

Iskwewak Miwayawak

“Women Feeling Healthy”



A Photo Journal About the Cultural and Visual Context of Healthy Body Image and Body Weight from the perspective of First Nations' Women and Youth.

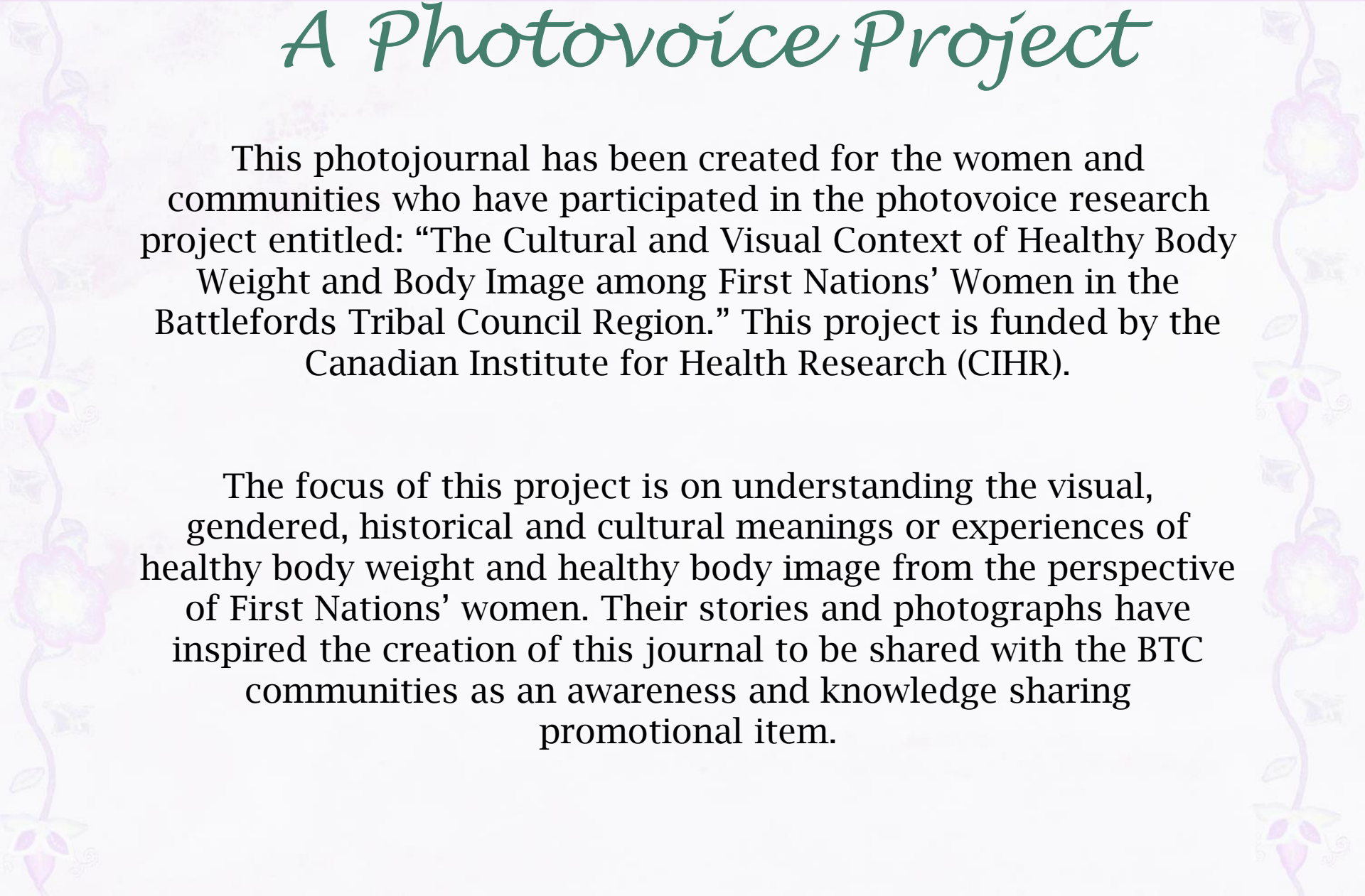




A Photovoice Project

This photojournal has been created for the women and communities who have participated in the photovoice research project entitled: “The Cultural and Visual Context of Healthy Body Weight and Body Image among First Nations’ Women in the Battlefords Tribal Council Region.” This project is funded by the Canadian Institute for Health Research (CIHR).

The focus of this project is on understanding the visual, gendered, historical and cultural meanings or experiences of healthy body weight and healthy body image from the perspective of First Nations’ women. Their stories and photographs have inspired the creation of this journal to be shared with the BTC communities as an awareness and knowledge sharing promotional item.





A Photovoice Project

This project developed through collaborations between the University of Saskatchewan and Battlefords Tribal Council Indian Health Services (BTCIHS).

All photographs and quotations are credited to the participants.

For more information:

bctihsphtovoiceereseareh.usask.ca



Elder's Message



Most of all in my young life I did not smoke or drink alcohol. I grew up in residential school. After I left residential school I was in the hospital. I grew up there. After I left there I went to Piapot. I didn't ever see my dad drink alcohol. I didn't know there was such a thing. I was 16.

When I moved to Little Pine I met my husband there. I saw people getting drunk. I was surprised and scared of people who were drunk. I saw men fight. I was even scared to attend the Pow wow's.

Later on in life I met my husband and fell in love with him. He looked after himself well and he took care of his horses too.

