

TEACHER GUIDE: Zagidiwin (Love) — Spiritual Self-Care

Seven Sacred Teachings Series | Sandy Lake First Nation

OVERVIEW

Aim of This Presentation

This presentation introduces students to Zagidiwin (the Sacred Teaching of Love) through the lens of spiritual self-care. Students will understand that loving themselves—their spirits, minds, bodies, and emotions—is not selfish but necessary for well-being and for showing up fully for their communities. The teaching positions spiritual self-care as an act of honoring the Creator, ancestors, and the gifts our traditions offer. It acknowledges the historical context of colonization and the resistance embedded in practicing our spiritual ways, while offering accessible, practical tools students can use immediately.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this presentation, students will be able to:

Knowledge:

- Understand the four dimensions of wellness (physical, mental, emotional, spiritual) as taught through the Medicine Wheel
- Define spiritual wellness and what it means to have a strong or struggling spirit
- Identify at least three practices from Anishinaabe traditions that support spiritual self-care
- Explain why our ancestral teachings about spiritual care matter historically and today

Skills:

- Recognize signs of spiritual wellness and spiritual struggle in themselves and others
- Identify at least one spiritual practice they can realistically try
- Use reflection and journaling to notice their own spiritual state
- Ask appropriate questions of Elders and family members about spiritual practices

Values & Mindsets:

- Understand that spiritual self-care is an act of self-love and cultural preservation
- Recognize their spirit as sacred and worthy of care
- Value Anishinaabe knowledge as legitimate and powerful
- Feel connection to ancestors and the longer story their traditions carry
- Understand that there are many valid paths to spiritual wellness

SECTION 1: FOUNDATION — UNDERSTANDING YOUR SPIRITUAL SELF

(Slides 1-7)

This opening section establishes the groundwork by introducing the Eagle as a symbol of love, explaining the whole self through the Medicine Wheel, defining spiritual self, and creating historical context for why this teaching matters now.

SLIDE 1: Title Slide

Zagidiwin: The Sacred Teaching of Love — Spiritual Self-Care

What's Being Taught

This is the opening frame that establishes the unit's focus and cultural grounding. It positions this as a series teaching within Sandy Lake's Seven Sacred Teachings curriculum, creating continuity with prior or future teachings students may receive.

Teacher Narration

"Today we're beginning our learning about **Zagidiwin** — one of the Seven Sacred Teachings. Zagidiwin is often translated as 'Love,' but it's deeper than that. It's about right relationship with yourself, others, and all of creation. The Eagle carries this teaching because the Eagle flies closest to the Creator and can see how everything connects — that's what love is really about: seeing ourselves and others as connected.

We're going to focus specifically on spiritual self-care—caring for the invisible part of you that makes you *you*. This is important learning for right now in your life. You'll leave today with actual tools and practices you can try.

Before we dive in, I want to set the intention for this circle. We're going to talk about spiritual wellness, which includes some sacred knowledge. I ask that you listen with respect, ask real questions if you're genuinely curious, and know that some teachings go deeper—those are meant to be learned in ceremony or from Elders when the time is right."

Assessment Questions

- What is one thing you already know about the Eagle from our traditions?
- Why do you think the Eagle might represent the teaching of Love?
- What does "spiritual self-care" mean to you in your own words?

SLIDE 2: Why the Eagle Carries Love

What's Being Taught

This slide introduces the central metaphor of the Eagle as a symbol of love and perspective-taking. It connects the Eagle's physical characteristics (flying highest, closest to Creator) to spiritual principles (seeing the whole

picture, understanding connection). This also introduces the foundational principle that loving yourself is connected to being able to love others.

Teacher Narration

"Look at this image of the Eagle. The Eagle flies higher than any other being. From that height, it sees the whole landscape—the water, the forests, the animals, the people. It can see how everything connects and relates to everything else.

Our teachers say the Eagle carries Love—**Zagidiwin**—because real love begins with this kind of clear seeing. When you truly love yourself in a good way, you're not being selfish. You're saying, 'I am part of this creation. My spirit matters. I matter.' And when your own spirit is strong and healthy, then you can see others clearly too. You can love them in a good way. You can take care of your community.

The Eagle teaches us that **love is seeing clearly**—seeing ourselves and our community and all our relations as connected. That's why the Eagle carries this teaching so close to the Creator's light."

Assessment Questions

- From the Eagle's perspective high in the sky, what do you think it sees that we on the ground might miss?
- How might loving yourself make you better able to love others?
- What does it mean to "love yourself in a good way"?

SLIDE 3: The Four Parts of You (Medicine Wheel)

What's Being Taught

This slide introduces the holistic concept of wellness using the Medicine Wheel, a foundational teaching in many First Nations cultures. It shows that wellness isn't just physical or mental—it includes spiritual and emotional dimensions. The visual of the four directions helps students understand that spiritual self-care is one essential part of overall health. This provides the conceptual framework that makes the rest of the unit coherent.

Teacher Narration

"Our teachings show us that each person is made up of four parts, like the four directions. You might know this as the Medicine Wheel.

The Physical — your body in the East, represented by red. That's your physical health—what you eat, how you move, how you rest. We take care of this when we play sports, eat good food, get sleep.

The Mental — your mind in the South, represented by yellow. That's your thinking, learning, how you understand the world. We care for this when we read, learn new things, think critically.

The Emotional — your feelings in the West, represented by black. That's joy, sadness, anger, love. All your feelings are important. We care for this when we express ourselves, talk to people we trust, and let ourselves feel.

The Spiritual — your spirit in the North, represented by white. That's the invisible part of you—your sense of purpose, your connection to Creator, ancestors, land, and all living things. Your spirit is what makes you *you*.

Today we're focusing on this fourth part—the spiritual. But as you're learning, notice that all four parts are connected. When your spirit is strong, it affects how your body feels, how you think, and how you handle your emotions. When any of these parts is struggling, the others feel it.

Our ancestors understood this. They took care of all four parts. That's true wellness—all four in balance."

Assessment Questions

- Can you give a personal example of how caring for your physical self affects your emotional or mental self?
- Think of someone in your community who seems to have spiritual strength. What do you notice about how they show up in the other three areas?
- Which of the four parts of yourself do you think needs the most care right now?

SLIDE 4: What is Your Spiritual Self?

What's Being Taught

This slide defines spiritual self in accessible, non-religious language that honors First Nations understanding while being inclusive. It emphasizes that the spirit is real and enduring (before birth, continuing after death), and it connects to something larger than the individual. The metaphor of the fire is powerful and memorable, helping students understand both the nature of the spirit and the need for its care.

Teacher Narration

"Let's get clear about what we mean by your 'spirit.' Your spirit is the part of you that you can't see or touch, but you know it's there. It's real. It's what makes you *you*—your uniqueness, your energy, what people feel when you walk into a room.

Our Elders teach that your spirit existed before you were born and will continue after your body walks on. You're not just your body or your brain. You're a spiritual being. And that spirit connects you to something much bigger than yourself.

