

Fêtes and Celebrations

Event Planning

The fête of the Mi-Carême

Unit prepared by
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Introduction

The unit “Fêtes and Celebrations, Event Planning: The fête of the Mi-Carême ” gives students the opportunity to explore the Mi-Carême, a festivity that dates back to the Middle Ages in Europe. It also allows students to have fun while discovering this traditional fête.

The first French-speaking colonists to settle in North America brought with them the tradition of celebrating Mi-Carême. Like Carnival, this fête is a period of merry-making and revelry that contrasts with the austere Lenten period of penance and abstinence. Mi-Carême is celebrated in the middle of Lent and is a mini-Carnival event.

Like Carnival, masks and costumes play an important role in the celebration of Mi-Carême. This event also includes such elements as eating food, playing music as well as singing and dancing. There are many traditions linked to the Mi-Carême celebration. The most popular one is called “running the Mi-Carême”. In small groups, masked revellers go from house to house to see if their neighbours can guess who is behind their disguises. Today, Mi-Carême is only celebrated in four Canadian communities: in the Acadian region of Chéticamp, Saint-Joseph-du-Moine and Margaree on Cape Breton Island in Nova Scotia as well as the three Quebec areas of l’Île aux Grues in the region of Chaudière-Appalaches, Natashquan in the region of Côte Nord and Fatima on the Magdalen Islands.

In order to ensure a good working climate for the participation of students in the activities of the unit, teachers can do the following:

The teacher reads the information contained in the unit.
The teacher guides the students in a brainstorming about fêtes and celebrations.
The teacher hands out the following pages to the students:

The list of tasks to be accomplished by students.

Planning an Event: Questionnaire for Students-Experts.
(Once the students have filled in the questionnaire, the teacher places students in work groups, making sure that each student is in a group that reflects one of the choices he/she indicated in the questionnaire.
Each work group has a different subject.)

A Bit of History about the Mi-Carême.

The page/or pages about one of the eight domains of expertise.

Once students have the necessary pages, the teacher can act as a facilitator, helping them when necessary.

The List of Activities (information for teacher)

The teacher will ensure that students participate in the following activities:

Participate in a brainstorming about the subject of fêtes that students are familiar with in their everyday lives.

Imagine a company that plans special events. The company creates fêtes in communities, linking these celebrations to a local and contemporary context. Students work for the company called FETES AND CELEBRATIONS. The board of directors of the Mi-Carême Interpretive Centre has hired this group because they are considered experts in the field of event planning. Students play the role of these experts and each one will choose a domain of expertise by filling in the questionnaire.

Students work in small groups of three to six persons that are the experts in one of the following domains: songs and music, expressions and poems, visual arts, dance, masks and costumes, food, promotion of events; “running the Mi-Carême”.

Teacher gives student groups the page or pages about the domains of expertise. Each file includes the tasks that must be accomplished by the work group. Students must read the information and interpret the material that is on the page or pages. They examine the documents and consult other groups (when necessary) to succeed.

Students plan a Mi-Carême celebration for your area (for example in the school).

Basic Material

The pages of information that teacher will give to students

Paper and pencils

Computers (when possible and if necessary)

Learning Outcomes (some examples)

Language Curriculum

Writing, reading and communicating orally are outcomes that are found in most of the language programs in Canada. These aspects of learning a language are closely linked to culture and identity. Of the many approaches that can be used, cooperative learning permits students to reach these outcomes. The unit “Fêtes and Celebrations” offers a creative way to use writing, reading and oral communication. In addition, this unit allows students to use language and culture to discover some traditions that are still alive today in many francophone communities around the world.

Arts Curriculum

There is also the possibility of including the unit in an arts curriculum (such as drama or theatre, dance, visual arts). For an example, see the 2012 grade ten and grade eleven drama curriculum that is used in Nova Scotia (page 89).