Elder's Message



He got drunk and came home smelling funny. He had drunk home brew. I didn't know there was such a thing. We used to go outside the reserve to Neilburg to pick stones and fence for the farmers. One Saturday my cousins came with beer and offered me one. It taste so bitter and ugly. They looked so happy so I drank it. I was 18 and for the first time I got drunk. The next day I thought I was going to die. I was very dizzy and sick.

After I had children I started gardening. My husband started to drink lots and he would get paid in liquor so we would be short on food. I had a total of 6 kids.

My mom always told me to feed my kids meat and potatoes. The meat was rabbit and deer meat and fruit was blueberries, pinch cherries, and cranberries.

Elder's Message



Always made sure my little ones went to school on Little Pine. They would take baths every day during the summer months but winter was different because it was cold and they would have to walk to school.

I made sure they had a good breakfast before they went to school so they would do well in school. I would give them snacks of bannock, lard and tea. I hardly gave them candy, this was for their teeth. Later on in life I became sick with diabetes. None of my kids have it. I probably got it from my mom. My dad died from lung cancer because of his smoking. August 21, 1987 he passed away. I was always against tobacco. I don't give money for tobacco or alcohol.

Elder's Message



I try and cook what is best. I do not fry my food, either I boil it or roast it. Even for my grandson. I tell him "it may not look good but it is good for the body." A good healthy walk is good especially after eating too much supper. You can get fresh air and you sleep good.

I always wash my feet in the morning and in the evening. It is very important for diabetes. I used to go to round dances and mini round dances a lot, now I'm kind of slow, I'm 80 years old now , but I'll go every now and then and dance till 4 in the morning. Today I still go to ceremonies, feasts or get-togethers like anniversaries, weddings and most of all comfort people at funerals that lost loved ones. That's all I have to say.

Elder, Grace Okemow
December 18, 2012

Executive Director's Message



Women's health - what a fascinating research topic. Unfortunately, most of us do not fully grasp the importance of our health. We're so busy looking after everybody's health needs, we tend to put our health concerns on the "to do" later list.

Our project, in partnership with the Dept. of Sociology, University of Saskatchewan, examined how First Nations women feel about their bodies, and what does a healthy body image really look like? I want to thank all the participants (the young ones and the wise ones) for sharing their stories and photos and opening up my eyes to what makes us beautiful, intelligent, fun and caring women. The use of photovoice in this project highlighted the importance of maintaining our First Nations language, traditions, and culture. Thank you to our Elders for their guidance and wisdom. We will forever treasure you.

Executive Director's Message



A heartfelt thank you to Dr. Jennifer Poudrier and team members at the University, to our health centre "team" and our current and former research coordinators, the Elders, the participants, and volunteers. Sonya did an awesome job with our women's gatherings including the Women's Gala held in June 2010. Thank you to the Indigenous People's Health Research Council for the initial grant in 2004-2005 and Canadian Institutes of Health Research for ongoing funding.

"Tapwēwakamso" - Believe In Yourself!

Janice W. Kennedy,
Executive Director, BTCIHS



Community Research Coordinator



I am so thankful for the opportunity to be a part of this project. At times it was overwhelming because this project helped me to realize that I did not have a positive self body image. As a result of this discovery I was able to examine why I felt the way I did. I realized that I was the one who had a problem with my weight. I've since become a much happier person and have accepted my body as it is.

Many times women are the foundations of our families and often forget their own needs as they tend to the needs of their family; sometimes playing dual roles of both parents. The women that participated in this project are inspirational, loving, caring, humorous, dedicated to family, and most of all RESILIENT.

Community Research Coordinator



Being a part of this project has shown me that I am not alone in my own challenges as a woman and mother. These women have inspired me to be the best that I can be. The most important message I will keep with me as a result of this project is “Do not give up”. I am so proud to be a First Nations woman and mother. The resilience in all these women is amazing!

Sonya Whitecalf,
Special Projects Coordinator, BTCIHS

University Research Partner



Iskwewak Miwayawak has been an incredibly inspiring and heart-felt journey. Our work together first began in 2003 with Janice's idea to learn more about women's perspectives on their own health and health within the BTC communities. Throughout the years, I've met incredibly smart, strong, kind, gentle and feminine women and girls; I've had an opportunity to see beautiful photography and hear profound and uplifting stories; and I've learned more than I could have imagined about the power of women working together.

Most of all, I've been inspired to do exactly what I was taught: "Tapēwakamso" - Believe in Yourself. For all of that, I am truly grateful and I will continue to be as this journey continues.

