person or people in question. Brousse also stated that this perception of consistency was generally not used for negative behaviours, such as someone who is consistently running late (personal communication, January 15, 2022).

The reference to porcupines in (94) relates to the animals’ reputation as solitary creatures that are rarely ever seen together:

(94) *Si paray aen portipik.*

*si*  *paray*  *aen*  *portipik*

COP  like  DET.INDF.M  porcupine

‘S/he is a loner or hermit.’ (lit. ‘S/he is like a porcupine.’) (MM.BF.20220115)

A person who is like a porcupine does not really like entertaining visitors and is not much for conversation. Brousse also mentioned that this stands in opposition to a typical cultural expectation that people be happy to receive and visit with guests (personal communication, January 15, 2022). There appears to be a similar notion in French as well:
(102) Oh, quel caractère, un vrai porc-épic.

**oh quel caractère un vrai porc-épic**

Oh, what character true porcupine

‘Oh, what an unpleasant cuss.’ (lit. ‘Oh, what charm, a real porcupine.’)

(WordReference.com, 2022)

The **WordReference.com** dictionary provides a figurative translation of **porc-épic** as **personne revèche** ‘a rude or difficult person’ (2022). Given the similar connotations between the French and Michif phrases, the Michif simile may well have been influenced by French.

The expression in (95) uses the word for a female dog to describe a woman who gets a great deal of attention from men:

(95) Si koum en shyenn.

**si koum en shyenn**

like dog

‘She gets a lot of attention from men.’ (lit. ‘She’s like a dog [in heat].’)

(MM.BF.20220115)

It is worth noting that a similar idea exists in English in the simile ‘like a bitch in heat,’ but female dogs typically have a negative connotation, also apparent in the French example below:

(103) Tu n’es qu’une chienne!

**tu n’es qu’une chienne**

you NEG:cop BUT:DET.IND.S.F dog.F

‘You’re a mean, nasty woman.’ (lit. ‘You’re nothing but a bitch.’)

(WordReference.com, 2022)

The noun phrase in (96) refers to poisonous mushrooms, which shows up in both Laverdure and Allard (1983) and the Heritage Michif To Go app (Gabriel Dumont Institute, 2019):

(96) li mawzhee’d koulayv

**li mawzhee’-d koulayv**

food-poss snake

‘toadstool’ (lit. ’snake’s food’)

(Laverdure & Allard, 1983, p. 335)

Although Brousse was not able to elaborate on the expression, it is worth discussing because of its similarity to the names for certain flora in Plains Cree. Recall examples (63) and (64) from section 2.2.1.4 Dead Metaphors, repeated as (104) and (105) below:
(104) ayîkitâs
  ayîki-tâs
  frog-pants
  ‘pitcher plant [Sarracenia purpurea]’ (lit. ‘frog pants’)
  (Alberta Language Technology Lab, 2022)

(105) ayîki-nônâcikan
  ayîki nônâcik-an
  frog  suck-NMLZ
  ‘mushroom’ (lit. ‘frog soother; frog sucker’)  (LeClaire & Cardinal, 1998, p. 367)

It must be noted that while the dictionary sources offer a literal translation of the whole compound noun in (105) as ‘frog sucker,’ the noun nônâcikan itself is translated as ‘soother; baby bottle’ (Alberta Language Technology Lab, 2022). Two related examples are provided below:

(106) wacasko-mîciwin
  muskrat-food
  ‘sweetflag [acorus calamus]’ (lit. ‘muskrat food’)  (Marles et al., 2012, p. 269)

(107) kinêpik nônâcikan
  kinêpik nônâcik-an
  snake  suck-NMLZ
  ‘mushroom’ (lit. ‘snake soother; snake sucker’)
  (Alberta Language Technology Lab, 2022)

The examples above illustrate a pattern of naming plants in relation to animals. In particular, the expressions in (104), (105), and (107) appear to be highly figurative, since neither frogs nor snakes suck on or consume mushrooms. It is therefore plausible that the figurative Michif phrase li mawzhee’d koulayv ‘toadstool’ (lit. ‘snake’s food’) stems from this Plains Cree pattern of naming plants by relating them to various animals.26

The phrase in (98) is quite novel, especially in light of the final noun and its translation:

26 Indeed, there may even be a conceptual framework such as PLANTS ARE ANIMALS’ FOOD, with some such expressions being literal (i.e., if the animal does in fact consume the plant in question) and others being figurative (as in the case of (107)).
Zhorzh meetshoow koum aen weehtikoohkawn.

George eats like a wolverine. (lit. ‘George eats like a Wihtikow/Windigo.’)

(Laverdure & Allard, 1983, p. 359)

This does not appear to be a word-for-word translation, for two reasons: First, the itwêwina dictionary lists kîhkwahâhkêw (Alberta Language Technology Lab, 2022) as ‘wolverine,’ which seems to be a cognate with Ojibwe gwiingwa’aage (The Ojibwe People’s Dictionary, 2012). Moreover, there is an entry for wîhtikôhkân in the Plains Cree dictionary that translates it as ‘member of a Wihtiko society; clown’ (Alberta Language Technology Lab, 2022). This suggests that the Michif phrase does not refer to wolverines; rather, it refers to the legendary wîhtikow (also windigo), an evil spirit - or possessed human being - known for greedy, gluttonous behaviour (Chabot, 2015). Indeed, the TMD translates English ‘avarice’ as weehtikouwiw (lit. ‘s/he is a wihtiko’) (Laverdure & Allard, 1983, p. 30). When Brousse was consulted on the phrase, he said that weehtikouhkan refers to a being that eats greedily and never stops. In addition, he had mentioned in a previous conversation that wolverines can be perceived more in terms of their cunning – not their appetite – since humans generally only see wolverines if the animals choose to reveal themselves (personal communication, November 6, 2021; April 23, 2022). Suffice to say that the Michif phrase in (98) appears to be grounded in the Cree/Algonquian concept of the wihtikow rather than observed characteristics of wolverines.

Examples (99) and (100) refer to female and male pigs, respectively:

(99) Si koum en trweey.

si koum en trweey
COP like DET.INDF.F sow
‘She’s messy.’ (lit. ‘She is like a pig.’) (MM.BF.20220424)

(100) Si koum aen kwashoon.

si koum aen kwashoon
COP like DET.INDF.M pig
‘He has poor table manners.’ (lit. ‘He is like a pig.’) (MM.BF.20211023)

Brousse said that the expression in (100) may be used to refer to people, male or female, who eat too much or have poor table manners, whereas (99) connotes a woman whose house is
messy; traditionally, women were entirely responsible for keeping the house clean, and those who did not do so might be called *en trweey* (personal communication, April 23, 2022). These concepts are also used figuratively in French: *cochon* ‘male pig’ has an identical connotation of someone with poor table manners, such that one might say *cochon!* to someone who belches or passes gas in the presence of others (A. Provencher, personal communication, December 24, 2020). There also appears to be a figurative use of French *truie* ‘sow; female pig,’ though it refers to a promiscuous woman\(^{27}\) rather than one who does not take care of her household (*WordReference.com*, 2022).

The next section provides examples containing a particular morpheme, *-maka*, which allows inanimate nouns to be the subject of AI verbs, many of which may have non-literal meanings.

