

Staying connected to culture without the sweat lodge during COVID-19



Supporting Indigenous wellness during COVID-19

This fact sheet is part of Thunderbird Partnership Foundation's commitment to provide culturally-grounded and strength-based supports for First Nations people during COVID-19. These resources can provide guidance as our communities navigate the current global health crisis, while continuing to face existing health challenges, including substance use and mental health issues.

How to stay connected to culture and Indigenous way of being during COVID-19, when we must stay apart.

Here are some best practices on how to navigate physical distancing and stay safe, and continue to nurture relationships with family, community, land, language, culture, and ceremonies.

NO TO SWEAT LODGE

- Sweat lodge is a place of healing but we are also told that we should not test the spirit ... we should not act without care for the balance between physical and spiritual knowledge.
- We cannot go into a sweat lodge during COVID-19 because we will be too physically close and COVID-19 can be passed on by droplets in our breath.
- To go into the sweat lodge, claiming the spirit will protect us, is the same as testing the spirit, acting without care for ourselves and others. We have to act with care for the precious breath of life.

HOW TO ADAPT OUR THINKING DURING COVID-19 WITHOUT THE SWEAT LODGE

- Focus on staying healthy and life-giving relationships.
- We can still connect with the spirit for answers about our stress, worry and fear without going into a sweat lodge through prayer or being on the land among Creation and talking about our hopes for the future... what we want to ensure for our children and our grandchildren for generations to come.
- That is exactly what our ancestors did for us... the proof of that is that we still exist as Indigenous people today with our languages and connection to land still intact. Even though our ancestors didn't have all that we have today, they had belief and they had their relationship with Creation and the land.
- It's up to us now, to extend our hopes into the future... not our fears, but our hopes.
- We can be clearer about hope if we give expression to our fears in a safe way... through prayer or on the land. The land and our relatives in Creation always listen with care and hold our hope for the future to discover.

"Connecting to the land for healing and to facilitate wellness is a good example of the role of intuition and spirit knowing. Spending time on the land can be a powerful facilitator for developing wellness."

(FNMWC, 2015, p.5)

REFERENCES

Hopkins, Dr. Carol. (2020).
Thunderbird Partnership Foundation; First Nations Mental Wellness Continuum – Copyright © 2015, Thunderbird Partnership Foundation. Bothwell, ON