Jennifer Poudrier,
Associate Professor, Sociology
University of Saskatchewan



Journal Page



Memorial

In Memory of late Josephine
Frank

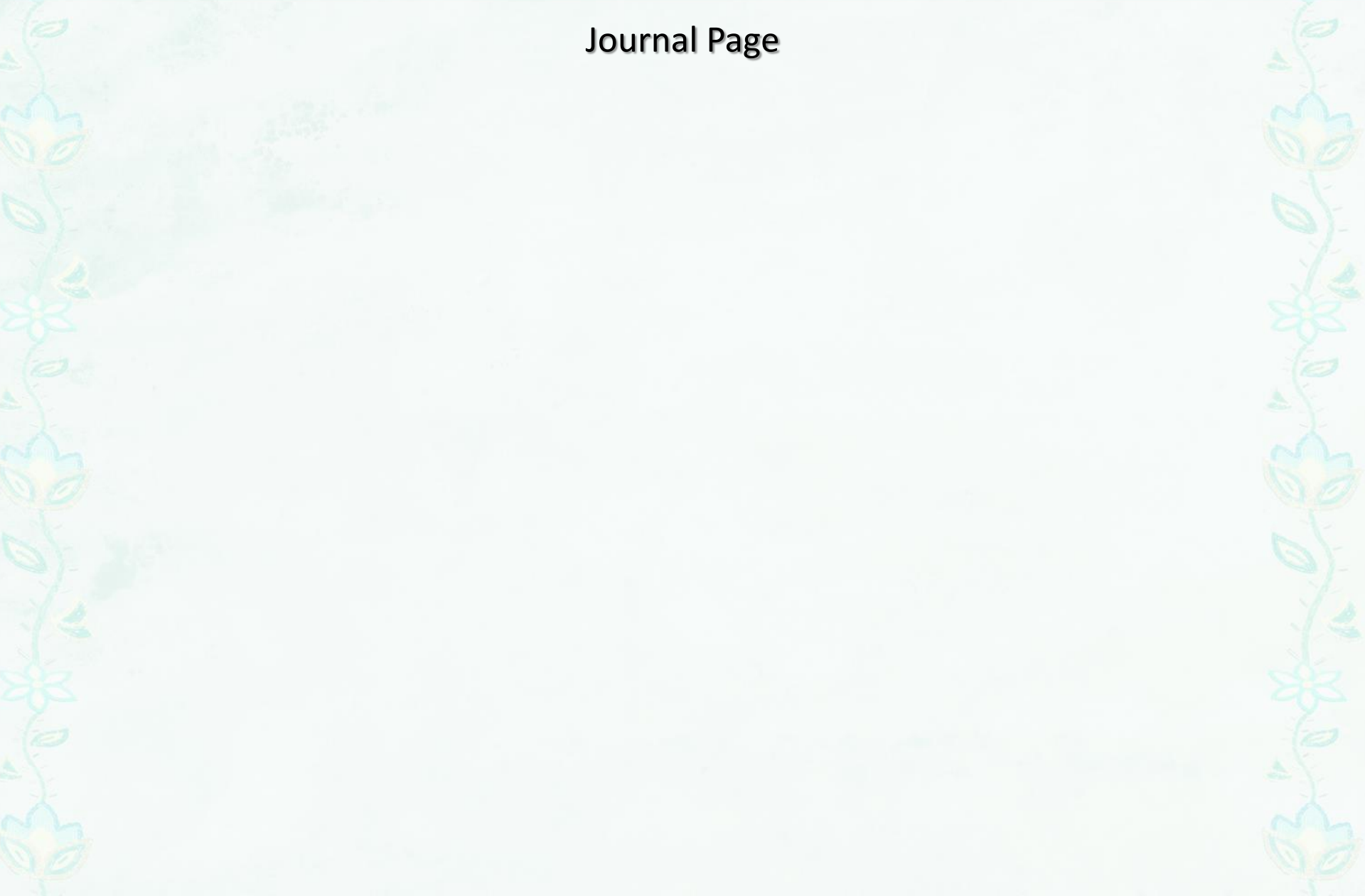


February 7, 1923 – November 2, 2012

Permission authorized by Trevor White and Family



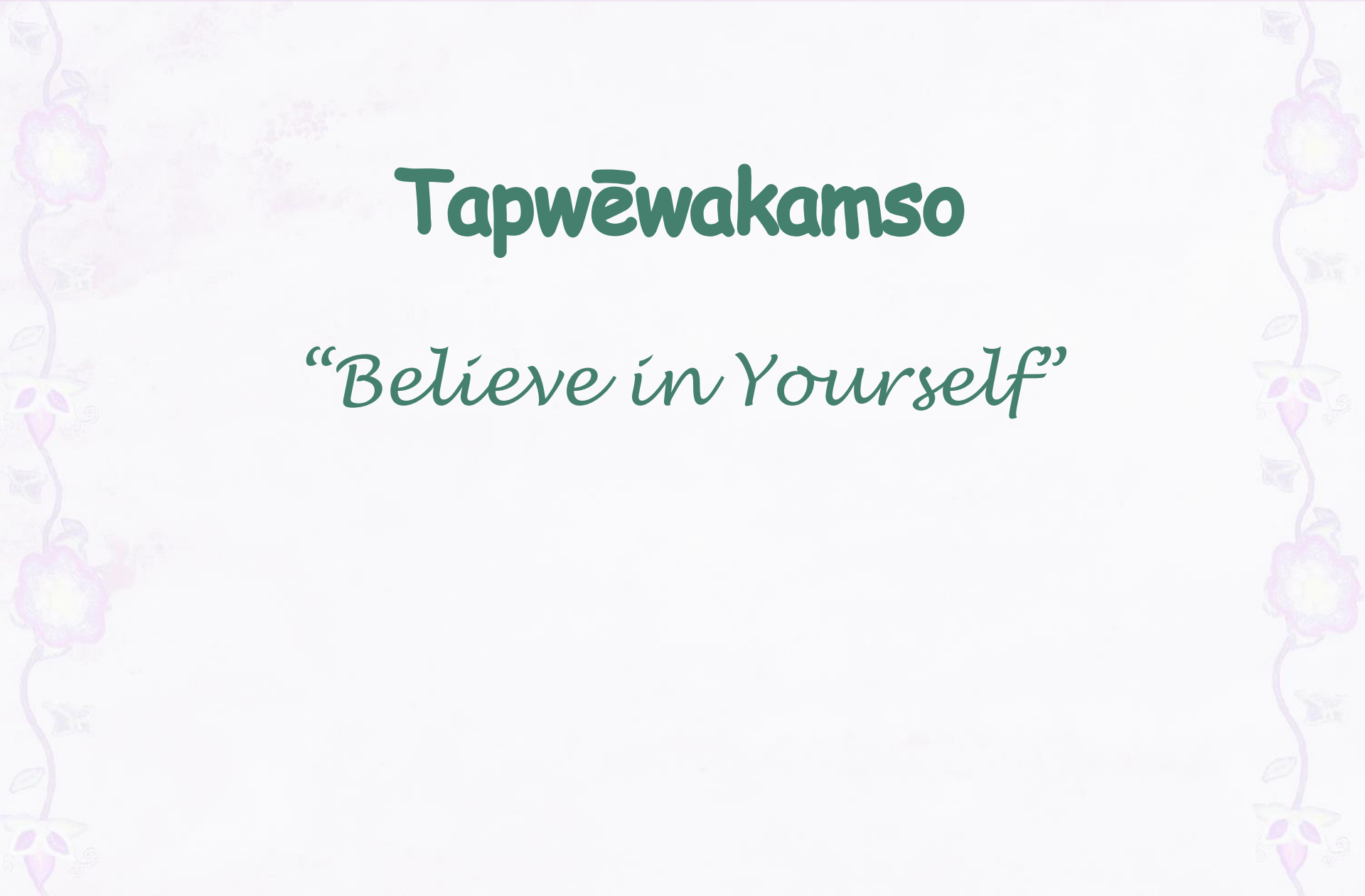
Journal Page





Tapwēwakamso

“Believe in Yourself”





*A picture speaks a
thousand words ...*



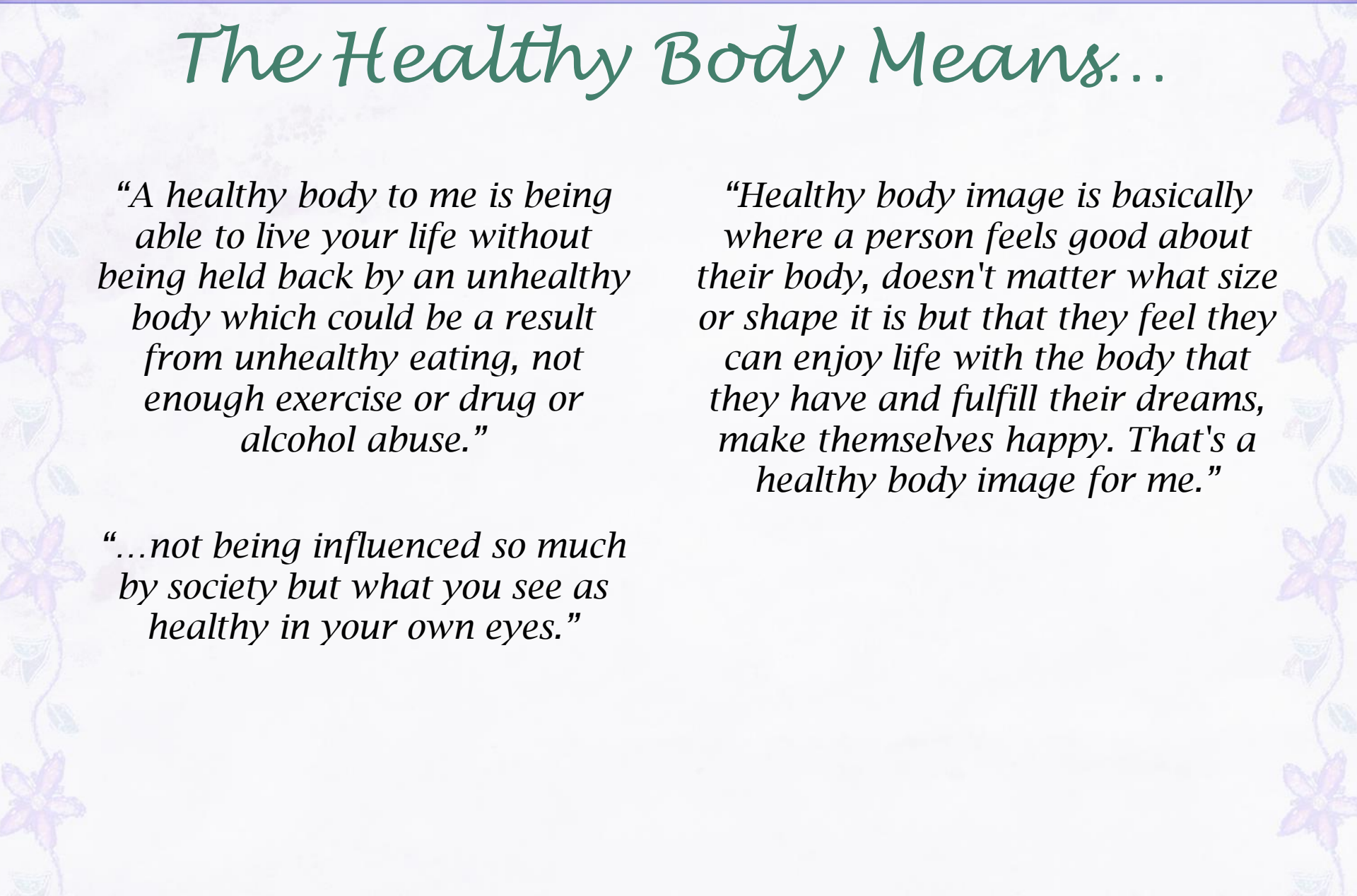


The Healthy Body Means...

“A healthy body to me is being able to live your life without being held back by an unhealthy body which could be a result from unhealthy eating, not enough exercise or drug or alcohol abuse.”

“...not being influenced so much by society but what you see as healthy in your own eyes.”

“Healthy body image is basically where a person feels good about their body, doesn't matter what size or shape it is but that they feel they can enjoy life with the body that they have and fulfill their dreams, make themselves happy. That's a healthy body image for me.”





