



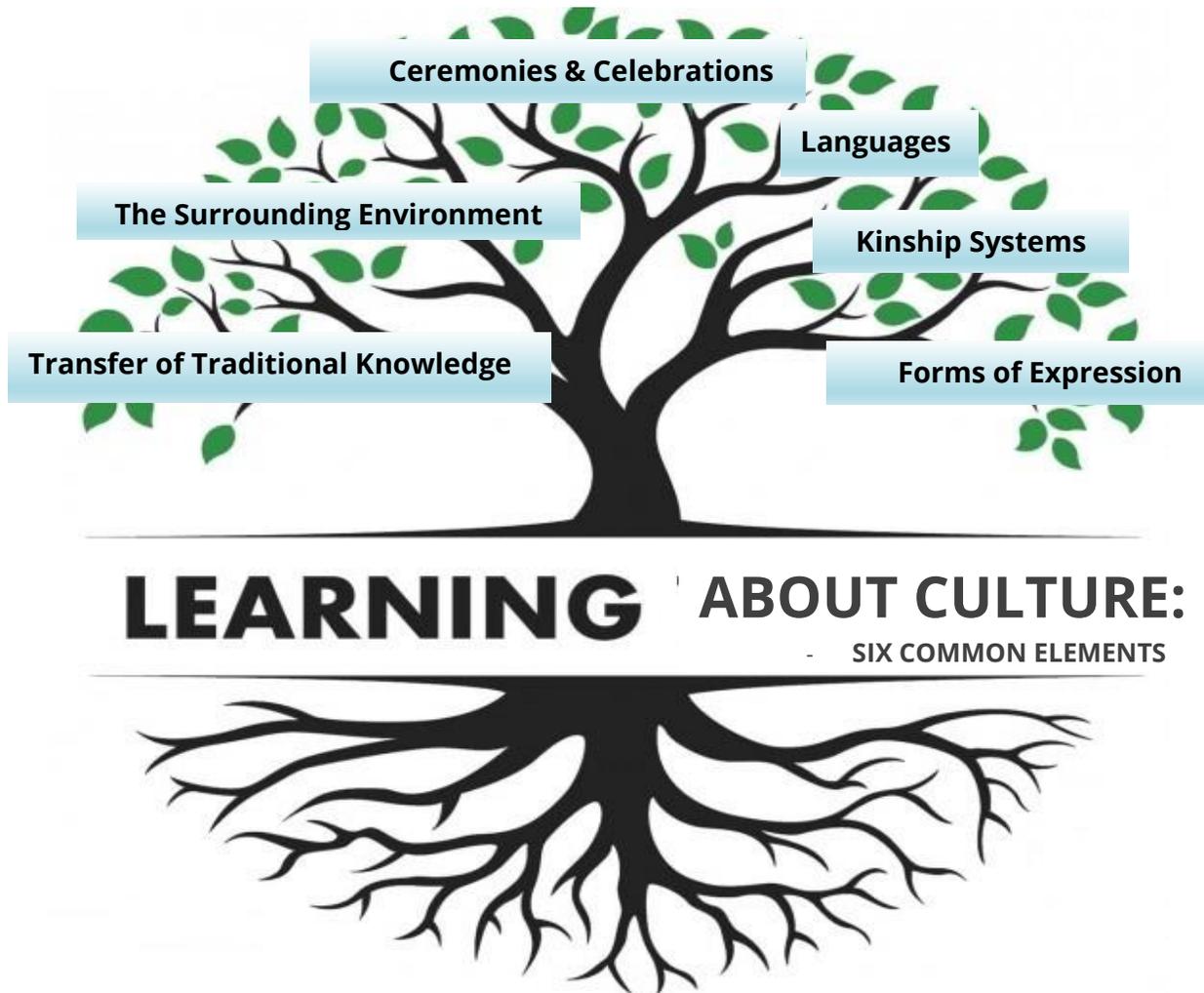
MODULE 1: KNOWING WHO YOU ARE & WHERE YOU COME FROM

READING GUIDE

Use this guide to help you keep track of your thoughts and reflections as you work way through this first module. Record your answers in whatever format you wish.

ENGAGEMENT

Students will reflect on what they consider their cultural background, using 6 common elements of that all cultures have. It is these 6 common elements that define the characteristics of all cultures across the Earth. Each element can also be further explored and expanded into sub elements where students can get more specific with their examples. The six elements are listed on the branches of the tree below. At the end of this workbook, you'll have a chance to design your own culture tree as it relates to who you are and where you come from:



Introductory Activity:

Who are we? Where do we come from? Where are we going? Why are we here?