Your spirit connects you to the **Creator** who made you—whatever name you use for that divine force. It connects you to **your ancestors**—all those people who walked before you, who survived so that you could be here. It connects you to the **land** that sustains you—our lakes, forests, rocks, all the living things. And it connects you to **all beings** as your relations.

Listen to this Elder teaching: '*Your spirit is the fire within you—it needs to be tended.*'

Think about a fire. If you tend it, feed it with good wood, protect it from the wind, it burns bright. If you neglect it, don't feed it, let anything blow through it, the fire gets smaller, dims, might go out. Your spirit is like that. It needs care, attention, and the right kind of fuel. That's what spiritual self-care is about—tending your fire."

Assessment Questions

- What do you think it means that your spirit existed before you were born?

- When have you felt connected to something bigger than yourself? What was that like?
- In this metaphor of fire, what do you think are the "good woods" that feed a spirit? What are the things that blow the fire out?

SLIDE 5: Signs of a Strong Spirit

What's Being Taught

This slide helps students recognize spiritual wellness. It's important to make the invisible visible by naming concrete signs and feelings that indicate spiritual strength. This helps students understand spiritual health isn't abstract—it's something you experience in your relationships, sense of self, sense of purpose, emotional resilience, and gratitude. The note that these come and go is important for normalizing the journey.

Teacher Narration

"So what does it look like when your spirit is strong and healthy? When your spirit is well, you might notice these things:

Connection — You feel connected to your family, your community, the land around you. You feel like you belong somewhere. You might feel this when you're with people who get you, or when you're out on the land.

Identity — You know who you are. You feel proud of being Anishinaabe. You know your family, you understand where you come from. Even if you're still figuring things out, there's a sense of 'this is me.'

Purpose — Your life feels like it matters. You have gifts—maybe you're good at teaching, or creating, or helping others. You feel like you have something to offer your community and the world.

Peace — Even when life gets hard—and it does for everyone—you can find some calm. You have inner strength to handle challenges. Not that everything is perfect, but you can find moments of peace.

Gratitude — You notice and appreciate the good things, even small ones. The way the sun feels. That your friend made you laugh. That your grandma made your favorite food. Gratitude is a sign your spirit is noticing life.

Now, here's important: these feelings come and go. That's normal. Spiritual wellness isn't about always feeling perfect. It's a journey. Some days your spirit feels strong; some days it needs more care. That's all part of being human."

Assessment Questions

- Which of these five signs do you experience in your own life? Can you give a specific example?
- Who in your life shows these signs of spiritual wellness? What do you notice about them?
- Is there one of these—connection, identity, purpose, peace, or gratitude—that you wish you felt more of?

SLIDE 6: Signs Your Spirit Needs Care

What's Being Taught

This slide identifies warning signs of spiritual struggle in non-judgmental, validating language. It's critical to normalize that many young people experience these feelings and that struggling doesn't mean something is wrong with them—it's a signal. The comparison to physical hunger makes it relatable. This slide also provides reassurance that help and healing tools exist.

Teacher Narration

"Sometimes—and this happens to everyone at different times—your spirit might be struggling. You might notice things like:

Feeling empty or disconnected — Like something is missing. You go through your day but nothing feels real or matters.

Not sure who you are — Not knowing where you belong. Questions like 'Who am I? Where do I fit?' that feel heavy.

Feeling alone even around people — Being surrounded by friends but still feeling like no one gets you. Loneliness.

Lost interest in things you used to enjoy — Activities that used to light you up now feel boring or pointless.

Feeling far from your culture or community — Sensing a distance from your heritage or feeling like you don't belong in your own community.

Here's what I want you to hear: **These feelings are not weakness**. They're not your fault. Your spirit is like a signal system. When your stomach growls, it's telling you your body needs food. When your spirit feels these things, it's telling you your spirit needs attention. It's wisdom, not weakness.

And look—many young people experience these things. You're not alone in this. The good news? Your ancestors left us powerful tools and practices to help our spirits heal and grow strong. We're going to learn them today."

Assessment Questions

- Have you noticed any of these signs in yourself? (Invite them to think privately, not share if uncomfortable)
- What do you think causes young people's spirits to struggle today?
- When you notice your spirit struggling, what's one thing that helps even a little?

SLIDE 7: Why This Matters — Our Healing Journey

What's Being Taught

This slide provides crucial historical and cultural context. It acknowledges the reality of colonization and residential schools while reframing spiritual practice as both healing and resistance. This contextualizes spiritual self-care not as individual self-improvement but as part of the longer story of survival and cultural continuity. It helps students understand they're part of something bigger and that practicing their ways honors their ancestors' sacrifices.

Teacher Narration

"I want to talk about something real. Our spiritual practices weren't always a choice. For generations—and I mean many, many generations—colonization tried to destroy our ways. The Canadian government made our ceremonies illegal until 1951. Residential schools punished children for praying in their own language, in their own way. Our ancestors' spiritual practices were treated like they were wrong, shameful, dangerous.

But something powerful happened. Even when it was illegal and dangerous, our ancestors protected these teachings. They kept them alive in secret. They passed them down so that you could receive them today. Your grandparents and great-grandparents fought to keep this alive for you.

So when you take care of your spirit using these practices, you're doing something that's both **healing for you personally** and **resistance against colonization**. You're saying, 'These ways matter. I'm keeping them alive. I honor the sacrifices my ancestors made.'

Listen to this: '*Taking care of your spirit is taking care of your ancestors' dreams for you.*'

Every time you sit by the water, or learn a word in our language, or pray, or talk to an Elder, you're honoring that lineage of resistance and love. You're saying yes to what your people survived for. That's powerful. That matters.

This learning today is part of your healing journey and part of keeping our nation strong."

Assessment Questions

- What do you understand about why our spiritual practices were suppressed?
- How does it feel to know that practicing our ways is honoring your ancestors' sacrifices?
- What does it mean to you that these teachings survived and are now available for you to learn?

SECTION 2: GIFTS FROM OUR ANCESTORS

(Slides 8-14)

This section introduces specific spiritual practices and knowledge passed down through generations. Each practice is presented as a gift and a tool. The approach emphasizes both accessibility (there are entry points for everyone) and respect (some teachings are deeper and belong in ceremony or with Elders).

SLIDE 8: Gifts from Our Ancestors — Section Intro

What's Being Taught

This slide serves as a transition and visual organizer, showing six major ancestral gifts: Land, Language, Smudging, Drum, Prayer, and Dreams. It sets the tone that these aren't abstract concepts but practical tools and relationships.

Teacher Narration

"Our ancestors gave us so many gifts for spiritual care. Over the next while, we're going to explore six of the most powerful ones. These aren't theoretical—they're things you can engage with right now.

Look at these six gifts: **Land, Language, Smudging, Drum, Prayer, and Dreams**. Each one is a doorway to spiritual wellness. Some of them you might already know about. Some might be new. By the end, you'll have a sense of which ones call to you.