Journal Page



The Healthy Body as a Journey

"It's a view of an ongoing trail and also you can look at it as a long road down ... a long life of being healthy and ... you know taking care of yourself and your body."



"Healthy choices are kind of like healthy paths."



Journal Page



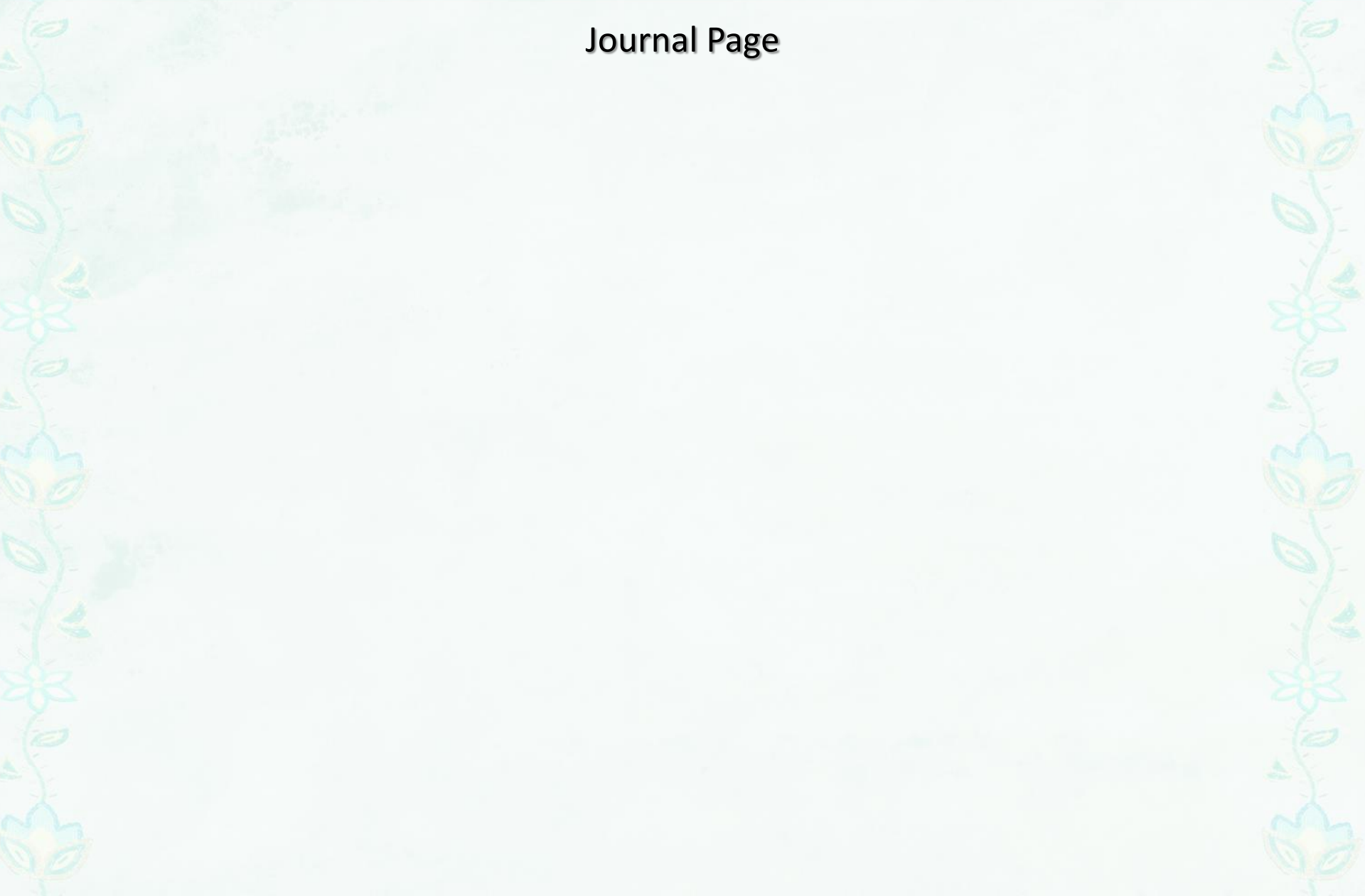
“The past and the present.”



*“Rivers are never the same...
always forever changing.”*



Journal Page





“Each time I need to think about something I just go for a walk back there and just think about it and look at the scenery.”





Journal Page



*“Playing the guitar
makes me feel good.”*



*“Sometimes the things we don’t
want to do are the best things for
us.”*



Journal Page



Cultural & Spiritual Connections to Health



*“I was happy to be dancing
because it’s so healing for me.
It is empowering for me.”*