To approach an understanding of the answers to these questions, we first invite you to consider these 6 common elements of culture, and then reflect on a series of questions as they relate to your own life. By recognizing culture differences and what makes each unique within each of these common elements, will help us parallel cultural understandings within our own lives and with other people and perhaps even more than human beings all over the world. Attached to the end of this document, you'll find a template you are welcome to use to create your own tree and label or draw each of the leaves with answers to any of the questions that accompany each element.

1. First element is **LANGUAGE**. All cultures of the world have their own language. It is not just how they sound when they speak, but it is also how their culture teaches them to communicate with one another in a structured system. Some languages have different dialects within the same language. There are languages that have a masculine and a feminine way of speaking which means men say things differently than women. Also, body language and gestures combined with words, and to where, or whom it is directed, could be influenced by a culture and their beliefs. The use of language is deeply entrenched in a culture's way of life.
 - Is there one or more languages that you identify as your or ancestry's language?
 - What are some qualities that make your language unique?
 - What are some things that you would like to learn about your language?
 - What other languages do you hear or are spoken around your home and nation?
 - Are there any body gestures signals that are specific to your traditional language?
 - How many different Indigenous languages can you identify that evolved on the lands surrounding your home?
 - How would do you rate your current knowledge and understanding of your ancestral languages?
 - What would you be willing to do to increase your knowledge and understanding of your ancestral languages?

2. Second element is **KINSHIP**. Every culture has a kinship system; the structure and understanding of how we are related to one another and what role we have in each other's lives. For many First Nation cultures, there are similarities between the systems including the significance of extended family.
- What family roles do you identify with? Are you a son, daughter, brother or sister?
 - For a lot of First Nation people there are people filling roles in lives beyond blood relations. Can you identify other people in your life that might feel like family but may not be blood relatives? For example, best friends, teachers, coaches and counsellors may all provide a loving support and feel like family. Relatives are those that have a role to play in our life. We are never alone.
 - Do you have a best friend? Do you love and appreciate them like they are your brother or sister? Write their names out on a leaf and acknowledge the appreciation that goes with a best friend and how they are treated like family like a brother or sister.
 - What family roles or relationships are you most thankful for that are a part of your life?
3. Third element is **TRANSFER OF TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE**. Every culture has traditional knowledge specific to their culture and way life and they have a process on how that knowledge is accessed or passed on from generation to generation. Where do we get our information and teachings from today? For example, in a school setting, we get information from books, teachers, videos, internet, etc.
- What kinds of things do you consider "traditional knowledge" or traditions?
 - Is there anything that is a part of your life that you feel is an example of traditional knowledge?
 - What kinds of people, places and settings provide the best opportunities for us to learn in our life times?
 - In your culture is there a protocol to ask before and/or after traditional information is shared? (In most First Nation cultures it is appropriate to offer a gift of tobacco or other items to the Knowledge Keeper in exchange for teachings)

4. Fourth branch is **ENVIRONMENT**. Every culture is connected to the environment in which their people live and know. The environment has influenced the practices and traditional understandings of the area around them. Food, clothing, shelter and tools came from the land and there was a relationship of respect with the land that things were gathered in a respectful manner. First Nation people not only have a physical connection to the environment but a spiritual connection as well. Cultures have lived off the land for centuries so traditional knowledge is deeply rooted in the environment. Understanding the plants and understanding the animals in your local environment was important for living and survival.

- What are examples of cultural practices that include the environment?
- Do you know of any traditional stories about the plants, animals and places in your area?
- Do you know of any traditional foods that come from your area?
- What are the different eco systems and eco regions that a culture evolved within?
- Brainstorm as many different cultural practices you can think of that are done as a result of living and evolving within a given environment.
- What kinds of animals live in this area?
- How are the environment, the animals and humans interconnected?
- Do you know of an example of a spiritual connection to the environment? (ie, traditional names usually included elements of the environment. "Sacred Walking Elk" or "Lone Buffalo" are traditional names of some of my relatives.
- In your culture is there a protocol for gathering things from the environment?