### 4.2 The animacy-converting morpheme -maka and its role in metaphor/metonymy

Perhaps one of the most important grammatical considerations relating to semantic creativity is the verbal affix *-maka*. From a syntactic perspective, this derivational affix allows animate, intransitive verbs to take inanimate nouns as their subjects, effectively creating a VII from a VAI (Mazzoli, 2021). Indeed, all the verbs in the following set of examples are inherently VAI, and all the subject nouns are inherently inanimate. As part of the verb paradigm, there are equivalents in other Algonquian languages: Colette (2017) provides a very brief description of the East Cree equivalent, *-miki(n)*, and Wolfart (1973) discusses the occurrence of this morpheme in Plains Cree, which has the identical form *-maka*, in story about a disembodied rolling head. Most (though not all) individual body parts are grammatically inanimate in Plains Cree and Michif (Wolfart, 1973; B. Flammand, personal communication, February 5, 2022), so this morpheme occurs throughout the story whenever the head moves, speaks, or acts in a manner that is normally associated with animate nouns. All of the examples below are semantically creative, showing either instances of metaphor or metonymy:

\(^{27}\) It is worth noting that this connotation of pigs exists in English, though it is most often used to refer to lecherous men (“men are pigs”), and apparently as another figurative meaning of *cochon* in French as well (*WordReference.com*, 2022).
(108) Neeminakaniyw see zyeu.
neemi-mak-n-iyi-w see zyeu
dance-AC-0.IND-OBV-3S 3.POSS eyes
‘S/he has a twinkle in his/her eye.’ (lit. ‘His/her eyes are dancing.’)
(adapted from Gabriel Dumont Institute, 2019)

(109) Geenakeenawn den vil ay-nipoomakahk.
gee-nakee-nawn d-en vil ay-nipoo-maka-hk
1.PST-stop-PL.EXCL in-DET.DEF.F town CNJ-die-AC-0.CNJ
‘We stopped in a ghost town.’ (lit. ‘We stopped in a town that had died.’)
(Laverdure & Allard, 1983, p. 110)

(110) Li feezee katakishkawchikaymakan pawshkishikayhki.
li feezee ka-takahishkaw-chikay-maka-n pawshkishikay-hk-i
DET.DEF.M gun FUT-kick-INT-AC-0.IND shoot-0.CNJ-COND
‘The gun will recoil when fired.’ (lit. ‘The gun will kick if fired.’)
(Laverdure & Allard, 1983, p. 255)

(111) Aen pistalay ka-ouhpeemakan.
aen pistalay ka-ouhpee-maka-n
DET.INDF.M pistol FUT-jump-AC-0.IND
‘A pistol has a small recoil.’ (lit. ‘A pistol jumps.’) (MM.BF.20220423)

(112) Mee souyee shoohkay-pahtohwmakan.
mee souyee shoohkay-pahtohw-maka-n
my.PL shoes powerful-run-AC-0.IND
‘I can run fast with these shoes.’ (lit. ‘My shoes run fast.’) (MM.BF.20211106)

(113) Namou pimouhtaymakan li fan.
Namou pimohtay-maka-n li fan
NEG walk-AC-0.IND DET.DEF.M fan
‘The fan is turned off.’ (lit. ‘The fan is not walking.’) 
(Laverdure & Allard, 1983, p. 142)

(114) Itwaymakun dawn li leevr.
itway-maka-n dawn li leevr
say-AC-0.IND in DET.DEF.M book
‘The author wrote [thus].’ (lit. ‘It says [thus] in the book.’) (MM.BF.20220423)
(115) *Lee brayk shoohkaynakeemakan.*

*lee*     *brayk*     *shoohkay-nakee-maka-n*

DET.DEF.PL brake powerful-stop-AC-0.IND

‘The brakes are good at stopping’ (lit. ‘The brakes stop powerfully.’)

(MM.BF.20211106)

In (108), the noun for ‘eyes’ is grammatically inanimate, even though the verb for ‘dance’ is AI. The morpheme -*maka* is attached to this VAI to yield a metaphorical expression describing a joyful look on someone’s face. It appears that the semantic sense of ‘dance,’ specifically dancing for joy or pleasure, is extended to the look in a person’s eyes when they experience joy.

The phrase in (109) involves animating a town or village:

(109) *Geenakeenawn den vil ay-nipoomakahk.*

*gee-nakee-nawn*     *d-en*     *vil*     *ay-nipoo-maka-hk*

1.PST-stop-1PL.EXCL in-DET.DEF.F town CNJ-die-AC-0.CNJ

‘We stopped in a ghost town.’ (lit. ‘We stopped in a town that had died.’)

(Laverdure & Allard, 1983, p. 110)

It is similar to - yet different from – the English expression “ghost town” and French *ville fantôme* ‘ghost town,’ since ghosts are associated with the dead. I asked Brousse if it makes sense to use other animate verbs when referring to cities such as *la pchit vil ahkoushimakan* ‘the village is sick’ or *la vil pimawtishimakan* ‘the town is alive,’ to see if perhaps there is a metaphor in Michif like *CITIES ARE PEOPLE*; upon hearing the latter expression, he referenced New York, since it is famously known as the city that never sleeps. He also accepted the former expression about sickness, although said that it would indicate an outbreak of disease among people living in the community, which sounds more like an example of *PLACE FOR INHABITANTS* metonymy. Considering this, it might be more helpful to view the expression in (109) as part of a metaphor such as *ACTIVITY IS LIFE, INACTIVITY IS DEATH*.

In (110), the inanimate noun *fleez* ‘gun’ is used with the VTA verb *katakishkawchikay-‘kick’ to refer to the recoil after firing:

(110) In (110), the inanimate noun *fleez* ‘gun’ is used with the VTA verb *katakishkawchikay-‘kick’ to refer to the recoil after firing:
As discussed in section 3.2.1 Rationale for the researcher to identify metaphors, the morphosemantics of the Michif verb *tahkishka*- suggest a sense of ‘poke or jab with one’s foot,’ making it too an example of non-literal language use. One last point must be made here: While sense extension of ‘kick’ to firearms or machines is not clearly attested in French (WordReference.com, 2022), there is at least one example of it being used in Plains Cree. Recall example (71) from section 3.2.1 Rationale for the researcher to identify metaphors, repeated here as (116):

(116) *kîkway ka tahkiskâcikepayik.*

*kîkway*  

something  

FUT kick-INT-FIN-0.CNJ

‘recoil’ (lit. ‘when something kicks’)  

(LeClaire & Cardinal, 1998, p. 399)

It is curious as to why the Plains Cree example does not include an animacy-converting morpheme whereas the Michif expression does; the possible reasons for this are taken up in more detail in the next section (4.2.1 The absence of the -maka morpheme). Furthermore, the *itwêwina* Plains Cree dictionary notes entries for *tahkiskikêw* and *tahkiskâcikêw* can have a figurative sense of ‘objecting, raising a fuss, complaining’ (Alberta Language Technology Lab, 2022), and the Online Etymology Dictionary notes a similar sense in English (Harper, 2022). It appears there is at least a generic-level metaphor such as REACTING IS KICKING, which may be applied to humans as well as tools/machines. It is unclear if the former sense of complaining exists in Michif, however the mechanical reaction sense is licensed by the -maka morpheme. After reading the dictionary entry in (110), Brousse gave the related utterance found in (111):

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28 In addition to its absence in dictionary sources, one native French speaker from Quebec mentioned that the only other common term he has heard for the mechanical reaction of a gun is retour ‘return,’ but younger cohorts might also use the English loanword ‘kickback’ (E. Plouffe, personal communication, April 17, 2022).
He explained that “it really depends on the gun. Most hunting rifles and pistols don’t really kick; we’d say they jump, *ouhpeemakan*, because your arm just goes up a bit when you fire” (Personal communication, April 23, 2022). He suggested that it would be more accurate to talk about a shotgun when using the verb *tahkishka*—‘kick,’ offering the phrase in (117) below:

(117) *Aen feezee-a-ploon katahkishkawchikaymakan.*

\[
\text{aen} \quad \text{feezeee-a-ploon} \quad \text{ka-tahkishkaw-chikay-maka-n}
\]

*DET.DEF.M* \hspace{1em} *shotgun* \hspace{1em} *FUT-kick-INT-AC-0.IND*

‘A shotgun will kick.’

The use of the semantic distinction between jumping and kicking to grade the reactive force of different firearms seems to point to the figurative nature of these expressions.

The expression in (113) is debatable in terms of whether it constitutes a metaphor or not, requiring a deeper look at how the verb *pimouhtay* is normally used.

(113) *Namou pimouhtaymakan li fan.*

\[
\text{namou} \quad \text{pimouhtay-maka-n} \quad \text{li} \quad \text{fan.}
\]

*NEG* \hspace{1em} *walk-AC-0.IND* \hspace{1em} *DET.DEF.M* \hspace{1em} *fan*

‘The fan is turned off.’ (lit. ‘The fan is not walking.’)