Acting

The actor’s language is a language of words, of movement, of gesture, of sound, and of the creation of meaning. Learning experiences designed to enhance skills in the use of concentration and observation, experience and memory, movement and poise, and creation and projection are part of the theatre experience.

http://www.ednet.ns.ca/pdfdocs/curriculum/drama10_11ss.pdf

The week called *La semaine de la francophonie*

The unit could also be explored during the week called *la semaine de la francophonie* where the underlying outcomes are linked to exploring, understanding and appreciating various aspects of francophone culture.

Social Studies Curriculum

The unit can be used in most social studies curriculum that has a section on culture. One example is in the 2012 grade nine social studies curriculum in Nova Scotia (see pages 41, 44).

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Teachers can have students research and report on the following traditions and, where appropriate, identify the cultural roots of the tradition:

Halloween

Use of confetti at weddings

Christmas trees

Valentine's Day

mumming

Mi-Carême

Kwanza

summer vacations

wakes

La Chandeleur

This section presents many opportunities for cross-cultural activities with fine arts teachers.

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2.4.4 identify local festivals or special occasions that take place in an area of Atlantic Canada and assess their significance for local culture.

2.4.7 select a Francophone cultural group in Atlantic Canada and examine ways in which its members express their identity

<http://www.ednet.ns.ca/pdfdocs/curriculum/global-community.pdf>

Tasks to be accomplished (This page is for students)

As an introduction to the unit, you will participate with your teacher and other students in a brainstorming about fêtes.

You will become employees of a company called FETES and CELEBRATIONS. You have been employed by the board of the Mi-Carême Interpretive Centre that is located on Cape Breton Island, to plan a Mi-Carême celebration.

As employees you will be asked to do the following tasks:

Fill in the questionnaire where you will choose three domains of expertise.

You will work in a group that reflects one of your three choices. Your teacher will form the work groups once he or she has looked at the answers of the questionnaire.

Form your work groups with the other people who have chosen the same domain of expertise.

Take the pages that describe your domain of expertise and information to help you plan your part of the event.

Do the activities listed.

Work with other groups of experts (if necessary).

Do research on the Internet to find more information about your subject.

Present the results of your work to the other people in your class.

Plan and bring to life the Mi-Carême celebration for others.

Event Planning

Questionnaire for Students-Experts

Please choose and mark (1, 2, 3) three domains of expertise in your order of preference:

Dance

Food

Song and music

Expressions and Poems

Masks and costumes

Visual Art

Promotion of an event

“Running the Mi-Carême”

A Bit of History About the Mi-Carême

The majority of researchers believe that the Mi-Carême dates back to the Middle Ages in Europe. The Mi-Carême is a type of mini-carnival that represents joy and merry-making in the middle of a period of penance and fasting, called Lent. Lent begins on Ash Wednesday and ends on the Saturday before Easter. Today, Mi-Carême is only celebrated in four Canadian communities: in the Acadian region of Chéticamp, Saint-Joseph-du-Moine and Margaree on Cape Breton Island in Nova Scotia as well as the three Quebec areas of l'Île aux Grues in the region of Chaudière-Appalaches, Natashquan in the region of Côte Nord and Fatima on the Magdalen Islands.

The first French-speaking colonists from France to settle in North America brought the tradition of celebrating Mi-Carême with them. The fête is composed of the following elements: food, music and song, dance, masks and costumes, the tradition of "running the Mi-Carême".

There are many traditions linked to this fête. The most well-known is called "running the Mi-Carême". In small groups, disguised persons go from house to house to see if their neighbours can guess who is hiding behind the masks.

Visit the following Web sites to learn a bit more about the Mi-Carême. For those who cannot read French, there are some lovely photos.

The Acadian region of Chéticamp, Saint-Joseph-du-Moine and Magré, Nova Scotia. This site is in English.

<http://micareme.ca/en/index.php>

The region of Iles aux Grues, Québec.