*“Just a blissful place where I feel
untouchable and invincible.”*





Journal Page

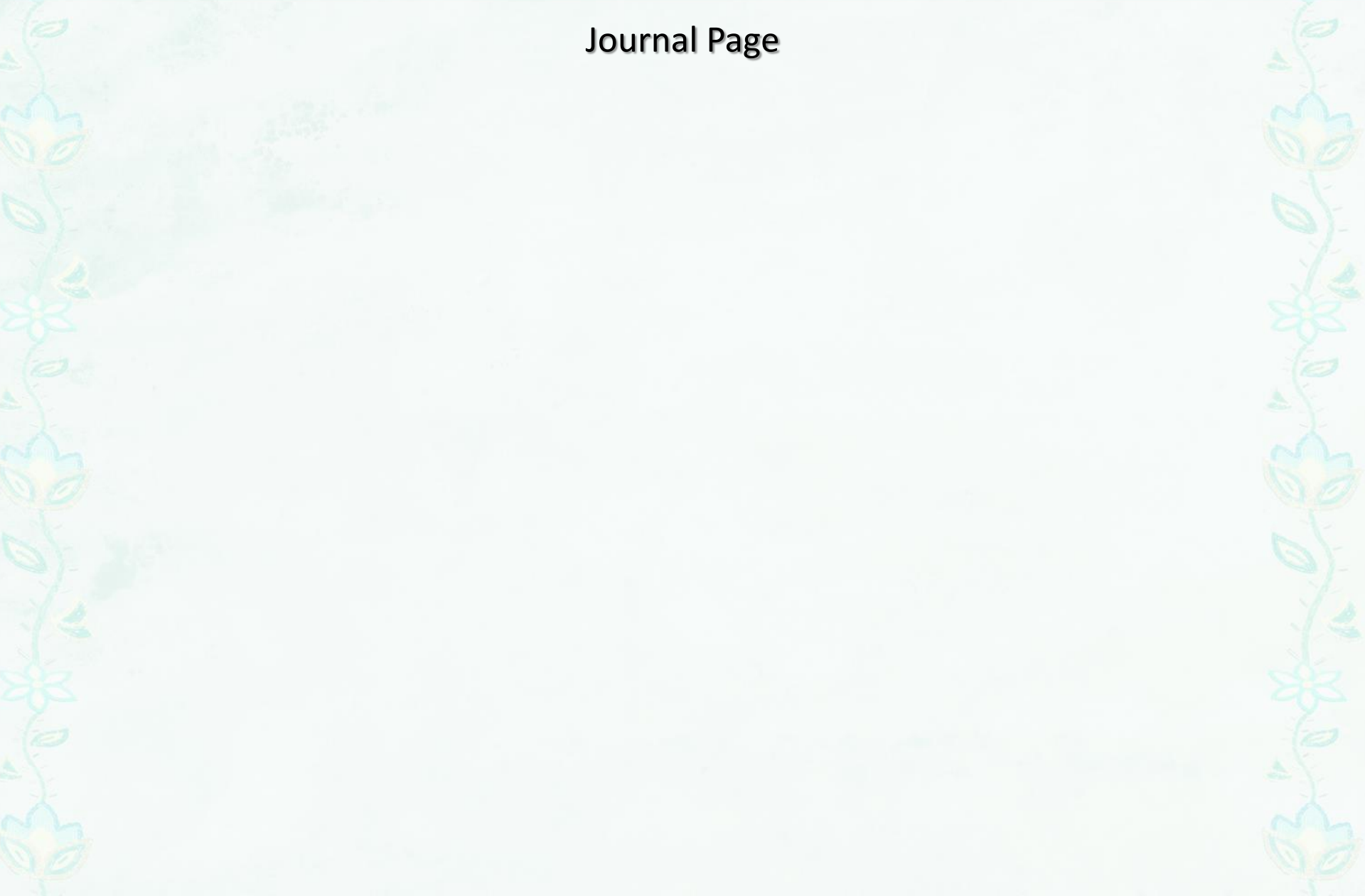




“You find that it’s healing... the cultural part of being native. People getting together and they are all happy.”



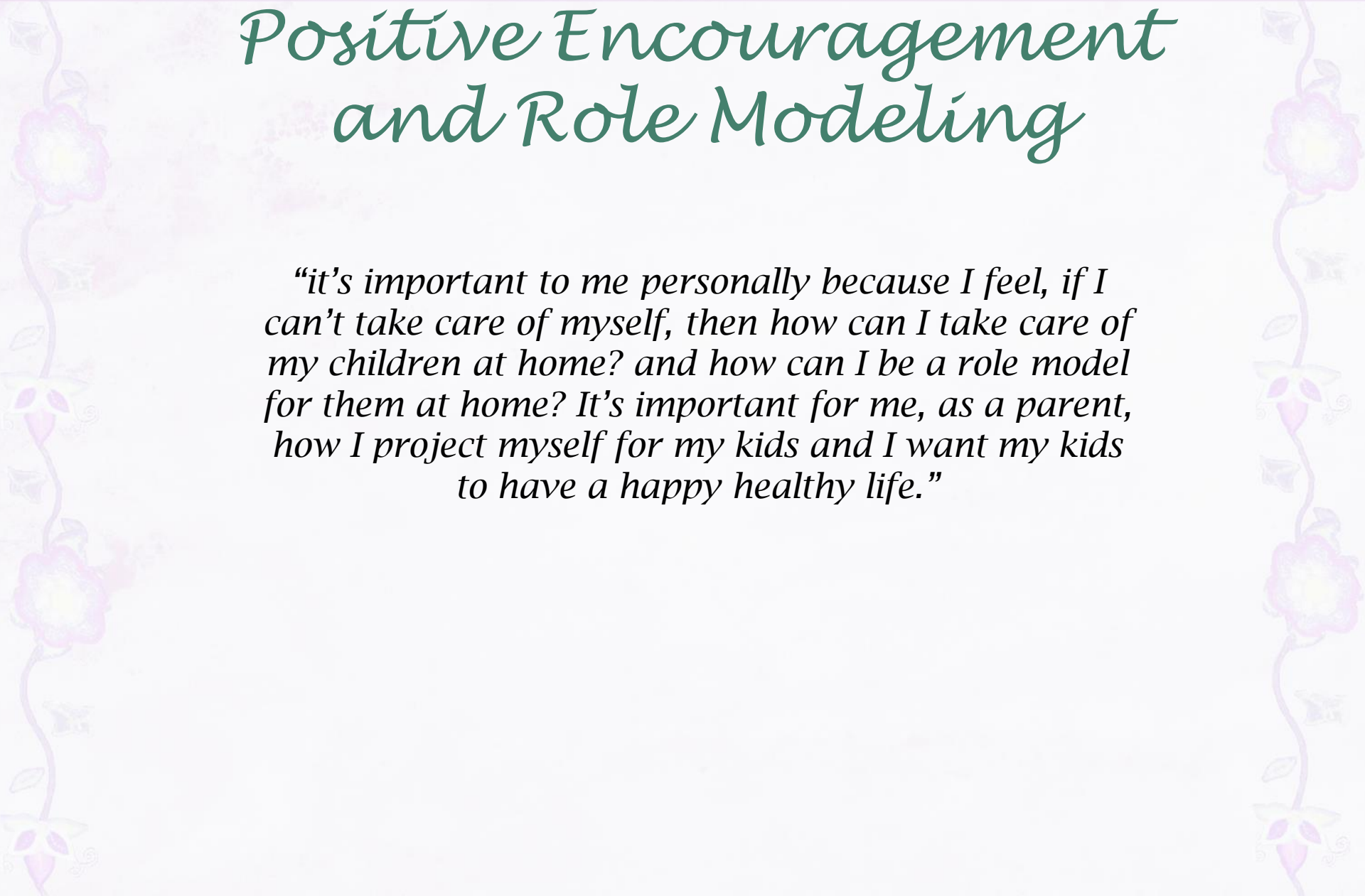
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Positive Encouragement and Role Modeling