(Laverdure & Allard 1983:142)

There is a connection between the verbs used to describe human/animal movement and the intransitive operation of machines that is observable in English (*run*), French (*marcher*), Plains Cree (*pimohtê*) and Michif (*pimouhtay*). Some might argue that this is not even figurative at all and is rather a case of polysemy (cf. OED Online, 2022), but recalling V. Evans’ (2009)
description of how polysemy may arise out of semantic creativity that eventually becomes entrenched, I would argue that (113) constitutes a dead metaphor at the very least.29

When asked about the use of the verb itway- in combination with the animacy-converting morpheme as in (114), Brousse mentioned that it would be used to describe what is written in a book or on a sign:

(114) Itwaymakan dawn li leevr.

\[
\begin{array}{llll}
\text{itway-maka-n} & \text{dawn} & \text{li} & \text{leevr} \\
\text{say-AC-0.IND} & \text{in} & \text{DET.DEFL M} & \text{book} \\
\end{array}
\]

‘The author wrote [thus].’ (lit. ‘It says [thus] in the book.’)

(MM.BF.20220423)

The itwêwina dictionary notes an identical usage in Plains Cree as well (Alberta Language Technology Lab, 2022). The usage there can be seen as an example of PRODUCER metonymy, since it encapsulates the notion of “The producer of this book/article/sign expressed this in writing” in a more succinct and cohesive manner.

The sentences in (112) and (115) are also examples of metonymy. (112) exemplifies an OBJECT FOR USER metonymy, where the shoes represent the person who wears them:

(112) Mee souyee shoohkaypahtohwmakan.

\[
\begin{array}{llll}
mee & \text{souyee shoohkay-pahtohw-maka-n} \\
\text{my.PL} & \text{shoes} & \text{powerful-run-AC-0.IND} \\
\end{array}
\]

‘I can run fast with these shoes.’ (lit. ‘My shoes run fast.’)

(MM.BF.20211106)

It is the wearer of the shoes who performs the action of running, but the metonymical expression above allows the speaker to focus on the shoes and the effect they have on his or her running ability. Example (115) illustrates a PART FOR WHOLE metonymy, which is made grammatical by means of the animacy-converting morpheme:

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29 Wolvengrey (2011) provides a Plains Cree example where the verb pimohtēmakahk is translated as “going on, happening,” (p. 270), which seems more semantically creative than the context of mechanical operation, though it is unclear if this same sense extension exists in Michif.
(116) *Lee brayk shoohkaynakéemakan.*

\[
\begin{array}{ccc}
\text{lee} & \text{brayk} & \text{shoohkay-nakee-maka-n} \\
\text{DET.DEF.PL} & \text{brake} & \text{powerful-stop-AC-0.IND}
\end{array}
\]

‘The brakes are good at stopping.’ (lit. ‘The brakes stop powerfully.’)

(MM.BF.20211106)

The expression above may be considered metonymical because the brakes themselves do not stop; when the driver pushes the brake pedal, the brakes begin to apply a force that results in the vehicle stopping, which may be best described as a PART FOR WHOLE relationship.

### 4.2.1 The absence of the *-maka* morpheme

There were two examples in the Michif data where inanimate entities occur in the subject position with animate verbs, and the animacy-converting *-maka* morpheme is absent:

(118) *Kishiwawshiw li tapee.*

\[
\begin{array}{ccc}
\text{kishiwawshi-w} & \text{li} & \text{tapee} \\
\text{be.angry.AI-3S} & \text{DET.DEF.M} & \text{rug.INAN}
\end{array}
\]

‘The rug needs cleaning.’ (lit. ‘The rug is angry.’)

(MM.BF.202111005)

(119) *Paytihk, ta vyawnd ka-tapasheew.*

\[
\begin{array}{ccc}
\text{paytihk} & \text{ta} & \text{vyawnd} & \text{ka-tapashee-w} \\
\text{be.careful} & \text{2S.POSS} & \text{meat.INAN} & \text{FUT.run.away-3S}
\end{array}
\]

‘Eat your meat before someone else does.’ (lit. ‘Be careful, your meat will run away.’)

(MM.BF.20220709)

It seems surprising that example (118) does not include *-maka*, given a rug’s status as both grammatically and semantically inanimate. However, there may be at least one parallel in another Algonquian language, Meskwaki/Fox:

...take the following Meskwaki song…: wahkwi mayomayôwî-ni / wahkwi-ye wîna // ahkwahkamikahkî-ni / mayôwi îni wahkwi-ye hihîye na’ “The sky is weeping then, / the sky; // at the end of the earth then, / the sky weeps then”...To make this metaphor work, the verb for “weep,” which otherwise requires an animate subject, has been pressed into service as one which takes inanimate subjects instead (without the normal derivation suffix that would be required in order to form such a verb), which is extremely unusual, and only found in songs. (Oзаawaабинешин, 2021)
Considering the explanation above, it might be that there are certain semantic (e.g., stative verbs of emotion) or contextual criteria (e.g., songs) that do not require this VAI-to-VII conversion. What is more, in the data from section 4.2 The animacy-converting morpheme -maka and its role in metaphor/metonymy, many of the verbs convey motion or the cessation thereof (e.g., kicking, walking, dancing, stopping). It may be the case that -maka is chiefly used to imply that an inanimate subject is imitating the actions of an animate one (C. Cenerini, personal communication, June 28, 2022), which can be seen in additional examples such as the difference between a bird or bug landing from flight (Plains Cree twêhow ‘s/he lands’) versus an airplane (twêhômakan ‘it lands’) (Alberta Language Technology Lab, 2022). Such expressions may become conventionalized because of this imitation factor.

Not every example is easily explained in this way, such as the use of the verb nipoo- ‘die’ to talk about a town whose inhabitants have all moved away, though the existence of one or two exceptions is not surprising and not enough to invalidate this hypothesis without further research. It is apparently possible to animate almost any inanimate object and doing so without using the AC morpheme seems to invoke a very novel (i.e., non-conventional) kind of personification, with (118) being a prime example: The rug is not actually imitating the actions of an angry person, so there is no need to conjugate the verb with -maka; it is a turn of phrase that draws on human ideas of how a person might feel if they were neglected and unable to clean themselves.

In the case of (119), the inanimate noun ta vyawnd ‘your meat’ is the subject of an AI verb without -maka:

(119) Paytihk, ta vyawnd ka-tapasheew.
    paytihk ta vyawnd ka-tapashee-w
    be.careful 2S.POSS meat.INAN FUT-run.away-3S
    ‘Eat your meat before someone else does.’ (lit. ‘Be careful, your meat will run away.’) (MM.BF.20220709)

Brousse elaborated on this expression by saying: “Sometimes, if children wouldn’t eat their food, the parents might say that as a warning, to teach them to eat the food that was prepared for them. If you don’t eat, your older siblings might steal your meat and then you’ll go hungry” (personal communication, July 9, 2022). This example may be explained in the same way as (118) in that the meat is not actually imitating the physical motion of running away, so there is no need to
include the animacy-converting morpheme for it to be grammatical. In any case, the presence or absence of \textit{-maka} in figurative Michif expressions warrants further research. The following section provides examples of figurative language based on human bodily experiences, such as the distinction between the front of one’s body versus the back, standing versus sitting, or the physiological manifestations of emotions such as anger or anxiety.

4.3 Metaphors based on bodily experience

This section covers the remaining metaphors that were explored during the research and which Lakoff & Johnson originally called \textit{structural} and \textit{ontological} metaphors (2003/1980). Subsection 4.3.1 External bodily experiences deals with expressions that rely on outward physical experiences, such as distinctions of front versus back or standing versus sitting; subsection 4.3.2 Internal bodily experiences relates to those expressions that draw on body-internal experiences, such as physical sensations brought about by emotional states.