Let's explore each one."

Assessment Questions

- Which of these six gifts are you already familiar with?
- Which one are you most curious to learn about?
- Can you think of a time someone shared one of these gifts with you?

SLIDE 9: The Land as Spiritual Medicine — Aki (Earth), Nibi (Water)

What's Being Taught

This slide introduces the land—specifically water—as a relational, living entity and spiritual medicine. It grounds students in place (Sandy Lake specifically) and teaches that being outside isn't just "fresh air"—it's a spiritual practice. The practice of offering tobacco is introduced as a way of showing respect and gratitude to the land. This is accessible to all students immediately.

Teacher Narration

"For Anishinaabe people, the land is a living relative. Sandy Lake—the water, the forests, the rocks—has held our people for thousands of years. When you're on this land, you're walking where your ancestors walked.

This lake has been home to our people. Your grandparents sat by this water. Their ancestors hunted these forests and harvested from this lake. The spirits of your ancestors are connected to this place. That's real and powerful.

The land heals your spirit. When you sit by the water, you remember your place in creation. The land teaches patience, cycles, and balance. Being outside without your phone lets your spirit settle.

Nibi (water) is life. Sandy Lake's water is medicine. It flows, nourishes, cleanses. Sitting by the lake restores the spirit.

We show respect by offering tobacco. Take a pinch, place it on the earth or in the water, and say words of gratitude: 'Thank you for this place. Thank you for sustaining my people. I honor my ancestors who came before.'

Try this: Sit by Sandy Lake for 15 minutes without your phone. Just watch and listen. Notice the water, the sounds, the feeling. Notice what happens in your spirit."

Assessment Questions

- What's a place on the land around Sandy Lake where you feel most peaceful?
- What do you notice about yourself when you spend time outside without your phone?

- How might the land around us be a teacher? What could it teach us?
- What does it mean to offer tobacco as a sign of respect?

SLIDE 10: The Power of Language — Anishinanimowin

What's Being Taught

This slide teaches that language is not just communication—it carries spiritual knowledge and ways of seeing the world. Learning the language is presented as a spiritual practice that strengthens identity and connection to ancestors. The teaching acknowledges that not all students may be fluent and positions learning even a few words as powerful. The specific words taught carry spiritual meaning and are accessible entry points.

Teacher Narration

"Anishinanimowin (our language) isn't just different English words—it's a way of understanding the world. Our ancestors encoded spiritual knowledge into our language. When you speak it, you think the way your people thought for thousands of years.

Some concepts only make sense in our language because they reflect how our people understood relationships and the spiritual world.

Learning our language:

- **Connects you to ancestors** — Your great-great-grandparents spoke these words
- **Unlocks deeper meaning** — Teachings make more sense in their original language
- **Strengthens your identity** — Language and culture are inseparable
- **Makes prayers more powerful** — Words from your heart in your language carry strength

Spiritual words to learn:

- **Miigwech** (mee-gwetch) — Thank you. A gratitude prayer.
- **Gizhe-Manidoo** (gee-zhay mah-nee-doo) — The Great Spirit, Creator
- **Aki** (uh-kee) — Earth, land
- **Nibi** (nee-bee) — Water, life

Ask an Elder or family member to teach you. That relationship is where the real learning happens. They'll be happy you asked."

Assessment Questions

- Why do you think language carries spiritual knowledge differently than just being a translation tool?
- Have you heard any words in Anishinanimowin? What was that experience like?
- Who could you ask to teach you more words in our language?
- How might learning your language change your sense of identity?

SLIDE 11: Smudging — Cleansing Your Spirit (The Four Sacred Medicines)

What's Being Taught

This slide introduces smudging—a foundational spiritual practice—by explaining the four sacred medicines and their purposes. It's presented as something practical students might experience but emphasizes that smudging is best learned through relationship with Elders, not from instructions. This respects the sacred nature of the practice while making it accessible and demystifying it.

Teacher Narration

"Smudging is a spiritual practice that's like taking a spiritual shower. The smoke from the sacred medicines carries away negative energy and invites positive energy. It prepares you for prayer, for learning, for important ceremonies, or just for starting your day in a good way."

There are four sacred medicines used in smudging. Let me tell you about each one:

Sage — Sage clears negative energy and purifies. If you're feeling heavy, worried, angry, or if a space feels tense, sage smoke can help clear that. It's like saying, 'I'm letting go of what's weighing me down.'

Sweetgrass — Sweetgrass invites positive energy and good spirits. After you've cleared with sage, sweetgrass brings blessing and good feelings. It smells sweet and calming.

Cedar — Cedar offers protection and grounding. It connects you to the earth and protects your energy. It's often used in healing or when someone needs strength.

Tobacco — Tobacco is the most sacred of the four medicines. It's used for offerings, for prayers, for saying thank you. When you offer tobacco to the water or the earth, you're making a prayer. Tobacco carries your words to the spirit world.

Here's the important part: **smudging is best learned through relationship, not from instructions**. Ask a family member or Elder to show you. They'll teach you the respectful way to handle the medicines, how to use the smoke, the prayers or intentions to set. The teaching happens in the relationship.

If you're interested in learning to smudge, talk to your family or an Elder. Offer tobacco and ask if they'll teach you. You might be invited to a smudging ceremony at school or in the community. Pay attention. Let the teaching come to you."

Assessment Questions

- Have you experienced smudging before? What was that like?
- Why do you think learning practices like smudging from an Elder is different from learning from a slideshow?
- What would you ask an Elder to teach you about the sacred medicines?
- If you were clearing negative energy from your life, which of the four medicines sounds most helpful to you?

SLIDE 12: The Drum and Song — The Heartbeat of Mother Earth

What's Being Taught

This slide teaches the drum as a spiritual and communal practice that connects the individual to the earth, ancestors, and community. It emphasizes both the healing nature of drumming and the spiritual significance of songs that carry thousands of years of teachings. This practice is accessible through attendance at gatherings, learning songs, and engaging with the drum in community settings.

Teacher Narration

"The drum is sacred. The drum represents the heartbeat of Mother Earth. And here's something amazing: the first sound you ever heard was your mother's heartbeat. So when you hear the drum, something deep inside you recognizes it. Your body knows it.

When the drum is played, it heals your spirit in several ways:

It synchronizes your heartbeat with Earth — When you listen to the drum or dance to it, your heartbeat actually syncs up with the drum's rhythm. You become one with the heartbeat of Mother Earth. That's grounding. That's healing.

It connects you to ancestors — Every pow wow, every ceremony, every gathering where drums are played—that's been happening for generations. When you hear the drum, you hear the voices of your ancestors who danced to that same rhythm.

It creates community and belonging — Drumming brings people together. When you're dancing or listening together, you feel part of something bigger. You belong.

Our songs carry prayers, stories, and teachings. Some of our songs are thousands of years old. When you hear or learn a song, you're carrying forward knowledge that your ancestors protected for you.