<http://isle-aux-grues.com/?s=mi-careme>

The region of Fatima, Iles de la Madeleine, Québec.

<http://www.tourismeillesdelamadeleine.com/magdalen-islands/evenements-29-la-mi-careme-dans-le-village-de-fatima.cfm>

The region of Natashquan, Québec.

<http://www.copactenatashquan.net/main.php?sid=m&mid=55&lng=2>

Event Planning: The Mi-Carême

File on Songs and Music

You have been trained in planning cultural events. In addition, you have a domain of expertise in traditional fêtes. You have been hired by the board of the Mi-Carême Interpretive Centre that is located on Cape Breton Island, to plan a Mi-Carême celebration in your area of the country.

Besides being event planners, you are specialists in songs about the Mi-Carême. You also have some information about music played during this celebration.

You have also been asked to create a song on the theme of the Mi-Carême and integrate it into the celebration.

On the following Web site you can hear an excerpt of a song called “Vive la Mi-Carême”:

<http://onoffkonoff.com/tag/celtic-colours/>

The excerpt that you heard is a song that was written by Luce Ethel Aucoin on the traditional melody of “Le p’tit cotillon blanc”. It was sung for the first gala “*Laissons entrer les mi-carêmes*” at the *Centre Acadien* on March 29, 1987. Maurice Poirier was the first singer to interpret the song when he had the honour of singing it during this gala event.

Here are the words to the song, followed by its English translation:

Vive la Mi-Carême!

C’est la Mi-Carêm’, amusons nous gaiement, maman ;
Il fait fêter ça, ça s’pass qu’un’ fois par an, maman.

Refrain :

Viv’ la Mi-Carêm’! Ma mèm’,
Chantons, rions, dansons, maman.

On va à l’églis’ se chercher du *butin*, maman,
Les plus distingués s’habillent élégamment, maman.

On s’déguise en mariés, ou en sœurs du couvent,
D’autres en policiers, ou Chevaliers d’Colomb, maman.

Y’en a qui sont muets, et d’autres très bruyants, maman.
Y’en a qui parlent anglais, et d’autres en Canad’ gens, maman.

On sonn’ des cloches à vach’s, ou des *borgots* d’antan, maman,
Y’en a qui sent’ le *mux*, et d’aut’s qui sent’ la boisson, maman.

Y’en a qui dans’ des quat’s, ou bien des rigodons, maman,
Et, puis y’en a toujours qui sont bien trop *monrons*, maman.

Faut pas abandonner de fêter l’occasion, maman ;
C’est comm’ ça qu’ça s’pass ‘ du Moine à Chéticamp, maman.

Source Daniel Boudreau, 2^e édition, Chansons d’Acadie, 11e série, Moncton, Centre d’études acadiennes 1996, p. 5.

Long Live the Mi-Carême!

It's the Mi-Carême, let's have fun, mama
Let's celebrate. It only comes once a year.

Refrain :

Long live the Mi-Carême, mama,
Let's sing, let's laugh, let's dance, mama

Let's go look for old clothes,
The most distinguished dress elegantly, mama.

Disguised as bride and groom, or convent nuns,
Others as police, or Knights of Columbus, mama.

There are those who do not speak, and those who are very noisy, mama,
There are those who speak English and others who speak French. Mama.

We ring cowbells, or blow old-fashioned horns, mama,
There are those who smell of musk and those who smell of alcohol, mama.

There are those who step-dance, or those who dance the rigodon, mama,
And, there are those who are too shy, mama,

We must not stop celebrating this fete, mama.
That's how it goes from the Moine to Cheticamp, mama.

Event Planning: The Mi-Carême

File on Expressions and Poems

You have been trained in planning cultural events. In addition, you have a domain of expertise in traditional fêtes. You have been hired by the board of the Mi-Carême Interpretive Centre that is located on Cape Breton Island, to plan a Mi-Carême celebration in your area of the country.