4.3.1 External bodily experiences

There appears to be a generic-level metaphor related to honesty that draws on the distinction between our face (front) and our back, and that may be referred to as \textit{visible is honest, hidden is dishonest}. In this framework, the source domain is related to that which we can see, and by extension, that which other people are willing to show with open hands; that which we cannot see, or that others refuse to show us, cannot be trusted. In English, this can even be extended to the adage that “seeing is believing,” which in related to the generic-level metaphor \textit{understanding is seeing}; if we can see an entity, we can understand and trust it, and if we cannot see that entity, we can neither understand nor trust it (examples (120) through (125)). The expression in (126) appears to belong to the framework \textit{progress is forward}, (128) can be considered an instance of \textit{active is up, passive is down}, and (129) may be part of a framework like \textit{relationships are physical objects}:

(120) \textit{Zha pat par daryayr.}
\begin{verbatim}
    zha     pat     par   daryayr
I.POSS   NEG    by   back
‘I am speaking frankly.’ (lit. ‘I have nothing behind my back.’)
\end{verbatim}

(MM.BF.20220115)
(121) *Pat par daryayr kawkishiawshit.*

*pat* *par* *daryayr* *kaw-kishiawshi-t*

NEG by back CNJ-be.angry-3S.CNJ

‘S/he doesn’t hide his/her anger.’
(lit. ‘There’s nothing behind his/her back when s/he’s angry.’)

(Laverdure & Allard, 1983, p. 48)

(122) *Aen vyeu pat par daryayr awiyek nawnduw kawweehitawt.*

*aen* *vyeu* *pat* *par* *daryayr* *awiyek* *nawnduw*

DETF.INDF.M elder.male NEG by back somebody somewhere

*kaw-weehita-wt*

FUT-tell-3S.CNJ

‘He’s a crotchety old man.’
(lit. ‘[He’s] an old man with nothing behind his back who will tell anybody anywhere.’)

(Laverdure & Allard, 1983, p. 222)

(123) *Awn daryayr peekishkwayw.*

*awn* *daryayr* *peekishkway-w*

at back speak-3S

‘S/he is not being honest.’ (lit. ‘S/he speaks from the back.’)

(MM.BF.20220115)

(124) *Dawn ma fas weehahmow.*

*dawn* *ma* *fas* *weehahm-ow*

in[to] my face tell.TI-2S.IMP

‘Don’t gossip about me.’ (lit. ‘Tell [it] to my face.’)

(MM.BF.20211205)

(125) *Awn divawn weehahmow.*

*awn* *divawn* *weehahm-ow*

at front tell.TI-2S.IMP

‘Be upfront with me.’ (lit. ‘Tell me in front/from the front.’)

(MM.BF.20211205)

(126) *Awn nayrayr a l’ikol niya.*

*awn* *nayrayr* *a* *l’ikol* *niya*

at behind at school 1S

‘My grades are worse than those of my peers’ (lit. ‘I’m behind at school.’)

(MM.BF.20211106)

(127) *Neekanayw a l’ikol.*

*neekanay-w* *a* *l’ikol*

be.in.front/first-3S at school

‘S/he is advanced in school.’ (lit. ‘S/he is first/at the front in school.’)

(Laverdure & Allard, 1983, p. 18)
(128) *Kiyanawn pikou not pyee chi-neepawiyakh.*

\[
\begin{array}{ll}
\text{kiyanawn pikou not pyee chi-neepawi-yakh} & \\
\text{we.INCL just our feet CNJ-stand.up-1PL.CNJ} & \\
\end{array}
\]

‘We need to be confident and independent.’ (lit. ‘[It is] just to stand on our own feet.’)  
(MM.BF.20211106)

(129) *Wayawaypina ton vyeu.*

\[
\begin{array}{ll}
\text{wayawaypin-a too vyeu} & \\
\text{throw.away-2S.IMP your old.man/husband} & \\
\end{array}
\]

‘Leave [break up with] your husband.’ (lit. ‘throw your old man away.’)  
(MM.BF.20220115)

The expressions in (120) through (123) use the word *daryayr* (“back/behind”) to refer to honesty and dishonesty. Example (120) also turns up in Laverdure and Allard (1983, p. 48) without the pronominal element, translated as “make no bones about it.” The literal translations provided above demonstrate a metaphor that is also found in French, as shown in example (130):

(130) *Dire du mal de quelqu'un derrière son dos.*

\[
\begin{array}{ll}
\text{dire du mal de quelqu'un derrière son dos} & \\
\text{speak of:DET.DEF.M.S bad of someone behind 3S.POSS back} & \\
\end{array}
\]

‘to gossip about someone in their absence’  
(lit. ‘to speak ill of someone behind their back’)  
(WordReference.com, 2022)

One’s back is not visible (i.e., hidden), so anything coming from or placed there cannot be trusted. When asked for an opposite expression to that found in (123), Brousse’s initial response was *kwayesh peekishkway* ‘speak rightly; speak in a good manner.’ He later produced the phrases in (124) and (125):

(124) *Dawn ma fas weehtahmow.*

\[
\begin{array}{ll}
\text{dawn ma fas weehtahm-ow} & \\
\text{in[to] my face tell.TI-2S.IMP} & \\
\end{array}
\]

‘Don’t gossip about me.’ (lit. ‘Tell [it] to my face.’)  
(MM.BF.20211205)

(125) *Awn divawn weehtahmow.*

\[
\begin{array}{ll}
\text{awn divawn weehtahm-ow} & \\
\text{at front tell.TI-2S.IMP} & \\
\end{array}
\]

‘Be upfront with me.’ (lit. ‘Tell me in front/from the front.’)  
(MM.BF.20211205)
The former is a metonymical expression that uses THE FACE FOR THE PERSON, such that “say it in[to] my face” means “say it in front of me; say it when I am present,” the opposite of speaking behind someone’s back. (125) is used in much the same way when reproaching someone for gossiping or being two-faced.

Example (126) illustrates a different metaphor, one that might be called SUPERIOR IS IN FRONT, INFERIOR IS AT THE BACK:

(126) Awn nayray a l’ikol niya.

awn nayray a l’ikol niya
at back at school 1S
‘My grades are worse than those of my peers’ (lit. ‘I’m behind at school.’)

(MM.BF.20211106)

Brousse discussed how the expression could be used literally or figuratively: In a literal sense, the expression can indicate the location of a student’s desk; in a figurative sense, it denotes a lack of progress, having the poorest grades, or just generally being slow to understand (personal communication, November 6, 2021). A related example shows up in Laverdure and Allard where awn naryayr ayaw is translated as ‘fall behind’ (1983, p. 91). When asked for the opposite of (126), Brousse initially said “We might use an English word, which actually might have come to Michif via French,30 aen smart” (personal communication, July 9, 2022). My own search turned up the example in (127), which Brousse confirmed is another way of expressing the idea of an advanced student, and it fits within the same framework:

(127) Neekanayw a l’ikol.

neekanay-w a l’ikol
be.in.front/first-3s at school
‘S/he is advanced in school.’ (lit. ‘S/he is first/at the front in school.’)

(Laverdure & Allard, 1983, p. 18)

The physical basis for the conceptual framework SUPERIOR IS IN FRONT can be seen when groups of people move together: in a competition such as a footrace, the fastest runner will be ahead (i.e., in front or appearing first) of the others, a sign of his or her superiority. Even in a

---

30 It appears that the English word ‘smart’ has indeed been borrowed into some varieties of French (WordReference.com, 2022), though it is used as an adjective rather than a noun.
cooperative endeavour such as hunting or travelling, the leader is often at the front of the group in order to guide the movement of others. There appear to be parallel expressions in both Plains Cree and French that also draw on the framework SUPERIOR IS IN FRONT:

(131) Plains Cree

\textit{nîkânîw}.

\textit{nîkânî-}\textit{w}

be.in.front/first-3S

‘S/he is the best; s/he is the leader.’ (lit. ‘S/he is first/in front.’)

(Alberta Language Technology Lab, 2022)

(132) \textit{nîkânapiw}.

\textit{nîkân-}\textit{api-}\textit{w}

be.in.front-sit-3S

‘S/he is in charge; s/he is the boss.’ (lit. ‘S/he sits in the front.’)

(Alberta Language Technology Lab, 2022)

(133) French

\textit{Jon est devant les autres enfants en lecture}.

