



THE DEEP LISTENING CHALLENGE

Minaadendamowin · Respect

A 3-Week Community Listening Mission for Grades 6–9

Your Mission

For the next three weeks, you are a Knowledge Gatherer. Your community holds stories, wisdom, and perspectives that no textbook contains. Your job is to listen — really listen — and bring those teachings back.

Student Name:

Teacher:

Grade:

Challenge Period:

How the Challenge Works

The Deep Listening Challenge is a three-week mission where you complete listening tasks worth different point values. You choose your missions, use the HEAR framework, and record what you discover. At the end, you share your greatest insight with the class.

Point Levels

Level	Listener Title	What it means
30 pts (2 missions)	Active Listener	You completed your missions and recorded your reflections honestly.
50 pts (3–4 missions)	Community Listener	You went deeper — listened across different people in your community.
75 pts (5–6 missions)	Knowledge Gatherer	You sought out wisdom from Elders or extended family. You asked real questions.
100 pts (7+ missions)	Story Keeper	You have honoured your community's voices. You carry what they shared with care.

The HEAR Framework — Your Listening Tool

Every mission asks you to use HEAR. Here is what it means in practice:

H — HALT	Stop everything. Put your phone away. Turn your body toward the speaker.
E — ENGAGE	Make eye contact (or show you are present in the way that feels respectful). Nod. Don't plan your reply.
A — ANTICIPATE	Expect to learn something. Go in curious, not just polite.
R — REPLAY	After they finish, reflect back: “So what I heard you say is...” and ask if you got it right.

Important: On Silence
 When an Elder or family member pauses, do not rush to fill the silence. In Anishinaabe and many First Nations traditions, a pause means thought is being gathered. That silence is part of the teaching. Wait. Receive it.

Your Missions

Choose missions from any category. You must complete at least one from Category A (Community Voices). Track your points on the last page.

CATEGORY A — Community Voices (15 pts each)

These missions bring you face to face with the knowledge holders in your life. Required: complete at least one.

MISSION

A1

15 pts pts

The Elder Conversation

Arrange to spend 15–20 minutes with an Elder, grandparent, or knowledge-keeper in your community. Come with 2–3 questions prepared, but let the conversation go where it goes.

How to use HEAR:

- HALT: Visit in person. No phone. Sit with them fully.
- ENGAGE: Look at them. Let them see you are truly there.
- ANTICIPATE: You are there to learn, not to talk. Aim to speak less than 25% of the time.
- REPLAY: At the end, say back what you heard and ask if you understood.

Reflection prompt:
What is one thing this person shared that you had never heard before? What does it make you want to do differently?

Two Generations, One Question

Ask the same question to two people from different generations — one older (parent/grandparent/Elder), one closer to your own age. Listen closely to how their answers differ.

How to use HEAR:

- HALT: Give each person your full, uninterrupted attention.
- ENGAGE: Don't react to their answer while they're speaking.
- ANTICIPATE: Go in genuinely curious about how age and experience shape perspective.
- REPLAY: Summarise their answer back before thanking them.

Reflection prompt:

How were the two answers different? What does that difference tell you about how experience shapes what we know?

MISSION

A2

15 pts pts

The Skill or Practice I've Never Asked About

Think of a traditional skill, practice, or piece of knowledge in your family or community that you have never fully asked about — harvesting, beadwork, trapping, medicine, food, language. Ask someone to teach you or explain it.

How to use HEAR:

- HALT: Go somewhere quiet. Bring something to write with.
- ENGAGE: Watch their hands, their face. Ask follow-up questions.
- ANTICIPATE: There is more here than you expect.
- REPLAY: Write or draw what they showed you right after.

Reflection prompt:

What surprised you about this practice? Why do you think it matters that people still know how to do this?

MISSION

A3

15 pts pts

CATEGORY B — Peer & Family Listening (10 pts each)

These missions develop your everyday listening with the people around you.

The Full Presence Conversation

Have a real conversation with a family member or close friend — with no phone, no screens, no distractions. At least 10 minutes. Let them lead.

How to use HEAR:

- HALT: Phones in another room or face down and silent.
- ENGAGE: Ask one follow-up question based on what they say.
- ANTICIPATE: Listen for something you didn't know about this person.
- REPLAY: Before you finish, say one thing you appreciated hearing.

Reflection prompt:

What did you notice about yourself during this conversation? Was it easy or difficult to stay fully present?

MISSION

B1

10 pts pts

The Listening Switch

In a conversation where you would normally do most of the talking, consciously switch roles. Ask questions. Listen 80% of the time. This could be with a sibling, a friend, or a classmate.

MISSION

B2

10 pts pts

How to use HEAR:

- HALT: Before the conversation, remind yourself: today I listen more than I speak.
- ENGAGE: Ask open questions (“What was that like?” “How did that make you feel?”).
- ANTICIPATE: Expect to find out something new about a person you think you already know.
- REPLAY: Reflect back once: “So it sounds like...”