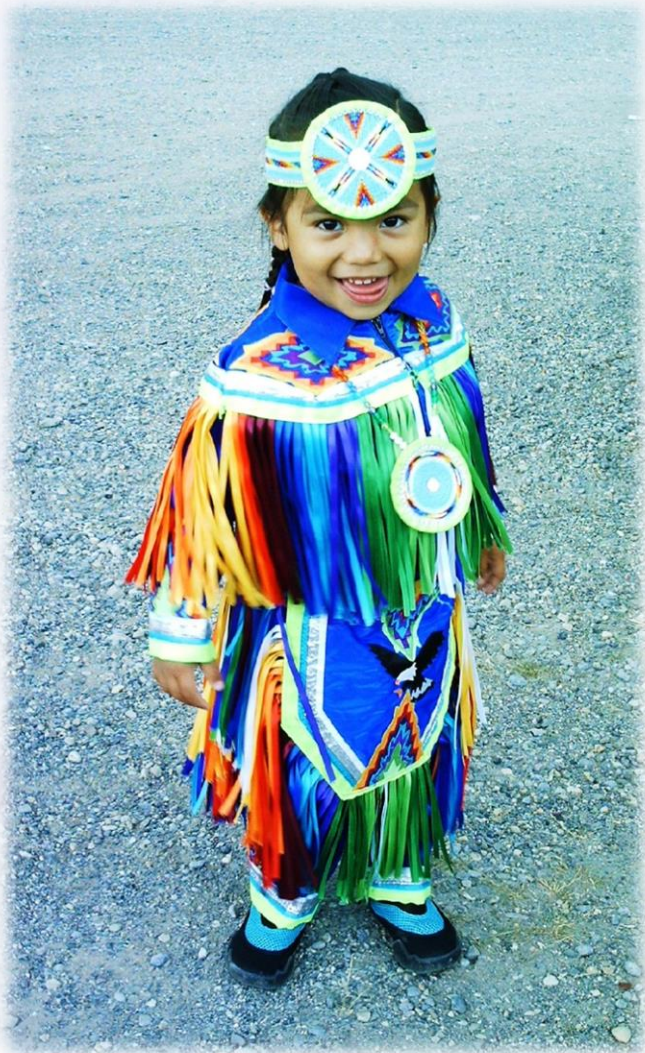
“it’s important to me personally because I feel, if I can’t take care of myself, then how can I take care of my children at home? and how can I be a role model for them at home? It’s important for me, as a parent, how I project myself for my kids and I want my kids to have a happy healthy life.”





Journal Page





"It's meant a lot for me to role model to my son to dance and show him that it's okay to dance and to be proud of who he is."





Journal Page



“There has to be some work done on the reserves - concentrating on the positives instead of the negatives.”



“They’re good role models for me...they lived a healthy lifestyle.”