\textit{Jon est devant les autres enfants en lecture}

John be.3S in.front.of DET.DEF.PL other.3PL children in reading

‘John is more advanced at reading than the other children.’

(lit. ‘John is in front of the other children in reading.’) (WordReference.com, 2022)

Given the existence of such expressions in Plains Cree and French, the framework \textbf{SUPERIOR IS IN FRONT, INFERIOR IS AT THE BACK} may be considered an example of a generic-level metaphor as discussed by Kövecses (2008), which tend to be widespread across cultures/languages who then specify and lexicalize them in different ways.

The phrase in (128) is unlike the others in that, rather than using a front/back distinction, it draws on the physical sensation of standing versus lying down:

(128) \textit{Kiyanawn pikou not pyee chi-neepawiyahk}.

\textit{kiyanawn pikou not pyee chi-neepawiyahk}

we.INCL just our feet CNJ-stand.up-1PL.CNJ

‘We need to be confident and independent.’ (lit. ‘[It is] just to stand on our own feet.’)

(MM.BF.20211106)

Brousse said this in reference to his hopes for the future of the Michif nation, with “standing on one’s own feet” referring to confidence, independence and “having a sense of what’s really
going on.” (Personal communication, November 6, 2021). There appears to be at least one related expression in Plains Cree, *nîpawîstawêw* ‘S/he stands up to someone; S/he challenges someone’ (Alberta Language Technology Lab, 2022). Lakoff and Johnson (2003/1980) provide a generic metaphor *ACTIVE IS UP, PASSIVE IS DOWN*, which seems to underlie the Plains Cree and Michif examples.

The expression in (129) is related to ending romantic relationships, using the same verb that one might use to talk about getting rid of trash or items that a person no longer needs:

(129) *Wayawaypina ton vyeu.*

\[\text{wayawaypin-} \text{a ton vyeu} \]

*throw.away-2S.IMP your old.man/husband*

‘Leave [break up with] your husband.’ (lit. ‘throw your old man away.’)

(MM.BF.20220115)

Based on Laverdure and Allard (1983), the verb stem *waypin-* seems to have a basic sense of ‘throw,’ and adding various directional preverbs can yield meanings like ‘throw [it] here; throw [it] back; hurl; toss,’ and so forth. The preverbal element *wayaw-* adds the nuance of ‘out, outside, away from inside’ (from Plains Cree *wayawî-; Alberta Language Technology Lab, n.d.), such that the Michif verb *wayawaypina-* covers the semantic sense of both ‘kick [someone] out’ and ‘throw away.’ When asked more specifically about the context of (129), Brousse mentioned that it is largely used to refer to married couples separating, and less so for unmarried couples; it signifies throwing away one’s wedding vows and thereby also the marriage (Personal communication, January 15, 2022). In this way, the underlying conceptual metaphor may be *RELATIONSHIPS ARE PHYSICAL OBJECTS*: in Michif – and Plains Cree, according to the *itwêwina* dictionary (Alberta Language Technology Lab, 2022) – a marital relationship can be thrown away; in English we may speak of damaging or breaking relationships, and in French too, the noun *rupture* (‘rupture’) may be used to describe problems in a relationship, or even ending a relationship, especially a romantic one (WordReference.com, 2022).
4.3.2 Internal bodily experiences

This section highlights a handful of semantically creative expressions used to talk about emotions, such as anger, nervousness/embarrassment, or worry/concern.

(134) *Goushkouhikounawn ay-pooshkoupayit.*

\`{\textit{goushkou-h-ikou-nawn ay-pooshkou-payi-t}}\`

\`{\textit{1.be.surprised-CAUS-INV-PL.EXCL CNJ-explode-INCH-3S.CNJ}}\`

‘She surprised us with her outburst.’ (lit. ‘We were surprised when she exploded’)

(Laverdure & Allard, 1983, p. 205)

(135) *Pooshkoukitawshouw.*

\`{\textit{pooshkou-kitawshou-w}}\`

\`{\textit{explode-move.in.anger-3S}}\`

‘She erupts with anger.’

(Laverdure & Allard, 1983, p. 87)

(136) *Ooshoo ayshpeeshchikitawshout.*

\`{\textit{ooshoo-w ayshpeeshchi-kitawshou-t}}\`

\`{\textit{boil.AI-3S to.such.an.extent-move.in.anger-0S.CNJ}}\`

‘to boil with anger’ (lit. ‘be angry to the point of boiling’)

(Laverdure & Allard, 1983, p. 47)

(137) *Keeshashkahwayw.*

\`{\textit{kee-shashka-h-wayw}}\`

\`{\textit{PST-ignite-TA-3S>4S.ANIM.OBJ}}\`

‘She kindled his anger.’ (lit. ‘S/he lit him/her on fire.’)

(Laverdure & Allard, 1983, p. 155)

(138) *Mee nerv ni-noocheehikon.*

\`{\textit{mee nerv ni-noocheeh-iko-n}}\`

\`{\textit{my nerve.PL 1S-beat/whip.TA-INV-1S}}\`

‘I’m nervous/embarrassed.’ (lit. ‘My nerves are beating me.’)

(Algonquian Dictionaries Project, 2022)

(139) *Waypina kawsheena ka-itayhtaman.*

\`{\textit{waypina kawsheena ka-itayhta-m-an}}\`

\`{\textit{throw.away.IMP wipe CNJ-think-TI-2S.CNJ}}\`

‘Worry about it later; forget about it.’

(lit. ‘throw away and wipe what you’re thinking.’)

(MM.BF.20220205)

The first four expressions demonstrate some of the ways in which the generic metaphor **ANGER IS HEAT** may be expressed in Michif. In (134) and (135), the verb *pooshkou* ‘explode; blow
‘up’ is used to indicate a state of extreme anger. (135) and (136) share the verb *kitawshou-* , which appears to indicate an idea like ‘moving or existing in a certain way while being angry’ (hence its English gloss here, move.in.anger). There are at least two parallel examples found in Plains Cree according to the *itwêwina* dictionary:

(140) *kiwêkitâsow.*
    
    *kiwê-kitâs-o-w*
    
    go.home-move.in.anger-3s
    
    ‘S/he goes home angry; s/he goes home in a huff.’

    (Alberta Language Technology Lab, 2022)

(141) *sipwêkitâsow.*
    
    *sipwê-kitâso-w*
    
    depart-move.in.anger-3s
    
    ‘S/he leaves sulking/in a huff.’

    (Alberta Language Technology Lab, 2022)

Furthermore, the *Ojibwe People’s Dictionary* contains entries with the verb *gidaazo* (cognate of Michif *kitawshou*) combining with other elements in much the same way:

(142) *Gimoojigidaazo.*
    
    *gimooji-gidaaz-o*
    
    secretly-move.in.anger-3s
    
    ‘S/he is secretly angry.’

    (The Ojibwe People’s Dictionary, 2012)

(143) *Giiwegidaazo.*
    
    *giwe-gidaaz-o*
    
    go.home-move.in.anger-3s
    
    ‘S/he goes home mad.’

    (The Ojibwe People’s Dictionary, 2012)

There is a clear cognate for the Ojibwe *gimoojigidaazo* ‘s/he is secretly angry’ in Michif: *keemoochikitawshouw*, which Laverdure and Allard translate as ‘fume [with anger]’ (1983, p. 47). Based on its usage, it may be said that anger as expressed by *kitawshou-* is a force that drives people to move or act in certain ways. Whether or not that constitutes a case of metaphor, examples like this underscore the need to revisit lexical resources such as the TMD with the aid of a native speaker.
The expression in (136) includes the VAI *oosho-‘boil’ combined with *kitawshou- to yield an expression related to the ANGER IS HEAT framework:

(136) *Ooshooy ayshpeeshchikitawshout.
ooshoo-w ayshpeeshchi-kitawshout-
boil.AI-3S to.such.an.extent-move.in.anger-08.CNJ
‘to boil with anger’ (lit. ‘S/he is angry to the point of boiling.’)