Reflection prompt:

What did you learn about this person that surprised you? How did it feel to hold back and just listen?

The Story Behind the Name

Ask a family member where your name comes from — your given name, your family name, or a traditional name if you have one. If they don’t know, ask about the family name or a relative’s name.

MISSION

B3

10 pts pts

How to use HEAR:

- HALT: Find a comfortable, private moment with them.
- ENGAGE: Don’t rush. Let the story unfold.
- ANTICIPATE: Names carry history. There is more here than you expect.
- REPLAY: Write the story down immediately after.

Reflection prompt:

What did you discover? How does knowing this change or deepen how you think about your identity?

CATEGORY C — Reflection Missions (10 pts each)

These missions develop your inner listening — paying attention to your own thoughts, feelings, and reactions.

The Barrier Journal

For one full school day, keep a listening journal. Every class or conversation, note what got in the way of your listening and what helped it.

MISSION

C1

10 pts pts

How to use HEAR:

- HALT: At the end of each class or activity, take 2 minutes to write.
- ENGAGE: Be honest with yourself — not what you think you “should” write.
- ANTICIPATE: Patterns will emerge by the end of the day.
- REPLAY: At the end of the day, read back your notes and look for the pattern.

Reflection prompt:

What was your most common barrier? What one thing could you change tomorrow to listen better?

Listen to the Land

Spend 10–15 minutes outside, alone and in silence. No phone. Listen to the sounds around you — water, wind, birds, community sounds. Write or draw what you notice.

MISSION

C2

10 pts pts

How to use HEAR:

- HALT: Find a place that feels right. Sit or stand. Be still.
- ENGAGE: Close your eyes for part of it. What do you hear that you normally miss?
- ANTICIPATE: The land has always communicated. What might it be saying?
- REPLAY: Describe in detail what you heard, felt, and thought.

Reflection prompt:

How is listening to the land different from listening to a person? How might Elders have used this kind of listening?

The Hard Conversation

Think of a conversation you have been avoiding — with a friend, a family member, a teacher. Use the HEAR framework to actually have it. You don't have to share what it was about.

MISSION

C3

10 pts pts

How to use HEAR:

- HALT: Go in calm. Breathe. Decide to listen before you respond.
- ENGAGE: Make it safe for the other person to speak honestly.
- ANTICIPATE: Their perspective might be different from what you expect.
- REPLAY: Don't defend. Reflect back what you heard first.

Reflection prompt:

Without sharing private details: what was it like to listen instead of defend? What changed?

CATEGORY D — Challenge Missions (20 pts each)

These missions are harder. They push your listening into new territory.

The Community Voices Project

Interview an Elder or community member about a specific topic: a change they have witnessed in the community, a traditional practice, a challenge Sandy Lake has overcome, or a hope they carry. Record notes or, with permission, audio.

MISSION

D1

20 pts pts

How to use HEAR:

- HALT: Prepare 3–4 thoughtful questions. Visit in person.
- ENGAGE: Follow the conversation, not just your question list.
- ANTICIPATE: You are gathering history. Take it seriously.
- REPLAY: Write a full summary of what you learned and share it with the class.

Reflection prompt:

What did this person's experience teach you about Sandy Lake's past, present, or future? What responsibility do you feel now that you carry this knowledge?

The Opposite Perspective

Find someone whose view on a topic you genuinely disagree with — a classmate, a family member. Ask them to explain their perspective. Your only job is to truly understand it, not to argue or change their mind.

How to use HEAR:

- HALT: Before you start, remind yourself: understanding is not agreeing.
- ENGAGE: Ask: “Help me understand why you feel that way.”
- ANTICIPATE: There is always a reason behind a belief. Listen for the reason.
- REPLAY: Summarise their view back to them until they say you’ve got it right.

Reflection prompt:

Did understanding their perspective change yours at all? What is the hardest part of listening to a view you disagree with?

MISSION

D2

20 pts pts

Mission Tracking Sheet

Record each mission you complete. Be honest — your reflection is more important than your points.

Mission	Who did you listen to?	Date	Points	One thing I learned

My listener level:

TOTAL: _____

Deep Listening Reflection Journal

Choose two missions to reflect on deeply. Use the space below. There are no wrong answers — what matters is honesty.

Mission 1 Reflection

Which mission did you complete? (e.g., A1 — The Elder Conversation)

Who did you listen to, and what was the setting?

What did you hear that surprised or moved you?

How well did you use HEAR? What was the hardest part?

What will you carry from this conversation?

Mission 2 Reflection

Which mission did you complete?

Who did you listen to, and what was the setting?

What did you hear that surprised or moved you?

How well did you use HEAR? What was the hardest part?

What will you carry from this conversation?

The Final Share

At the end of the three weeks, every student shares one insight with the class. This is not a presentation — it is a sharing circle moment. You are passing on something you received.

Your Sharing Prompt:

"In these three weeks, I listened to _____, and what I will never forget is _____. I think our community needs this knowledge because _____."

You do not need to share anything private. You only share what you are ready to give.