Here's how you can connect with the drum: Go to pow wows and community gatherings. Listen. Feel the drum in your chest. Ask someone to teach you a social song—a song that's meant to be shared and danced to. Attend drum practices if your community has them. Even just showing up, listening, dancing—that's participating in something sacred and healing.

The drum is waiting for you."

Assessment Questions

- When you hear drums, what do you feel in your body?
- Have you ever danced to the drum? What was that experience like?
- Why do you think the drum connects people across generations?
- How might learning a traditional song be different from just hearing music?

SLIDE 13: Prayer and Quiet Reflection — Talking with the Creator

What's Being Taught

This slide demystifies prayer by explaining it as conversation rather than performance or asking. It provides simple, accessible daily prayers (morning, before eating, when struggling, evening) and introduces tobacco offerings as a spiritual practice. It also emphasizes the power of silence and quiet reflection in a world of constant stimulation. This positions prayer as something anyone can do.

Teacher Narration

"Prayer in our tradition isn't just about asking for things. It's having a conversation with the Creator. It's giving thanks. It's listening for guidance. You don't need special words or to know exactly how to do it. You speak from your heart."

Here are some simple daily prayers you can use:

Morning prayer — When you wake up, you might say something like, 'Thank you, Creator, for giving me another day. Help me walk a good path today.' That's it. Simple. From your heart.

Before eating — Before you eat, you might pause for a moment and acknowledge the food. You might say, 'I'm grateful for this food. I know something gave its life so I could eat. I honor that sacrifice. I'll use this energy to live in a good way.' Many families do this. It's a moment of gratitude and connection.

When you're struggling — If you're facing something hard, you might say, 'Creator, I'm having a hard time. Help me find strength. Help me see the lesson. Help me remember I'm not alone.' Prayer in difficulty is powerful. It connects you to something bigger than your problem.

Evening prayer — Before bed, you might reflect. 'What am I grateful for today? What did I do well? What do I need to let go of?' You might say, 'Thank you for this day. Thank you for my family. Forgive me where I messed up. Help me do better tomorrow.'

Tobacco Offerings — When you make a prayer, especially an important one, you can offer tobacco. You place a pinch of tobacco on the earth or in the water and speak your prayer. The tobacco carries your words to the spirit world. It's a way of saying, 'This matters. I'm serious about this prayer.' You're also giving something—the tobacco—which shows respect.

The Power of Quiet — Our ancestors didn't have phones buzzing constantly. They had silence. In silence, you can hear yourself. You can hear guidance. Find moments of quiet—even just 5 minutes. Put your phone away. Sit. Be quiet. Let your spirit speak to you. In that quiet, you'll hear things you need to hear."

Assessment Questions

- What would be one prayer you'd want to say right now? What would you say?
- Why do you think having a conversation with the Creator is different from other kinds of talking?
- What happens to you when you have even a few minutes of complete quiet?
- How might offering tobacco with a prayer make it feel more real or powerful?

SLIDE 14: Dreams and Visions — Messages from the Spirit World

What's Being Taught

This slide teaches that dreams are not random but can carry spiritual guidance. It provides practical tools for working with dreams (journaling, noticing patterns, sharing with Elders) while emphasizing that not every dream is a message and that interpretation is best done with guidance. This respects the spiritual significance of dreams while being practical.

Teacher Narration

"In Anishinaabe tradition, dreams aren't just random brain activity. Dreams are one way the spirit world communicates with us. Ancestors, spirit helpers, and the Creator can send guidance through dreams.

Your dreams are worth paying attention to.

Here's how to work with your dreams:

Keep a notebook by your bed — As soon as you wake up, before you forget, write down your dream. Don't worry if it doesn't make perfect sense. Just write it down.

Look for patterns — Over time, you might notice that certain animals appear in your dreams, or certain people, or certain places. Pay attention to those patterns. They might be messages.

Notice how dreams make you feel — Sometimes the feeling matters more than the specific images. Did you wake up feeling peaceful? Scared? Energized? What was the feeling?

Share important dreams with an Elder — If you have a dream that feels especially vivid or important—one that stays with you, one you can't stop thinking about—consider sharing it with an Elder or Knowledge Keeper. They can help you understand its meaning. Elders have wisdom about dream interpretation that comes from generations of teaching.

Here's something important: **not every dream is a message**. Sometimes you dreamed because you ate something weird for dinner or you're stressed about school. But some dreams—the ones that stay with you, that feel real, that keep coming back—those are worth paying attention to.

In our tradition, dreams of eagles, bears, wolves, or other animals often carry special significance. If you dream of an Eagle, that might be a message about perspective or seeing clearly. If you dream of a Bear, that might be about strength or going inward. If an animal keeps appearing, pay attention.

Your dreams are a gift. They're one way your spirit communicates with you and guides your path."

Assessment Questions

- Can you remember a dream that felt significant or stayed with you? What happened in it?
- Why do you think an Elder could help you understand your dreams better than you figuring it out alone?
- If you kept a dream journal for a week, what patterns do you think you might notice?
- Have you ever dreamed of an animal? How did that dream make you feel?

SECTION 3: CEREMONIES

(Slides 15-19)

This section introduces ceremonies as sacred containers for spiritual healing. It emphasizes both the significance of ceremonies and the importance of approaching them with respect and through proper channels (family and Elders, not classroom learning).

SLIDE 15: Ceremonies — Section Intro

What's Being Taught

This brief transition slide establishes that ceremonies are sacred and accessible while hinting that detailed teachings about ceremonies require Elder instruction.

Teacher Narration

"Ceremonies are sacred gatherings that have been practiced since time immemorial. Our ancestors protected these ceremonies even when they were made illegal. Now they're available to you if you choose to participate.

In this section, we're going to talk about what ceremonies are, why they matter, and how you can learn more. But I want to be upfront: the deep teachings about ceremony are meant to be learned with Elders, not from a slideshow. We'll give you enough information to understand they exist and how to start the conversation with your family."

Assessment Questions

- What have you heard about ceremonies from your family or community?
- Are there ceremonies in your community that you've observed or participated in?

SLIDE 16: Respecting Sacred Knowledge — Why Some Teachings Aren't Shared in Classrooms

What's Being Taught

This slide is critical for cultural respect and safety. It explains that some teachings are sacred and private, not because they're secret in a bad way, but because they're powerful and need to be received in the right way from the right people. This frames the classroom's role as education about *why* ceremonies matter and how to access them through proper channels, not teaching the ceremonies themselves.

Teacher Narration

"Some spiritual teachings are sacred and private. They're meant to be shared only in ceremony, by the right people, at the right time. This isn't about keeping things secret in a bad way. It's about respect and safety.

Think about it like this: medicine is powerful, right? But medicine works best when it's given by someone who knows how to use it properly. If someone just handed you medicine without knowing your whole health situation, or how that medicine works with other things you're taking, it could hurt you. The same is true with ceremonial teachings.