Besides being event planners, you are experts on expressions and poems on the theme of Lent and Mi-Carême. You have information about some expressions and poems.

Here are a few examples of expressions that speak of Lent:

You have a face of Lent (someone who is very thin).

To arrive just like Lent in March (usually Lent takes place in March and it occurs every year).

Lent always comes in like the tides (the tides come in regularly each day just as Lent comes every year).

Here is an example of a poem about Mi-Carême, written by Bérangère Landry:

On the quest of the full moon
In a bluish whirlwind
The "Mascarêmes" sing
And their hearts celebrate...

Create an expression and poem that contains the word Mi-Carême. Integrate this expression and poem into the Mi-Carême celebration that you are planning. Here are some examples of ways of integrating the expression and the poem that you create: tell a story, prepare a poster, write the expression and poem on place mats that can be used during the event.

Event Planning: The Mi-Carême

File on The Visual Arts

You have been trained in planning cultural events. In addition, you have a domain of expertise in traditional fêtes. You have been hired by the board of the Mi-Carême Interpretive Centre that is located on Cape Breton Island, to plan a Mi-Carême celebration in your area of the country.

Besides being event planners, you are also specialists about artists and artisans who have created visual art on the theme of Mi-Carême. You have an example of one artist and one artisan who were inspired by the Mi-Carême theme.

Create an artwork that is inspired by the Mi-Carême fête and integrate it into your event.

**DURING MI-CARÊME
HEARTS CELEBRATE**



Painting by Gabriel Landry



Hooked Rug by Gisèle LeBlanc

Event Planning: The Mi-Carême

File on Dance

You have been trained in planning cultural events. In addition, you have a domain of expertise in traditional fêtes. You have been hired by the board of the Mi-Carême Interpretive Centre that is located on Cape Breton Island, to plan a Mi-Carême celebration in your area of the country.

Besides being event planners, you are also specialists on dances that are danced during the Mi-Carême celebration. You have some information about some dances that one can see and perform during this fête.

Let the words of the following song, written and performed by the musical group *Suroit* from the Magdalen Islands, inspire you:

Put dance into your soles
Sing on the music of fools
And you will find
The strength to stand tall.

(translation)

“Mi-Carême”, 12th album of the group *Suroit*.

To hear the song in French visit the following Web site:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ACxMTxihw3Y&feature=related>

Create at least one choreography of a dance that can be presented during the Mi-Carême celebration.

Here is an example of a parade where some dancers are performing a dance:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ACxMTxihw3Y&feature=related>

Visit the following to see two examples of free style dancing during Mi-Carême in the Acadian region of Chéticamp:

http://micareme.ca/fr/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=63&Itemid=81

Event Planning: The Mi-Carême

File on Masks and Costumes

You have been trained in planning cultural events. In addition, you have a domain of expertise in traditional fêtes. You have been hired by the board of the Mi-Carême Interpretive Centre that is located on Cape Breton Island, to plan a Mi-Carême celebration in your area of the country.

Besides being event planners, you are also specialists on masks and costumes worn during Mi-Carême and Carnival. You have some information about this subject in this file.

Create some masks and costumes for the Mi-Carême runners and participate in the event.

Visit the following Web sites to give you ideas about making masks:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IjdWH1G1GSA>

<http://www.google.ca/search?q=paper+plates+masks&hl=en&client=safari&rls=en&prmd=imvns&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ei=grrHT9ngKaue6QGJyZHrDQ&sqj=2&ved=0CFsQsAQ&biw=1135&bih=559>

You can use old clothes and your imagination to come up with some interesting costumes for the event.

Event Planning: The Mi-Carême

File on Food

You have been trained in planning cultural events. In addition, you have a domain of expertise in traditional fêtes. You have been hired by the board of the Mi-Carême Interpretive Centre that is located on Cape Breton Island, to plan a Mi-Carême celebration in your area of the country.

Besides being event planners, you are specialists on food and treats that can be served during the Mi-Carême celebration.