5. Fifth branch is **CEREMONIES and CELEBRATIONS**. Every culture has their own types of celebrations or ceremonies that are specific to their culture. Your culture will teach you if these are to be viewed as ceremony or celebration and in some cases both. These events happen at certain times of the year or at certain stage of a life. These events have a specific order in how things happen for that ceremony/celebration. Most ceremonies and celebrations have elements such as a special food, clothing, song(s) and the ritual/traditional component. Consider a birthday party. When we attend a birthday we understand what is required as a host and as a guest. We know that a birthday party has a particular order of events with a special song, special food, special games or socializing and sometimes special clothing. Kids know the order of a birthday party. You can parallel that most cultural events will have a special order of things

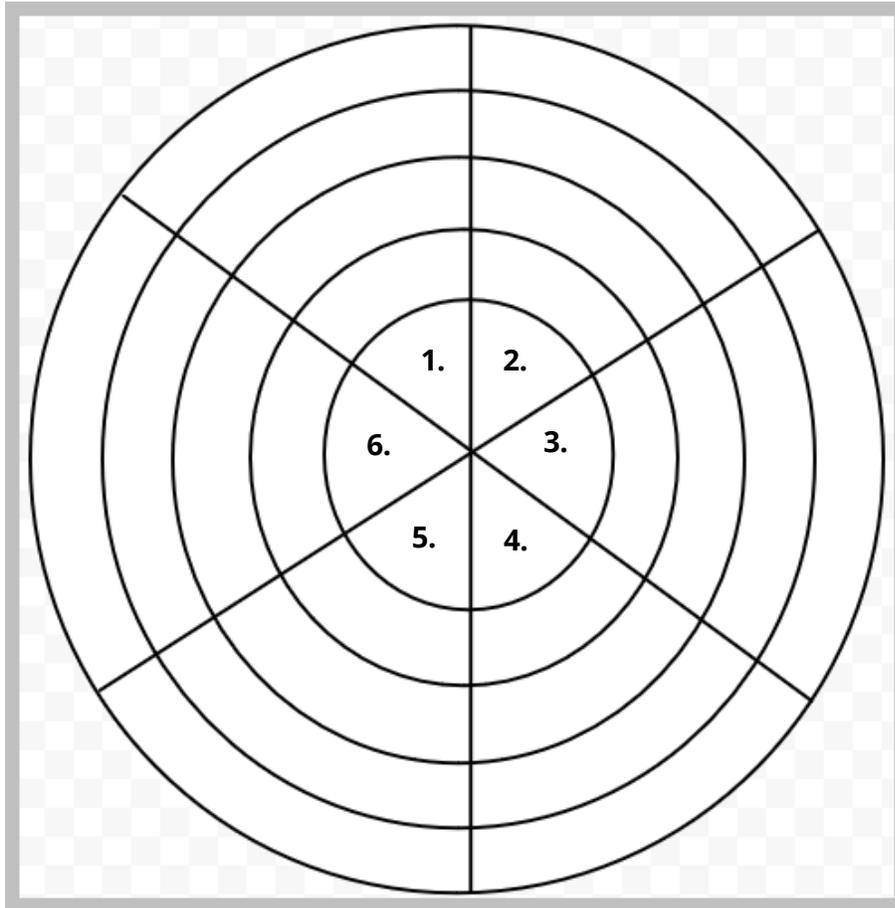
specific to that cultural group. For example, First Nation events will have an element of prayer to open and close the celebration or ceremony.

- What kinds of ceremonies/celebrations do you consider cultural? Do those events have certain elements like, food requirements, special clothing, certain songs, etc?
- Are there ceremonies/celebrations that you are looking forward to for your own life?
- Does your culture have a celebration or ceremony that is only specific to your culture?