Some teachings are so powerful that they need to be received in the right way—in ceremony, from someone trained in that tradition, with the proper protocols in place. Receiving them the wrong way, or without proper preparation, can be harmful.

So here's what we do in this classroom: **We tell you what ceremonies exist. We tell you why they matter. We tell you how to learn more.** But the actual teachings—the songs, the specific practices, the protocols—those are learned in ceremony, from Elders.

In this presentation, we share:

- **WHAT** ceremonies exist
- **WHY** they matter for spiritual wellness
- **HOW** to learn more through proper channels

When you're ready and the time is right, the teachings will find you. For now, know that these powerful spiritual tools exist and are available to you if you seek them out with respect.

If you're interested in ceremony, talk to your family or an Elder. Offer tobacco and ask. 'I'm interested in learning more about this ceremony. Would you be willing to teach me or help me find the right person to learn from?' That respect, that asking—that's how you begin."

Assessment Questions

- Why do you think some teachings are meant to be private rather than taught in a classroom?
- How is learning a ceremony from an Elder different from learning it from a presentation?
- If you wanted to learn more about a ceremony, how would you respectfully ask?

SLIDE 17: The Sweat Lodge — **Madoodiswan** (A Ceremony of Purification)

What's Being Taught

This slide introduces the sweat lodge as a powerful purification ceremony while clearly stating that the specific teachings belong in ceremony. It provides enough information for students to understand what a sweat lodge is and recognize an invitation to participate while respecting the boundaries of what can be taught in a classroom.

Teacher Narration

"The Sweat Lodge—we call it **Madoodiswan**—is a ceremony of purification. Imagine returning to the womb of Mother Earth. You go into a dome-shaped structure made of bent saplings, covered with blankets and hides. Inside, there are rocks—we call them 'Grandfathers' because they're ancient and powerful—that have been heated in a fire. Water is poured on the hot rocks, creating steam. People sit in a circle in the heat and darkness, praying, singing, and purifying their spirits.

What the sweat lodge offers:

- Deep spiritual cleansing — getting rid of negative energy, old pain, things you're carrying
- Release — letting go of what's weighing you down
- Connection with others — the people who sweat together form a powerful bond
- Renewal and rebirth — coming out of the sweat lodge feels like being born new

If you're invited to a sweat: You might be invited to participate in a sweat lodge at some point in your life. If that happens, talk to your family or an Elder about what to expect. There are protocols to learn—how to enter, how to sit, what to wear, what to bring. These aren't random rules; they show respect for the ceremony.

Important: The specific teachings, the songs, the prayers—those are learned *in* ceremony, not from me telling you about them. This is just so you know this powerful healing way exists. If you want to participate, the door is open to you."

Assessment Questions

- What do you think happens spiritually when people come together in ceremony like this?
- Why would learning the ceremony from an Elder be different from learning it from a slideshow?
- If you were invited to a sweat lodge, what questions would you want to ask before participating?
- How might releasing old pain or negative energy change how you feel?

SLIDE 18: Fasting and Vision Quest — Seeking Guidance and Direction

What's Being Taught

This slide introduces vision quests—a significant ceremony for seeking guidance—while emphasizing that it is never done alone and requires Elder support. It positions this as something accessible but requiring proper mentorship.

Teacher Narration

"A vision quest is when you go out on the land alone to fast, pray, and seek guidance from Creator and your spirit helpers. It's a powerful ceremony, often done when a person is at an important crossroads or looking for clarity about their life purpose.

What fasting can bring:

- Clarity about your life purpose — Why are you here? What are you meant to do?
- Connection with spirit helpers — During a fast, your spirit becomes very open to communication from helpers and guides
- Deep spiritual strength — Facing yourself and your hunger builds spiritual power

Here's what's critical: Fasting is **never** done alone. An Elder prepares you spiritually, teaches you what to expect, and watches over you while you fast. They're there to make sure you're safe and to help you understand what you're experiencing.

If you're interested: This isn't something you do on a whim. This is something you bring to your family and an Elder. You might say, 'I'm thinking about doing a vision quest. Can you help me prepare?' The Elder will know if you're ready. They'll know the right time. They'll guide you through it.

This is powerful work. It requires wisdom and guidance. But it's available to you if you walk the path respectfully."

Assessment Questions

- Why do you think an Elder needs to be present during a fast or vision quest?
- What would you want clarity about in your life that might lead you to seek a vision quest?
- How do you think being alone on the land with no food would change your spiritual awareness?

SLIDE 19: Seasonal Ceremonies and Gatherings — Community Celebrations That Nourish Your Spirit

What's Being Taught

This slide presents ceremonies and gatherings that are more accessible to students—celebrations that most can attend and participate in without prior initiation. It emphasizes that these community gatherings are spiritually nourishing and accessible now.

Teacher Narration

"Not all ceremonies require fasting or special preparation. Some ceremonies are community celebrations that are open to everyone. These are powerful for spiritual wellness too, because they connect you to your community and your culture.

Pow Wows — These are celebrations where we come together to dance, drum, and celebrate our culture. If you've been to a pow wow, you know that feeling when the drums start and the dancers move—it's energizing. You feel part of something. Even just watching or dancing socially feeds your spirit.

Feasts — Sharing food connects us. A feast might be a community gathering to celebrate something, or to share gratitude, or to mark a season. When you sit together and eat, you're connected. When you help prepare the food, you're serving. Both feed the spirit.

Naming Ceremonies — Some people receive a spirit name—a name that connects them to their identity and purpose. It's a powerful ceremony. If you ever have the opportunity to receive a spirit name, that's significant.

Seasonal Ceremonies — Our ancestors marked the seasons and harvests. They had ceremonies for spring's arrival, for the harvest, for winter's coming. These keep us connected to natural cycles instead of just living in a screen-based world disconnected from seasons.

Coming of Age — Many cultures and communities mark the transition from childhood to adulthood with ceremony. This honors that you're becoming an adult and ready for adult responsibilities.

Memorial Feasts — When someone passes on, we honor them with a feast. We share stories, feed people, and keep their memory alive. This keeps our ancestors close.

The simple truth: Just showing up to these gatherings—even just being present—feeds your spirit. You feel belonging. You feel cultural pride. You're part of your community and your heritage.

These ceremonies are happening. You're invited. Go."

Assessment Questions

- Which of these community ceremonies have you attended or heard about?
- What do you feel when you're in a gathering like a pow wow or feast with your community?
- Why do you think coming together in ceremony matters so much for spiritual wellness?
- Is there a ceremony you'd like to participate in or learn more about?

SECTION 4: DAILY SPIRITUAL SELF-CARE

(Slides 20-27)

This section shifts from the ancestral gifts and ceremonies to practical, daily spiritual practices that students can integrate into their lives right now. It also connects back to the theme of Love and invites personal commitment.

SLIDE 20: Daily Spiritual Self-Care — Section Intro

What's Being Taught

This brief section frames daily practices as essential spiritual maintenance—spiritual practices don't require waiting for ceremonies or big moments. Small daily practices keep spiritual fire alive.

