**Our Sacred Tree: Art Experiential art form of holistic healing with community.**

**Facilitator 1:** The purpose of the sacred tree activity is to identify our gifts and strengths, let go of what we can today, and let other things be for now.

**Activity Instructions:** Please write one word per stage, large enough for the group to see from their seats. At each stage, we will hear from a few willing to share what they wrote on their tree decoration. Participants will bring their decoration and tape to the tree.

**Facilitator 2**: We are going to use a tree as a metaphor to emphasize how life is always changing and that we have a foundation in life to sustain us.

This exercise involves body, mind, spirit and emotions. Like the cycle of life, our resilience across time of being whole and carrying on with our families, communities, nations, and land.

**Facilitator 1**: Let’s notice the big tall tree, how tall it is, the branches, the leaves. On a fall day we notice colourful leaves: yellow, red, bronze, green and sometimes they blow around in the crisp air, or sometimes they just gently fall to the ground. See above the tree, the sun or maybe a moon and stars, with geese flying above. Just notice all that is there.

**Facilitator 2: 1-The roots, the nourish us.**

Let’s move into early fall and what do we see with the tree? The leaves starting to change colour? The air or wind? It’s cooler days and the early sunset and harvest moon in the sky.

Can you tell me what the things that nourish us are? Write on the roots provided (or on the actual roots displayed) and mount under the tree to share with the group. Things that nourish our body, mind and spirit? *(Pause for stick their roots)*

*(Once seated)* Can you notice how these connect to one another? Can you notice how roots run deep? They are strengths, morals, traditions, teachings that provide for us, give us stability, strengths, nourishment, love etc., help us get through the hard days.

**Facilitator 1: 2-The branches, our life’s roles:**

Let’s identify the different roles we have in life, these will be the branches of the tree, they help us do the work we need to do in our families, they hold us up, for work, school friendships etc.

Write on a sticky note the roles you have in life and put on the tree trunk.

Maybe you’re a mom, dad, grandparent, sister, brother, auntie, foster parent, friend, teacher, CCP Navigator, police-officer, take your time to search your heart, to describe what role you play in life. You mean so much to your community and to the people who care about and love you.

Can you notice all that you are? Just notice all of that, that’s a lot! No wonder we get tired, maybe we need some self-care to help us feel centered and well.

**Facilitator 2: 3-The mushrooms, what our Ancestors gave us.**

We are moving into the fall, days are shorter and air is crisp, less bugs! More colourful life to be seen, babes are fatter, rivers are freezing up on the shoreline. Fall shows off the beauty of rich colour all around us. Mother earth is moving into a rest period.

What is it that our ancestors gave us: teachings, language, ceremony, spirituality, values, laughter, perseverance, family, relations, ways of knowing, etc.?

Write these on the mushrooms and attach around the growth of the of the tree.

Just notice all the goodness, or greatness! We are so, grateful for our ancestor’s teachings, their legacy that they gave me, you and our people, we are here because of all of that.

**Facilitator 1: 4-The acorns, it is the legacy we want for our children.**

Now we are moving into late fall, what do we notice? Crisp cold days, cloudy skies, the shore of the lakes are starting to freeze and so much white snow!

It’s as if the earth is going quiet. Many acorns are gone from the trees, food for the small animals, yet a few lay untouched and are hugged by nature to get it ready to bud new life.

The acorn symbolizes potential, they have been going through this phase for generations. With time one acorn can start a whole forest of mighty trees. What legacy do we want to leave for our children and grandchildren?

Write these on the acorns and mount beside the mushrooms or on a branch.

Can you see the connections between ancestors, and today and tomorrow? Our people are timeless, does this make sense? Look at our tree, how is it?

**Facilitator 2: 5-Leaves, thing to let go of or let be for now.**

Okay, now we are moving into the beginning of winter, what do we notice. Cooler days, less sunshine, Indian summer, clear waters, no bugs, yay! We’re harvesting and preparing for winter.

Okay now we are going to identify things we are ready to let go or let be for now. Like racism, hate, violence, bullying, suicide etc.

Write them on leaves. *(Pause/silence for helper to gather the leaves, come forward and stand by the tree. Hole up the leaves at the highest point and when ready, let them gently drop on the grown, on the earth.*

Can you see those falling onto the land? Falling down, moving from me or us down into the earth. Can you notice the space between the tree which represents you, and the land? Just imagine how lighter one becomes by letting go of hurts.

Now what happens when mother earth holds them for us? Yes, they slowly turn back into the earth, to nourish us, the trees, the bugs, can you see that? Its going through its own transformation.

**Facilitator 1: 6- Clouds, the storms of life.**

With the winter often comes the big snow storms and snow days, road closures.

As we live our lives, we have hard days, the storms of life,

Loss, violence and other, what are the storms that we see?

Write them on the clouds and mount in the sky above the tree.

Can you see that the storms come and go? The tree is still standing, maybe needs to bend and that we live through them, we’re alright or okay. We get through the long winter, with hopes for sunshine and melting snow, when spring rolls around again soon.

**Facilitator 2: Summary.**

The tree is like someone, me and you; a grandmother tree or a hub. This tree grows up and has new trees growing around it, growing together, having many generations growing over time.

It is like a family or a community or a nation across homelands. Can you notice that? Take a minute to see that big old tree. Imagine, how long has it been standing there? Can you notice other trees around it on the land? How it connects to all who survive, grow and thrive here?

The tree stands tall, bends in the storm, it is nourished from the earth and elements, to be strong and whole, in the environment where it grows. It goes through many transformations in life as it grows up, through the season, some seasons are better than others.

**Facilitator 1: summary.**

This tree is similar to each individual, our strengths, the things that nourish us, help us get through the storms of our lives, helps us to release those things that we are ready to be let go, and those that can remain for now.

We are grateful for those things for teaching us about who we are. We want to set them down on the earth for they are ready to nourish other beings some more.

This connection to life and land, to the sacred land is an essential relationship in our lives. It helps us get through our whole lives, transform our hurts, to lean into the land and not transfer the hurt to others.