(Laverdure & Allard, 1983, p. 47)

When asked about the preverbal element *ayshpeeshchi- in (136), Brousse stated that it indicates the notion ‘while something is happening,’ giving a sense of ‘boiling while being angry.’ This preverb appears to be a cognate of Plains Cree *ispisi-, which the itwèwina dictionary translates as ‘to such an extent’ (Alberta Language Technology Lab, 2022), and there seems to be a cognate form in Ojibwe as well:

(144) *Apiichigidaazo.
apiichi-gidaaz-o
to.such.an.extent-move.in.anger-3S.IND
‘s/he is angry to such an extent.’

(The Ojibwe People’s Dictionary, 2012)

It is also important to note that the verb *ooshoow (‘s/he is boiling’) is intransitive in (136); it is thus clear from the syntax that ‘boiling’ is an intransitive state or condition rather than a transitive action, hence the translation as ‘s/he is angry to the point of boiling.’

Example (137) uses the verb *shashka- ‘ignite; kindle’, and the final suffix is important to note:

(137) *Keeshashkahwayw.
kee-shashka-h-wayw
PST-ignite-TA-3S>4S.ANIM.OBJ
‘She kindled his anger.’ (lit. ‘S/he lit him/her on fire.’)

(Laverdure & Allard, 1983, p. 155)

If the object of this transitive verb were inanimate, the form would be *keeshaskaham ‘S/he ignited it.’ In this case, the final -wayw morpheme makes it clear that the object is grammatically animate (the 3S>4S.ANIM.OBJ in the gloss is meant to show a third person acting upon a fourth
person), so it could be taken as a literal act of lighting someone on fire, or a figure of speech meaning that she made him angry; Brousse confirmed that both interpretations are possible. The expressions in (134) through (137) illustrate how the notion of ANGER IS HEAT may be expressed in Michif, though it is worth noting that Brousse only really elaborated on (137), and there do not seem to be equivalents for any of these expressions in the Plains Cree or Ojibwe dictionaries. This may indicate that those particular examples are English calques, or simply that they have not been documented in those particular languages/lexical resources.

The sentence in (138) comes from the Michif dictionary developed by the Algonquian Dictionaries Project (2022):

(138) Mee nerv ni-noocheehikon.

\begin{verbatim}
  mee  nerv   ni-noocheeh-iko-n
my nerve.PL IS-beat/whip.TA-INV-1S
\end{verbatim}

‘I’m nervous/embarrassed.’ (lit. ‘My nerves are beating me.’)

(Algonquian Dictionaries Project, 2022)

When shown the expression, Brousse took in a figurative sense at first, saying that someone who utters that phrase is feeling gutless, similar to “lose the nerve [to do something]” in English. He then went on to say that it might also be used literally to describe nerve pain, such as that associated with sciatica (personal communication, October 9, 2021). The noocheeh- base seems to indicate a kind of negative force, occurring in the translations for English words like ‘beat; whip; lash’ (Michif Talking Dictionary | Li Liivr Di Moo Aan Michif, 2022), ‘pursue’ (Algonquian Dictionaries Project, 2022), ‘oppress; mistreat’ (Alberta Language Technology Lab, 2022; Mazzoli, 2021, p. 131), or ‘bother’ (B. Flammand, personal communication, October 9, 2021). Of these various translations, only the last one provided by Brousse seems literal.\(^{31}\) The imagery of our own nerves beating, oppressing, or pursuing us makes a figurative reading much more tenable.

The phrase in (139) uses the verbs waypina (‘throw away’) and kawsheena (‘wipe’) together, which seems to suggest an extension of CLEANING to the target domain of FORGETTING:

\[^{31}\text{In spite of the translation, Brousse acknowledged the figurative use of the phrase in (138) to convey the sense of feeling like a coward.}\]
(139) **Waypina kawsheena ka-itayhtaman.**

```
waypina    kawsheena    ka-itayhta-m-an
throw.away.IMP   wipe   CNJ-think-TI-2S.CNJ
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‘Worry about it later; forget about it.’ (lit. ‘throw away and wipe what you’re thinking.’) (MM.BF.20220205)

Brousse said that the phrase could be used to deal with someone who is stuck in a bad state of mind, obsessing over negative thoughts. A semantic connection between **cleaning** and **forgiving/forgetting** can also be seen in English *clean slate* or Latin *tabula rasa*, both of which refer to the idea of having a pure conscience after resolving previous debts/faults; these expressions both draw upon the idea of a slate (Latin *tabula*) as an object that can be easily wiped off and rewritten, conveyed in Latin by *rasa* ‘scraped; erased’ (Harper, 2022). French has *passer l’éponge sur* ‘pass over [something] with a sponge,’ with much the same meaning. The Michif phrase in (139) is nevertheless unique in how it has lexicalized this concept. The next section provides a broader discussion on the results of the research, along with possible semantic implications in Michif.
5. DISCUSSION

This chapter is divided as follows: section 5.1 contextualizes the major findings in relation to the goals and research questions of the thesis, section 5.2 Situating the results among previous research on North American Indigenous languages situates the findings in relation to the previous literature on metaphors in Indigenous languages of North America, and section 5.3 Limitations and future possibilities discusses the limitations and possibilities for future research.

5.1 Potential categories of metaphor in Michif

The goal of this thesis was to examine semantic creativity and figurative expressions in Michif through the lens of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) and thereby add to the overall body of linguistic knowledge and documented phrases in Michif. The research questions that helped to frame the study were (1) what kinds of metaphors and figurative expressions exist in Michif, and how are they formulated? And (2) is it possible to determine which metaphors may have been influenced by Plains Cree or French, and which ones are unique to Michif? I hypothesized that there would be some metaphors unique to Michif, some found in both parent languages, and some that clearly come from one or the other parent language. Those that fall under the latter category should be largely predictable based on word class: semantically creative noun phrases are most likely to be of French origin, and semantically creative verb phrases are more likely to be of Cree origin.

Section 4.1 Figurative expressions featuring animals deals with animal similes. Although more research is needed, it seems that the examples in that section present a mix of ones inherited from ancestral languages, and those that may be unique to Michif. The examples conceptualizing pigs as messy and uncouth, snakes as sinister, and porcupines as grumpy loners appear to stem from French; the translation of ‘toadstool’ as li mawzhee’d koulayv (lit. ‘snake food’) appears to have come from Plains Cree and may even be a calque from that language, given some of the highly similar terms for mushrooms in Plains Cree. On the other hand, interpreting phrases like tawpiskooch lee kwarnay ‘[they are] predictable’ (lit. ‘like crows’) or si paray aen foutroo ‘I’m doing great’ (lit. ‘same as a mink’) requires an understanding of Michif cultural attitudes toward such animals, as such expressions do not appear to be rooted in either of its ancestral languages. Given the relative isolation of Michif-speaking communities from one
another, community may also play a role in the interpretation and use of such phrases. While it is probably the case that most Michif speakers consider pigs to be filthy and snakes to be sinister, it would be unwise to draw specific conclusions about how the other animals are conceptualized and used to create figures of speech in Michif, because: (1) most of the data in that section does not show up in the written sources, and (2) it was not possible to hear more than one native speaker’s thoughts on these matters, meaning that more research/inquiry is needed.

There are certain generic metaphors (i.e., non-specific metaphors that are then adapted and expressed differently from one language to the next, as per Kövecses, 2008) that are present in Michif, with a variety of expressions structured around them. Some of these metaphors use our bodily experiences (section 4.3 Metaphors based on bodily experience) to characterize concepts like HONESTY or PROGRESS. For example, the physical distinction between front – where our eyes are – and back – which we cannot see – is used in the conceptualization VISIBLE IS HONEST, HIDDEN IS DISHONEST. In this way, phrases like pat par daryayr ‘nothing behind [one’s] back’ can be used to talk about straightforward/honest speech. Having nothing behind one’s back symbolizes honest, direct speech, whether it pleases the listener or not (e.g., the translation of ‘crotchety old man’ found in (122)). By extension, expressions like awn divawn ‘in front’ or dawn ma fas ‘in my face’ can be used with verbs of speaking like weehtamo- ‘tell; admit’ to demand honesty from a person suspected of speaking ill of someone in their absence. It is unclear whether this front/back distinction is used in the same way in Cree, but the fact that these expressions rely on daryayr ‘back’ and divawn ‘front’ suggests a French influence. Indeed, similar expressions do exist in varieties of French, although they are lexicalized somewhat differently – recall example (130) from section 4.3.1 External bodily experiences:

(130) Dire du mal de quelqu’un derrière son dos.

\[ \text{dire du mal de quelqu’un derrière son dos} \]

\[ \text{speak of someone behind 3S.POSS back} \]

‘to gossip about someone in their absence’

(lit. ‘to speak ill of someone behind their back’) (WordReference.com, 2022)

While both French and Michif expressions use the word for ‘behind,’ the Michif expression does not include the word for ‘one’s back,’ and the semantics appear to differ as well, since awn
daryayr peekishkwayw ‘speak from the back’ is about untrustworthy speech rather than hurtful speech in one’s absence.

In a similar vein, Michif speakers may use a front/back distinction to express the generic-level metaphor framework SUPERIOR IS IN FRONT, INFERIOR IS AT THE BACK,32 as seen in expressions like awn daryayr a l’ikol ‘I’m the least intelligent kid in my class’ (lit. ‘I’m at the back in school’) (MM.BF.20211106) or its opposite, neekawneew a l’ikol ‘s/he is the best student in the class’ (lit. ‘S/he is at the front in school’) (Laverdure & Allard, 1983, p. 18). This framework is one of the few found in this study that clearly exists in both ancestral languages, as illustrated in examples (131) through (133) in section 4.3.1 External bodily experiences:

(131) Plains Cree
nikânîw.
nikânî-w
be.in.front/first-3S
‘S/he is the best; s/he is the leader.’ (lit. ‘S/he is in first/in front.’)  
(Alberta Language Technology Lab, 2022)

(132) nîkänapiw.
nikân-api-w
be.in.front-sit-3S
‘S/he is in charge; s/he is the boss.’ (lit. ‘S/he sits in the front.’)  
(Alberta Language Technology Lab, 2022)

(133) French
Jon est devant les autres enfants en lecture.
Jon est devant les autres enfants en lecture
John be.3S in.front.of DET.DEF.PL other.3PL children in reading
‘John is more advanced at reading than the other children.’  
(lit. ‘John is in front of the other children in reading.’)  
(WordReference.com, 2022)

It is worth noting that the Michif examples use a verb inherited from Plains Cree to express superiority on the one hand, and a prepositional phrase inherited from French to express inferiority on the other; this particular way of lexicalizing the generic-level metaphor SUPERIOR IS IN FRONT, INFERIOR IS AT THE BACK is unique to Michif, owing to its mixed heritage.

32 While it did not come up during the present study, there is evidence that a related framework exists, PROGRESS IS FORWARD; future research may examine how this framework is lexicalized in Michif.
Semantically creative expressions exist for talking about emotions in Michif as well. Conceptualizing our nerves as physically beating us up (i.e., *mee nerv ni-noochihikon* ‘I’m nervous’; lit. ‘my nerves are beating me’) can be taken literally, to describe nerve pain, or figuratively, to describe the feeling of being nervous or losing one’s courage. This phrase does not appear to be used in either parent language, and perhaps that stems from the fact that its meaning is derived from the combination of a specific French noun and a specific Cree verb, which is only done in Michif. Expressions like *waypina, kawsheena ka-itayhtaman* ‘throw away/wipe away your negative thinking’ rely on a generic metaphor found in other Algonquian languages, THINKING IS OBJECT MANIPULATION (Junker, 2003; Ozaawaabineshiinh, 2021) in that negative thoughts are objects that can be thrown away; this same expression also draws on a more specific subset of the OBJECT MANIPULATION metaphor, CLEANING IS FORGIVING/FORGETTING, such that a person can wipe away or erase negative thoughts. Michif may also include expressions from the conceptualization that ANGER IS HEAT, although we were unable to elaborate on the expressions enough to conclusively say if they all naturally occur in Michif, or whether they represent a set of calques.

The animacy-converting morpheme *-maka* has the potential to create metaphorical and metonymical expressions by allowing AI verbs to take grammatically inanimate nouns as subjects. While there are exceptions, grammatical animacy is largely linked to semantic animacy in Michif and other Algonquian languages, so conjugating a verb with *-maka* can be used with great effect to give animate-like qualities to inanimate entities. The examples related to *lee feezee* ‘guns’ provide a succint illustration of this: actions such as jumping or kicking are normally only performed by living beings, though as seen in section 4.2 The animacy-converting morpheme *-maka* and its role in metaphor/metonymy, the reactive force of guns (and perhaps other mechanized tools) can be considered as imitative of jumping or kicking motions, hence the application of the AC morpheme *-maka*.

Metonymical uses of the AC morpheme are exemplified in utterances like *itwaymakan dawn li leevr* ‘It says [thus] in the book’ or *mee souyee shoohkay-pahtohwmakan* ‘my shoes run fast.’ In the first example, there is a PRODUCT FOR PRODUCER metonymy that allows speakers to avoid cumbersome expressions such as “the author of this book has written [that…]” and the second example utilizes an OBJECT FOR USER metonymy that concisely expresses the idea that “I
can run faster when I wear these shoes, as opposed to others.” The examples with the village (e.g., la pchit vil ahkoushimakan ‘the town is sick’) express a PLACE FOR INHABITANTS metonymy, which allows speakers to talk about a city being alive, dead, or sick based on the condition of the people who live there. Such phrases help to illustrate the benefit of metonymy as (briefly) discussed by Rhodes and Lawler (1981); namely, its usefulness as a way to communicate relevant details in a succinct and cohesive manner.

One other important point related to the AC morpheme must be reiterated: there are expressions where an inanimate entity is the subject of an animate verb, and yet -maka is absent from the verb (recall examples (118) and (119) from section 4.2.1 The absence of the -maka morpheme). One potential reason for this is that animacy conversion may be primarily – though not exclusively – used in contexts where the inanimate noun is imitating the movements or activities of an animate one, as in examples (110) and (111) from section 4.2 The animacy-converting morpheme -maka and its role in metaphor/metonymy related to firearm recoil.33 Contexts where the animacy-converting morpheme is absent may be because there is no imitative action implied; rather, the pairing of the inanimate subject and animate verb is highly novel, to the extent that the listener might not even be able to understand the expression without prior knowledge of the metaphor itself. There is at least one parallel example noted in a song from the Algonquian language Meskwaki (Fox), where the AI verb for ‘weep’ takes the inanimate noun for ‘sky’ as its subject without using the animacy-converting morpheme in that language (Ozaawaabineshiinh, 2021). This example could also be argued as not requiring animacy conversion: it is similar to the ‘angry rug’ from example (118) in that the sky is not actually imitating the movements of a sad person, though there is evidently an element of personification through the use of the verb for ‘weep.’