Teacher Narration

"You don't have to wait for ceremony or big spiritual moments to care for your spirit. Small daily practices—things you can do right now, today—keep your spiritual fire burning bright.

This is the spiritual equivalent of brushing your teeth or eating healthy food. You do these things every day to maintain your physical health. Same with spiritual health. Small daily practices maintain your spiritual wellness."

Assessment Questions

- What's one small thing you already do daily that could be a spiritual practice?
- How often do you think you need to do spiritual practices to feel their effect?

SLIDE 21: Simple Daily Practices — Small Actions That Make a Big Difference

What's Being Taught

This slide provides concrete, accessible daily practices organized by time of day, making it easy for students to integrate spiritual care into their existing routines. It emphasizes that these are simple and don't require special equipment or lots of time.

Teacher Narration

"Here are spiritual practices you can do every day. They're simple and don't require anything special.

Morning:

- Acknowledge the new day—you made it through the night
- Offer tobacco or say a quiet prayer: 'Thank you for this day. Help me walk a good path.'
- Set an intention: 'Today I'll be kind' or 'Today I'll notice something beautiful'

During the Day:

- Notice creation around you—trees, sky, water, animals
- Do one act of kindness—help someone
- Take 2 minutes of quiet—even in the bathroom or between classes

Evening:

- Reflect on your day: What happened?
- Give thanks for good moments—a laugh, good food, solving a problem
- Release what didn't go well—don't carry it to tomorrow

Anytime:

- Drink water mindfully—feel it, be grateful for it
- Step outside—even for a minute
- Spend time with an Elder—listen to their stories
- Help someone—small things count

These practices keep your spirit tended. Pick one to start with today."

Assessment Questions

- Which of these practices do you already do (even if you haven't thought of them as spiritual)?
- Which practice feels most accessible for you to try?
- How do you think doing one of these daily would change how you feel over a month?
- Is there a time of day when you could most easily add a spiritual practice?

SLIDE 22: Protecting Your Spirit — What Drains vs. What Feeds Your Spirit

What's Being Taught

This slide names things that drain spiritual energy (negativity, harmful substances, toxic relationships, excessive screen time, disconnection) and things that feed it (Elders, land, service, family, culture). It helps students become aware of their choices and how these affect their spiritual wellness.

Teacher Narration

"Just like your body needs good food and can be harmed by bad food, your spirit needs certain things and is harmed by others. Let's be real about what drains your spirit and what feeds it.

Spirit Drains — Things that pull your spiritual energy down:

- **Constant negativity, gossip, drama** — When you're around people who are always complaining, spreading rumors, creating conflict, your spirit gets pulled down. You feel heavier.
- **Harmful substances** — Using drugs or alcohol—especially as a way to escape—disconnects you from yourself and your spirit. It numbs you. Your spirit wants to feel and be present.
- **Toxic relationships** — People who put you down, use you, make you feel small. These relationships drain you.
- **Too much screen time** — I know I sound like an Elder, but this is real. Hours of scrolling, gaming, watching—it disconnects you from your body, from people in front of you, from the land. Your spirit gets lost in a screen.
- **Disconnection from land and culture** — When you never go outside, when you're disconnected from your heritage, when you never speak to Elders or participate in your culture, your spirit withers. It's like a plant with no sunlight.

Spirit Feeds — Things that nourish your spiritual energy:

- **Time with Elders and hearing stories** — Elders carry wisdom and love. When you're around them, you're learning and being honored at the same time. Their presence feeds you.
- **Being on the land** — Water, trees, sky, earth beneath your feet. The land restores. Always.
- **Helping others** — When you serve, when you help, when you give without expecting something back, your spirit feels alive. You're living your purpose.
- **Family laughter and connection** — Real connection with people who love you. Laughing together. Being silly. That's spiritual food.
- **Cultural activities and quiet reflection** — Learning your language, participating in ceremonies, sitting quietly with your thoughts—these keep you grounded and connected.

Notice that the things that feed your spirit usually involve connection—to land, to people, to culture, to yourself. The things that drain it are usually disconnection.

Pay attention to how different activities and people affect your spirit. Notice: Do I feel more alive or less alive? More connected or more alone? That's your spirit telling you what it needs."

Assessment Questions

- What's one thing that drains your spirit that you can identify in your own life?
- What one thing feeds your spirit that you could do more of?
- How do you know when your spirit is being drained? What do you feel or notice?
- If you had to choose between something that drains your spirit and something that feeds it, what would make that choice hard?

SLIDE 23: Love and Spiritual Wellness — How Zagidiwin Connects to Caring for Your Spirit

What's Being Taught

This slide brings the teaching back to the central concept of Zagidiwin (Love) and reframes self-care as an act of love, not selfishness. It emphasizes that loving yourself is foundational to being able to love and serve others.

Teacher Narration

"Remember at the beginning when I talked about the Eagle and how love begins with seeing clearly? The Eagle teaches us something else: **Love starts with loving yourself—not in a selfish way, but in a sacred way.**

When your spirit is healthy, you can truly love and care for others. When you're spiritually empty, you have nothing to give.

Zagidiwin teaches us:

- **To care for ourselves is not selfish—it's necessary.** You have to put your own oxygen mask on before you can help others. Your spirit is like that.
- **We can't pour from an empty cup.** If your cup is empty, you have nothing to pour for others.

- **Healthy love flows from a healthy spirit.** When you love yourself in a good way—when you take care of your spirit—then you can love your family, your friends, your community in a healthy way.
- **Self-love honors the Creator who made you.** When you say, 'My spirit is sacred, I'm going to care for it,' you're honoring the Creator who made you.

Listen to this: '*Love for yourself is where love for all creation begins.*'

Here's the thing: when you take care of your spirit, you're not being selfish. You're making sure you have the strength to be there for your family, your community, and future generations. You're honoring your ancestors by keeping yourself strong. You're preparing yourself to give gifts to your community.

So everything we've talked about—caring for your spirit—that's an act of love. Love for yourself, which opens you to love for everything and everyone else."

Assessment Questions

- How is loving yourself different from being selfish?
- How do you think a person with a strong, healthy spirit shows up differently for others than someone with a struggling spirit?
- What's one way you could show love to yourself this week?
- What does it feel like to think of spiritual self-care as an act of love?

SLIDE 24: Your Spiritual Path — Many Paths, One Destination

What's Being Taught

This slide emphasizes that there's no single "right way" to spiritual wellness. Different practices resonate with different people. Some connect through ceremony, some through land, some through language, some through service. This honors diversity while encouraging students to explore and find what works for them.

Teacher Narration

"Here's something important: there's no single 'right way' to spiritual wellness. Your journey is your own.

Some people connect deeply with Creator through ceremony. Others through being on the land. Some through learning language. Some through helping others. Some through a combination. All of these paths are valid.