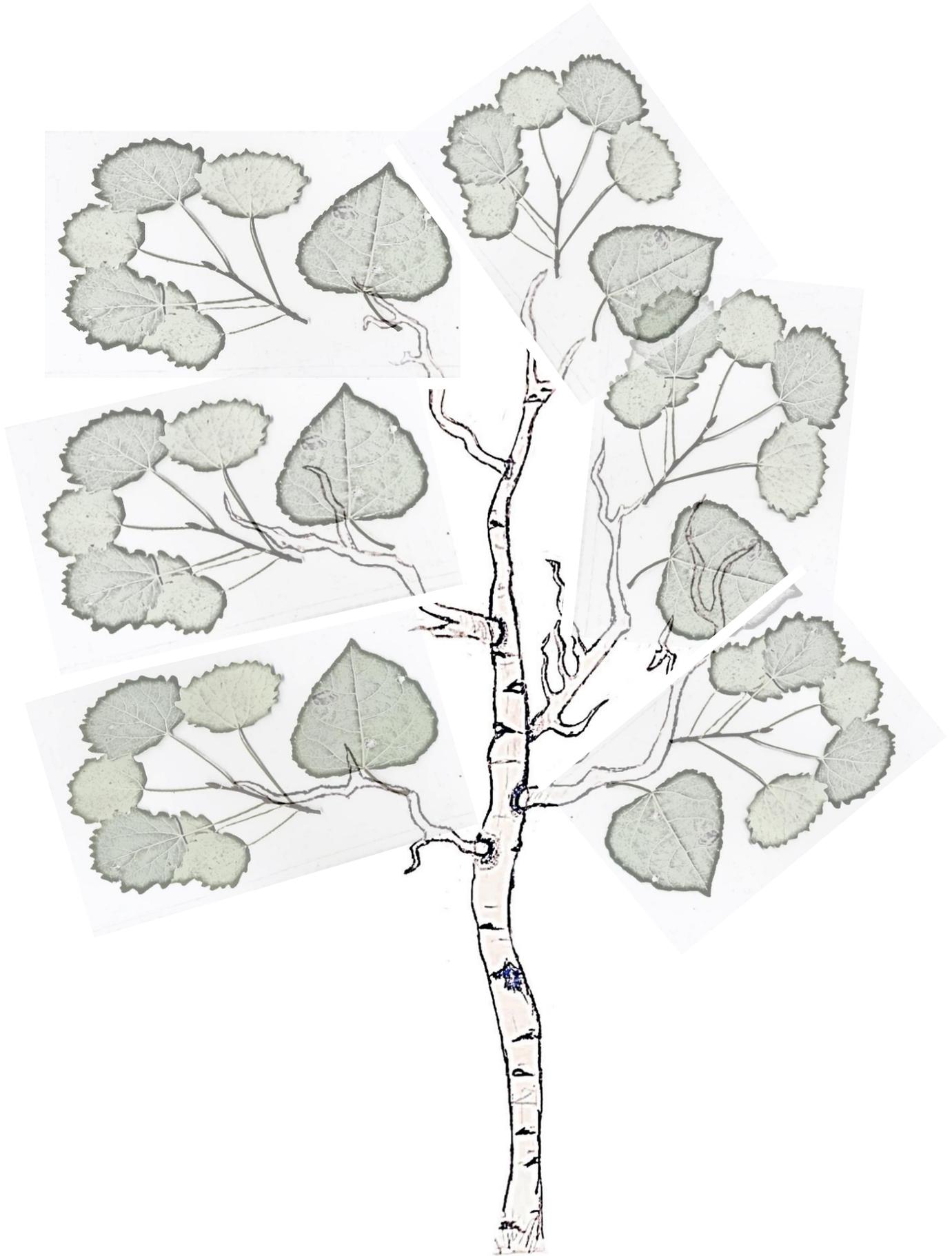
6. Sixth branch is **FORMS OF EXPRESSION**. Every culture has specific forms or styles of artistic expression such as dance, music, songs and art techniques that are unique to their own culture. Forms of expression allows us to do storytelling which is how we can share story and history. All these forms can connect to our own spirit and we can use them to tell our own story. Forms of expression traditionally helped to take care of our mental health and well-being as it was an opportunity to get out in art what we needed to express or to document. Every culture has their own versions of songs, music, dances and arts including significant designs, colours and materials.

- How do you feel when you are creating art?
- Do you have a favorite art technique?
- Do you like to dance or sing? Do you do specific kind of dancing or singing?
- How do you feel when you dance?
- How do you feel when you sing?
- Do you have one thing in life that is your most favorite piece of art work?
- Do you know about any designs or styles that are specific to certain cultures?
- What symbols from your culture help you to feel better about yourself?
- Can you recognize that art, dance, music and songs generate feelings inside us?

Concluding Activity: Complete the following self-assessment of how connected you feel with each element as it relates to your life. Colour in each section from the inside out to represent your current level of connection to each element of your cultural background. Afterwards you could reflect on ways of re-strengthening your connections within each element, and share in your reflections on the final page.



1. Language
2. Kinship
3. Transfer of Traditional Knowledge
4. Surrounding Environment
5. Ceremonies & Celebrations
6. Forms of Expression



OTHER THOUGHTS OR REFLECTIONS

Use this space to record final thoughts or reflection on the information you gathered any feedback you would like to offer, in the on-going development of this workbook.

After completing this workbook, feel free to share your tree and/or any reflections that come up from this at: www.learningtheland.ca/share

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