In addition, it seems unlikely that the possible uses of the AC morpheme -maka are limitless. In other words, while it may be possible to speak of a city living, being sick, and dying, is every inanimate noun able to combine with AI verbs + -maka and still make sense to the listener? There are probably semantic constraints around the kinds of inanimate entities and/or animate activities that this can be applied to, however those constraints remain under-described.

33 Recall that with the concept of firearm recoil, the Plains Cree example does not use animacy conversion, but the Michif equivalent does; future research might seek to find out whether both forms are acceptable in both languages and how speakers of each language would describe the difference between the two forms.
At the very least, it would be beneficial to find out more about what kind of noun + verb collocations are commonly associated with this versatile morpheme, as many of them may be figurative as well.

5.2 Situating the results among previous research on North American Indigenous languages

Along with adding to the overall number of documented Michif phrases and taking a deeper look at their semantics, this thesis contributes to the broader study of metaphors in North American Indigenous languages, particularly Algonquian languages. Drawing on previous research into metaphors in this language family (e.g., Junker, 2003, or Scott, 1989 for East Cree; Rhodes, 1985, 1986 for Ojibwe) helped to frame some of the research questions and ultimately confirm the presence of certain semantic connections in Michif that are also found in other Algonquian languages, such as: the use of verbs meaning ‘throw away’ to refer to divorce; the use of verbs related to cleaning/removing to express concepts like forgiving or forgetting; or the use of an animacy-converti

This thesis also serves to broaden the discussion on metaphor and metonymy in understudied languages in general, and the importance of studying this topic. For example, comparing the animal similes from section 4.1 Figurative expressions featuring animals of this study to those found in Upper Tanana Dene as described by Lovick (2012) point to the fact that even though many of the same animals are present throughout the Michif and Upper Tanana homelands, there is indeed a cultural component in how these animals are conceptualized; documenting this kind of information is not only beneficial for those learning these languages, but it also helps to show the diversity and semantic creativity present across Indigenous languages. Another important consideration in this matter is that of morphology, given that many Indigenous languages in North America are highly synthetic; Rice (2012) looks at metaphor and metonymy in Dënesųłíné and describes how that language has a small number of lexical stems (i.e., word forms that carry fundamental semantic information), so metaphors/metonymy are made by using this limited number of stems in creative ways. While verbal morphology was an important consideration in the present study (e.g., the -maka morpheme), much remains to be
explored in terms of actual verb stems and how they may be used in semantically creative ways to invoke metaphor, metonymy, or other kinds of figurative language in Michif.

5.3 Limitations and future possibilities

There were challenges that affected the range of data presented in the study. The biggest issue that exacerbated all the others is that of COVID-19. I was lucky enough to be able to interview Brousse in person, thanks to the level of safety eventually provided from the development of vaccines and other health protocols. That said, our abilities to travel, connect with new people, and even find the time to do such activities have all been curtailed by COVID-19; it would surely have been easier to connect with more speakers if this study had been carried out in pre-COVID times.

Only one Michif speaker, Misyeu Brousse Flammand, could be interviewed in the timeframe of the research presented here. This unfortunately limited the number of utterances and ideas that could be explored during the research. For example, we were only able to discuss a small number of examples related to the AC morpheme -maka. Input from more speakers might have provided more clues about possible semantic constraints and exceptions to how this morpheme is used. Also, we had a limited ability to confidently say whether certain entries from the lexical resources were English calques, and if so, what a more natural Michif expression might be. The entries related to ANGER IS HEAT come to mind here, although there are many such examples that deserve a second look by a wider variety of fluent speakers. Lastly, given what Brousse himself said about potential differences between communities, it was not possible to determine the extent to which the animal similes described in this study are universally shared among speakers. Future research might reveal whether and to what extent native speakers – especially those from different communities – share perceptions about certain animals.

In addition, no Cree, Saulteaux or French speakers were interviewed for this research, aside from one brief personal communication with a French speaker from Quebec. While the Plains Cree and Ojibwe People’s dictionaries were produced with consultation/input from native speakers and Elders, they cannot provide the same kind of context and extensions of meaning that can be gleaned from a real-time conversation about language and how it is used. Moreover, the French dictionary sources do not represent the full range of possibilities within Michif.
French, the dialect from which Michif gets its French elements; there may well be undocumented figurative expressions in Michif French which are not found in other dialects, so interviews with native speakers would be the only way to verify the existence of such expressions. It goes without saying that it would be beneficial for future studies of this kind to include interview data from speakers of these three languages, given their historical influence on the development of Michif.

Undoubtedly, there are still numerous figurative expressions in Michif which are either poorly documented at best, or wholly undocumented at worst. For example, most of the animal similes are not found in lexical Michif resources; the ones that do appear in writing often provide little information that would help learners be able to use these expressions in novel sentences. Sitting down with Brousse and asking him to elaborate on such topics allowed him to not only produce more example phrases, but also provide background information and semantic/pragmatic details in the process. As Rice (2012) states in her paper on figurative language in Denesųłıné, if new speakers have the opportunity to learn about metaphors or other kinds of semantic creativity, this can help them to see patterns and connections between words and ideas - connections that were brought into the language by previous generations of speakers. This, in turn, can give them a sense of how they too might create new expressions in the language without resorting to loanwords or calques (Rice, 2012, pp. 72–73).

This study highlights only a small number of possible metaphors in Michif; there are several other potential examples that could not be pursued in the course of this thesis, but which deserve to be explored in more detail. One such example is outlined below:

(145) La taeb pashakwaw.
\[
\text{la} \quad \text{taeb} \quad \text{pashakwa-w} \\
\text{DET.DEF.F} \quad \text{table} \quad \text{be.sticky-3S}
\]

‘The table is sticky.’

(Laverdure & Allard, 1983, p. 315)

(146) Pashakwawwa tee maen.
\[
\text{pashakwa-wa} \quad \text{tee} \quad \text{maen} \\
\text{be.sticky-3.POSS.OBJ} \quad \text{your hands}
\]

‘Your hands are sticky.’

(Laverdure & Allard, 1983, p. 315)
These examples illustrate the existence of a figurative expression in Michif that compares lying to gluing someone or making them sticky; the utterance in (147) came up naturally during a conversation about truth and honesty with Brousse. A subsequent search through the TMD turned up the example in (148), which shows a similar usage of the verb pashakwa- (‘be sticky’) to talk about lying. It is important to note that both (147) and (148) include the derivational affix -h, whereas the others do not. Mazzoli states that this morpheme can either increase the valency of a verb, converting VAI to VTA, or create a causative verb (2021, pp. 16–17). Either way, we are left with a metaphorical expression about dishonesty. There are only two examples of the metaphor provided here, which leaves several questions: How else can this verb be used to talk about dishonesty? Are there other verbs related to glue, goo, slime, or other sticky substances that can be used to express this idea? To what extent are different speakers aware of this apparent conceptualization, and how might they explain this idea to a language learner? Future studies could use examples like this as a starting point for exploring the language even further.
6. CONCLUSION

The present study is a preliminary analysis of the kinds of conceptual metaphors (i.e., figurative language) that appear in Michif. The study contributes data from an understudied and underrepresented language to the broader discussion on conceptual metaphor and attempts to provide a deeper look at when/how certain figurative expressions may be used – as well as their semantic/pragmatic indications – in Michif.

Future research could involve interviews that pursue similar lines of questioning as found in this study, given that gaps remain in our understanding of semantics and pragmatics in the language. This is particularly true of colloquial speech, where figurative language may be more likely to turn up, in comparison to more formal or rigid styles of discourse (see Lovick, 2012, for a brief discussion on this). Given the age and number of remaining native speakers, documenting colloquial speech – whether literal or figurative – is an important area of research. This is not to say that non-native speakers cannot provide some insight in this regard, but as Brousse noted on more than one occasion, his generation was the last to grow up immersed in traditional ways of thinking before a Westernized worldview began to dominate in Michif households. Considering this, Michif Elders are in the best position to describe and explain colloquial elements like idioms, metaphors, and other kinds of figurative language, as many of them may be rooted in the traditional Michif worldview.

The Turtle Mountain Dictionary is now almost 40 years old, which has implications for its relevance to revitalization efforts both now and in the future. Brousse stressed on multiple occasions that the TMD is a good resource for learners, though the way in which it was created means that learners must be careful about what they take away from it; as noted throughout this thesis, there are a number of entries related to metaphors and figures of speech that are either misleading, lacking sufficient context, or perhaps English calques. Because of this, revisiting sources like the TMD with the aid of fluent speakers can be beneficial in terms of making them relevant for 21st century learners of Michif. Just as we have learned so much about the grammar and phonology of Michif in recent years, I contend that it is equally as important to dig into the deeper meaning of Michif words and the different ideas they can be used to express. Indeed, in the introduction section of the TMD, Crawford states that “[i]f the interest in this dictionary turns out to be sufficient to lead to its correction or amplification, that would be a more than gratifying
response to the hopes of its preparers.” (Laverdure & Allard, 1983, p. x). Looking at metaphors and figurative language is just one way of doing so, and it is my hope that this kind of collaborative research can continue to shed light on semantic creativity in Michif.
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