Think about it like food. Some people feel nourished by eating lots of vegetables. Others by eating fish. Others by eating grains. All of them can be healthy if it's real food. It's not about one way being right and others wrong. It's about what nourishes *your* body. Same with your spirit.

Some people connect deeply through ceremony. They feel most spiritually alive when they're in a sweat lodge or at a pow wow or in a naming ceremony. If that's you, honor that. Seek out ceremony.

Some people connect through the land. They feel their spirit come alive when they're outside—sitting by water, walking in the forest, feeling the earth beneath them. If that's you, spend time on the land. That's your practice.

Some people connect through language. Learning Anishinanimowin awakens something in them. Words unlock understanding. If that's you, pursue language learning. That's your path.

Some people connect through service. They feel most aligned with Creator when they're helping others—whether it's in their family, community, or the world. If that's you, keep serving. That's spiritual practice.

Some people connect through all of these and others too. That's fine. Your path might include ceremony and language and land and service.

Here's what's true: **You don't have to figure it all out today.** Spiritual growth happens over a lifetime. Your practices might change. What resonates at 15 might be different at 25 or 45.

What matters is that you *start*—even with small steps. Try different things. See what resonates with your spirit. Ask questions. Listen to Elders. Be patient with yourself. The teachings will unfold as you're ready."

Assessment Questions

- Which path calls to you most right now—ceremony, land, language, service, or something else?
- Why do you think different practices resonate with different people?
- What's one practice you want to explore more deeply?
- What might a spiritual path that's uniquely yours look like?

SLIDE 25: Who Can Help? — Resources in Our Community for Spiritual Support

What's Being Taught

This slide provides a practical resource map and normalizes asking for help. It identifies specific people and places in Sandy Lake's community where students can seek guidance and support. It emphasizes that asking for help is wisdom, not weakness.

Teacher Narration

"You're not supposed to figure this out alone. Your community has people and places ready to support you. Let me tell you who they are.

Elders — Our Elders carry wisdom passed down through generations. They've lived long lives. They've faced challenges. They've learned practices that help. They can teach you, answer your questions, and guide you on your spiritual path. Elders are treasures. Respect them. Ask them.

Knowledge Keepers — Some people in our community hold specific ceremonial or traditional knowledge. They might be trained in certain ceremonies or practices. If you're drawn to learning something specific, a Knowledge Keeper can guide you.

Family Members — Your parents, grandparents, aunties, uncles—they might have teachings and practices to share. They might tell you stories about your great-grandparents and the spiritual practices they had. Family is a resource.

School Supports — Teachers, counselors, and cultural staff at school can support you. They understand that spiritual wellness is part of overall wellness.

Health Centre — The health centre has mental wellness workers who understand that spiritual health is connected to overall health. You can talk to them.

Community Events — Gatherings, feasts, pow wows, cultural programming. These are places where you can connect and learn. Show up.

Here's the truth: You are never alone. Help and guidance are available. Asking for support isn't weakness. It's wisdom. It shows you care enough about yourself to reach out.

If you're struggling, if you have questions, if you want to learn more—reach out. To your family, to an Elder, to someone at school. The door is open."

Assessment Questions

- Who in your community do you already have a relationship with that you could talk to about spiritual practices?
- Is there someone you admire who seems to have spiritual strength? Could you ask them about their practices?
- What's something you'd want help with regarding your spiritual wellness?
- What would make it easier or harder for you to reach out for help?

SLIDE 26: Reflection & Commitment — Choosing One Practice to Try This Week

What's Being Taught

This slide moves from learning to commitment. It provides reflection questions that help students identify what resonates with them, then invites them to write down one specific commitment. This creates accountability and bridges the gap between learning and action.

Teacher Narration

"We've covered a lot. You've learned about the Four Parts of You, about gifts from our ancestors, about ceremonies, about daily practices. Now it's time to choose something *you* are going to try.

I'm going to ask you some reflection questions. Take time with these. There's no rush.

Reflection Questions:

- **What practice from today spoke to your spirit?** Not what you think you *should* do. What actually called to you? What made you feel something?
- **What's one small thing you could try this week?** It doesn't have to be big. Small is good. Small is sustainable.
- **Who in your life could support you in this?** Is there someone—a parent, a friend, an Elder—who could help or do it with you?

Choose one to try this week:

You don't have to choose all of them. Pick one. Maybe it's:

- Morning gratitude
- 10 minutes outside without your phone
- Learn one word in Anishinanimowin
- Have a conversation with an Elder or family member about spiritual practices

- Something else that called to you

My Commitment:

Here's what I want you to do: In your reflection journal or on a piece of paper, write down your commitment. Make it specific and real.

Write: '*This week, I will care for my spirit by [practice]. I will do this [when/how often]. [Person's name] will support me.*'

For example: '*This week, I will care for my spirit by sitting by the water for 10 minutes without my phone. I will do this Wednesday and Saturday morning. My aunt will do it with me.*'

Or: '*This week, I will care for my spirit by learning one word in Anishinanimowin from my grandmother. I will do this when I visit her on Saturday. She said she'd be happy to teach me.*'

Specific. Real. Doable.

Write this down. Tell someone about it. That makes it real."

Assessment Questions

- (Allow quiet reflection time first, then ask):
- What practice did you choose? Why?
- When specifically will you do this?
- Who will support you?
- What do you think you might notice or feel after doing this practice?

SLIDE 27: Closing the Circle

What's Being Taught

This slide brings closure to the teaching, circles back to the central metaphor of the Eagle and the message that self-care is honoring ancestors, and sends students off with the Anishinaabe word of gratitude.

Teacher Narration

"We're closing the circle now, but this learning doesn't end here. It begins here.

Remember: '*Love for yourself is where love for all creation begins.*'

Your spirit is sacred. Your ancestors protected these teachings for thousands of years. Even when it was illegal and dangerous, they kept them alive for you. You're receiving teachings that your ancestors risked everything to protect.

When you take care of your spirit—when you sit by the water, when you learn a word, when you pray, when you help someone, when you spend time with Elders—you're honoring those ancestors. You're saying yes to what they fought for.

Care for your spirit, and it will give you strength for the journey ahead.

Miigwech. That's thank you. But it's deeper. It's a gratitude prayer. Thank you for being here. Thank you for listening. Thank you for caring about your spirit.

You are loved. Your spirit matters. Go."

Assessment Questions

- What's one thing from today that will stay with you?
- How do you feel knowing your ancestors protected these teachings for you?
- What's your commitment? Are you ready?

SECTION 5: EXTENSIONS

(Slides 28-29)

These optional slides provide opportunities for deeper engagement through circle discussion or an extended 7-day practice.

SLIDE 28: Circle Discussion Questions

What's Being Taught

This slide offers a structured format for a talking circle—a common First Nations teaching format that honors each voice and creates space for community learning and sharing.

Teacher Narration

"If you want to do a deeper learning together, you can sit in a talking circle and discuss these questions. A talking circle has some guidelines that make sure everyone's voice is heard and respected.