Prepare some treats for the event. One treat that is especially loved by the Mi-Carême runners is fudge. However, all kinds of food that is easy to prepare can be served to the disguised revellers.

Create a menu with drawings, photos or other visual art to give participants the opportunity to see what they will be able to taste during the event.

Event Planning: The Mi-Carême

File on Promotion of the Mi-Carême

You have been trained in planning cultural events. In addition, you have a domain of expertise in traditional fêtes. You have been hired by the board of the Mi-Carême Interpretive Centre that is located on Cape Breton Island, to plan a Mi-Carême celebration in your area of the country.

Besides being event planners, you are also specialists on promoting cultural events. You know how important it is to promote events thus ensuring an active and dynamic participation by the population that you have targeted.

Prepare a variety of types of promotion. Here are some suggestions: posters, a Web page, a Web site, a Facebook account, a Twitter account, a newspaper article, a radio or TV interview or publicity, brochures. Make sure to distribute and disseminate the promotional material to your targeted audience.

Event Planning: The Mi-Carême

File on “Running the Mi-Carême”

You have been trained in planning cultural events. In addition, you have a domain of expertise in traditional fêtes. You have been hired by the board of the Mi-Carême Interpretive Centre that is located on Cape Breton Island, to plan a Mi-Carême celebration in your area of the country.

Besides being event planners, you are also specialists on the tradition of “running the Mi-Carême”, the most popular activity during the fête. In small groups, disguised persons go from one place to another to see if their neighbours can guess who is hiding behind the masks.

Prepare an activity of “running the Mi-Carême”. Decide how to integrate it into the event.

Short Biographies of the Creators of this Learning Unit

Ethnologist Dr. Barbara Le Blanc teaches for the Department of Education at Université Sainte-Anne in Nova Scotia. She has lived and worked in Europe and North America in a variety of fields, more specifically in theatre, teaching and cultural tourism. Her research has focused on topics linked to educational tourism, the use of drama and theatre in learning as well as Acadian history and culture. She has written a number of articles on Acadian culture and a children's book, *Acadie en fête* published by the BBC and Longman Publications in Great Britain. Her book *Postcards From Acadie: Grand-Pré, Evangeline and the Acadian Identity*, examines the role of an historic site in the construction of a sense of Acadian group identity and belonging. Her publication *All Join Hands: A Guide to Teach Traditional Acadian Dances in School* is a resource consisting of a manual, a music CD and a DVD to help learn examples of Acadian dances that have been done over the past 400 years. Barbara Le Blanc is past president of the Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Ecosse (FANE) and the Folklore Studies Association of Canada.

Mireille Baulu-MacWillie obtained her Ph.D. from the Université de Montréal and dedicated her forty-five-year career to the field of education. In her first twenty-five years, she taught students at all academic levels: primary school, high school, community college and university. She also held the administrative positions of principal in a public school and chair of a university department. She spent the last twenty years of her career at Université Sainte-Anne in Nova Scotia as a professor of education preparing students for the teaching profession. These experiences have allowed her to become very familiar with the conditions that foster healthy and successful learning. She has written many scholarly articles and co-authored two books, one of which entitled *Apprendre...c'est un beau jeu* (1990) is about the education of young children. She also wrote the book *Millions of Souls* which narrates the story of Philip Riteman, a survivor of the Holocaust. Now retired, she uses all the knowledge that she has accumulated over the years to help educators foster the desire to explore the best teaching practices and nurture the pleasure to learn.

Both authors have collaborated on numerous articles, books and projects, including the chapter "La culture populaire en Acadie" in the book *Les enquêtes d'Octave*, Collection Franç'Arts (Les éditions Beauchemin et la Fondation d'éducation des provinces atlantiques, 2003), the book *Découvrir la langue par la magie des contes* (Chenelière Éducation, 2007) and the learning unit *Millions of Souls* (Flanker Press, 2010).