Circle Guidelines:

- **Speak from the heart** — Say what's real for you. Not what you think you should say.
- **Listen without interrupting** — When someone else is speaking, really listen. Don't plan what you're going to say next.
- **What's shared stays in the circle** — This is confidential space. Don't repeat what someone shared outside the circle.
- **It's okay to pass** — You don't have to speak if you're not ready. You can pass and come back.
- **Respect all voices** — Everyone's experience and perspective is valid.

Circle Questions:

- What spiritual practices does your family have? Are there teachings from your grandparents or parents you'd like to learn more about?
- What challenges do young people today face in caring for their spirits that previous generations didn't have? (Think about screens, social media, pressures, disconnection)

- How can we support each other in spiritual wellness? What would it look like if friends helped each other stay spiritually strong?
- What does 'loving yourself in a good way' mean to you?

These are deep questions. Take time with them. Listen to each other."

Assessment Questions

(These are embedded in the circle discussion)

SLIDE 29: 7-Day Spirit Care Challenge (Extended Activity)

What's Being Taught

This optional extension invites students to practice daily spiritual self-care for a week and track how different practices affect them. It provides structure while leaving room for personal exploration.

Teacher Narration

"If you want to go deeper, you can take a 7-day Spirit Care Challenge. Each day, try one spiritual practice and notice how it makes your spirit feel.

Here are some options for each day:

Day 1: Morning Gratitude — When you wake up, before you even get out of bed, think of three things you're grateful for. Or step outside and offer tobacco and say thank you. How does your spirit feel after gratitude?

Day 2: 10 Minutes Outside — Spend 10 minutes outside without your phone. Just be. Watch, listen, feel. What did you notice?

Day 3: Learn a Word — Ask a family member or Elder to teach you one word in Anishinanimowin. Practice it. How does it feel to speak your language?

Day 4: Help Someone — Do something kind or helpful for someone. No big deal necessary. Small counts. How did helping make your spirit feel?

Day 5: Talk to an Elder — Spend time with an Elder. Ask them about their spiritual practices or a time they felt guided. Really listen. What did you learn?

Day 6: No Screens for One Hour — Put your phone away, turn off the computer. Do something else—be outside, read, create, be with people. What changed when you disconnected?

Day 7: Your Choice — By now you might have noticed a practice that really works for you. Pick one and do it. Or try something new.

Daily Reflection: After each practice, write a few words in your journal. Ask yourself: *'How did this make my spirit feel?'* Not what you think you should feel, but what you actually felt.

End of Week: Share in class or with your family: Which practice will you keep doing? What surprised you about caring for your spirit?

Remember: It's not about being perfect. Even trying one practice shows you care about your spirit. That matters. The point isn't to be flawless. The point is to start. To pay attention. To notice what helps your spirit feel alive."

Assessment Questions

- (After completing the challenge) Which practice made the biggest difference for you?
- Which practice will you keep doing?
- What surprised you?
- How do you feel different, if at all?

GENERAL TEACHING NOTES

Tone and Approach

This presentation should be taught with:

- **Authenticity** — Speak from your own experience and understanding of these teachings
- **Respect** — Honor these as sacred teachings, not just information
- **Openness** — Invite students to question, explore, and find their own path
- **Cultural Humility** — If you're not Indigenous, acknowledge that. If there are Elders in your community, acknowledge their deeper knowledge
- **Inclusivity** — Not all students have the same level of family/cultural engagement. Create space for all

Timing Suggestions

- Full presentation with discussion: 3-4 class periods (40-50 minutes each)
- If shortened: Focus on Sections 1, 2, and 4; use Slides 26-29 as homework/extension
- Minimum single-class teaching: Slides 1-7, then 20-27 (foundation + daily practices + commitment)

Creating Safety

- Acknowledge that talking about spirituality can feel personal or vulnerable
- Normalize that students have different levels of engagement with these teachings
- Create a confidential space (what's shared in class stays in class)
- Make it clear that students don't have to share publicly; they can reflect privately
- Be aware of students who may have experienced trauma; offer choice always

Assessment Strategy

Rather than traditional grading:

- **Completion** of reflection journals and commitments (effort matters)
- **Quality of thinking** in response to questions (Did they engage deeply?)
- **Evidence of planning** (Did they make a real commitment?)
- **Optional follow-up:** After a week or two, ask students to share briefly (orally or written) how their chosen practice went

Adapting for Your Community: Sandy Lake Specific

When teaching this at Sandy Lake, you have rich opportunities to make this deeply local and relevant:

Land References:

- Sandy Lake and the surrounding waters are specific places to mention. "When you sit by Sandy Lake, you're walking where your ancestors walked for generations."
- Reference local gathering places, seasonal hunting/harvesting areas, or land features students know
- Connect daily practice suggestions to actual, accessible places: "You can sit by the lake before school" or "Walk through the bush near your home"

Community Resources:

- Update Slide 25 (Who Can Help?) with actual names and roles: specific Elders, Knowledge Keepers, community leaders, school staff
- List actual Sandy Lake programs, gatherings, and events
- Name the health centre staff or counselors students can talk to
- Include information about where and when community gatherings (pow wows, feasts, etc.) happen

Local Protocols & Practices:

- If Sandy Lake has specific protocols for smudging, offering tobacco, or other ceremonies, reference those
- Mention Elders by name (if appropriate) who teach these ways
- Reference specific ceremonies or seasonal gatherings that happen in your community
- Include any local teachings about the land, water, or seasonal changes

Language & Cultural Context:

- Affirm Sandy Lake's specific language teachings and pronunciation
- Reference any local language programs or Elders who teach
- Acknowledge the specific colonial history of Sandy Lake and residential school impacts if relevant
- Celebrate specific cultural practices or innovations from your community

Student Connection:

- Use examples that reference students' lived experience at Sandy Lake
- Mention younger siblings, family members, or community members students know
- Reference local plants, animals, weather patterns they experience
- Connect to students' routines and the places they spend time

Recommended Additions:

- Consider having an Elder review or co-teach the presentation
- Invite community members to share their own spiritual practices during class
- Create a community resource list for "Who Can Help?" that's specific to Sandy Lake
- Document local teachings and stories to incorporate into slides or discussion

Connection to Other Learning

- This unit can connect to Health class (mental health, stress management)
- It connects to Language arts (reflection writing, storytelling)
- It connects to Social Studies (history of colonization, residential schools, cultural preservation)
- It can be a standalone teaching or part of a broader Seven Sacred Teachings curriculum

CLOSING NOTE FOR TEACHERS

This presentation teaches spiritual self-care not as individual self-improvement but as **cultural continuity, resistance, and love**. When students understand that their spiritual practice honors their ancestors and keeps their nation strong, the work becomes meaningful.

Your role is to create a space where students can genuinely explore what spiritual wellness means for them, connect to their families and Elders, and leave with a real practice they can try. You're not delivering information. You're opening doors.

Miigwech for the work you're doing.