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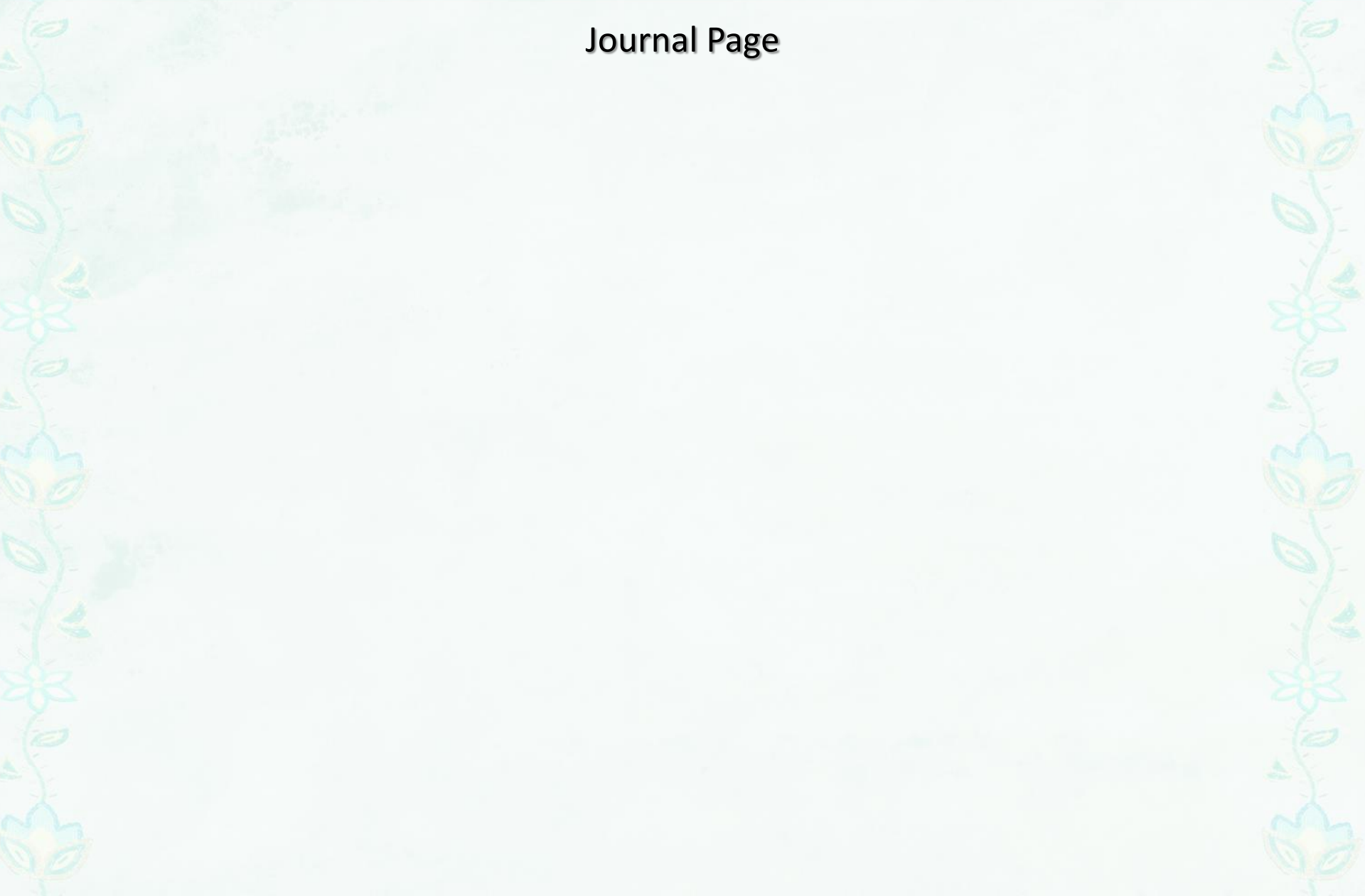
“I like to see positive things on the reserve.”

“I really believe that to build self-esteem in a person, even with our youth, instead of you know criticizing them... to try and find the good in that person...”

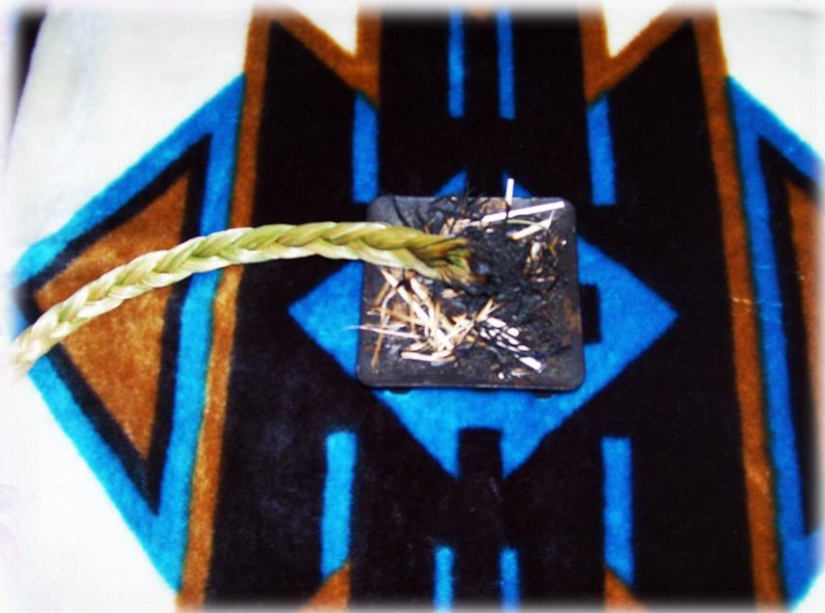




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“She not only motivated me, she disciplined me without saying a word.”



“He changed my life.”



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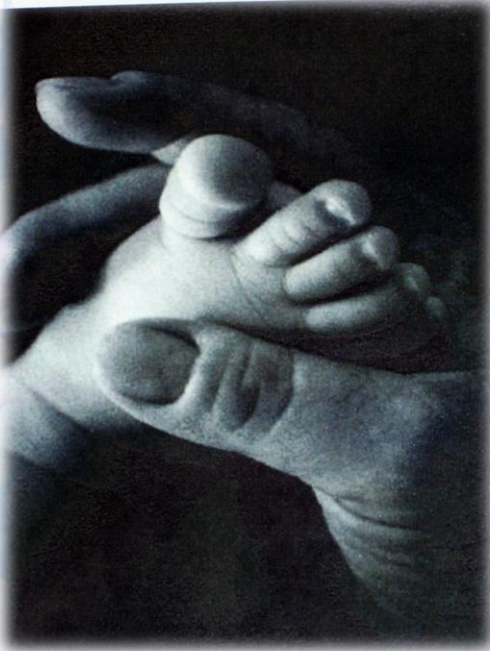
*“You just got to believe in
yourself that you can do it
... education is key.”*



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*Family As Motivators
and Enablers to Good
Health*





Journal Page





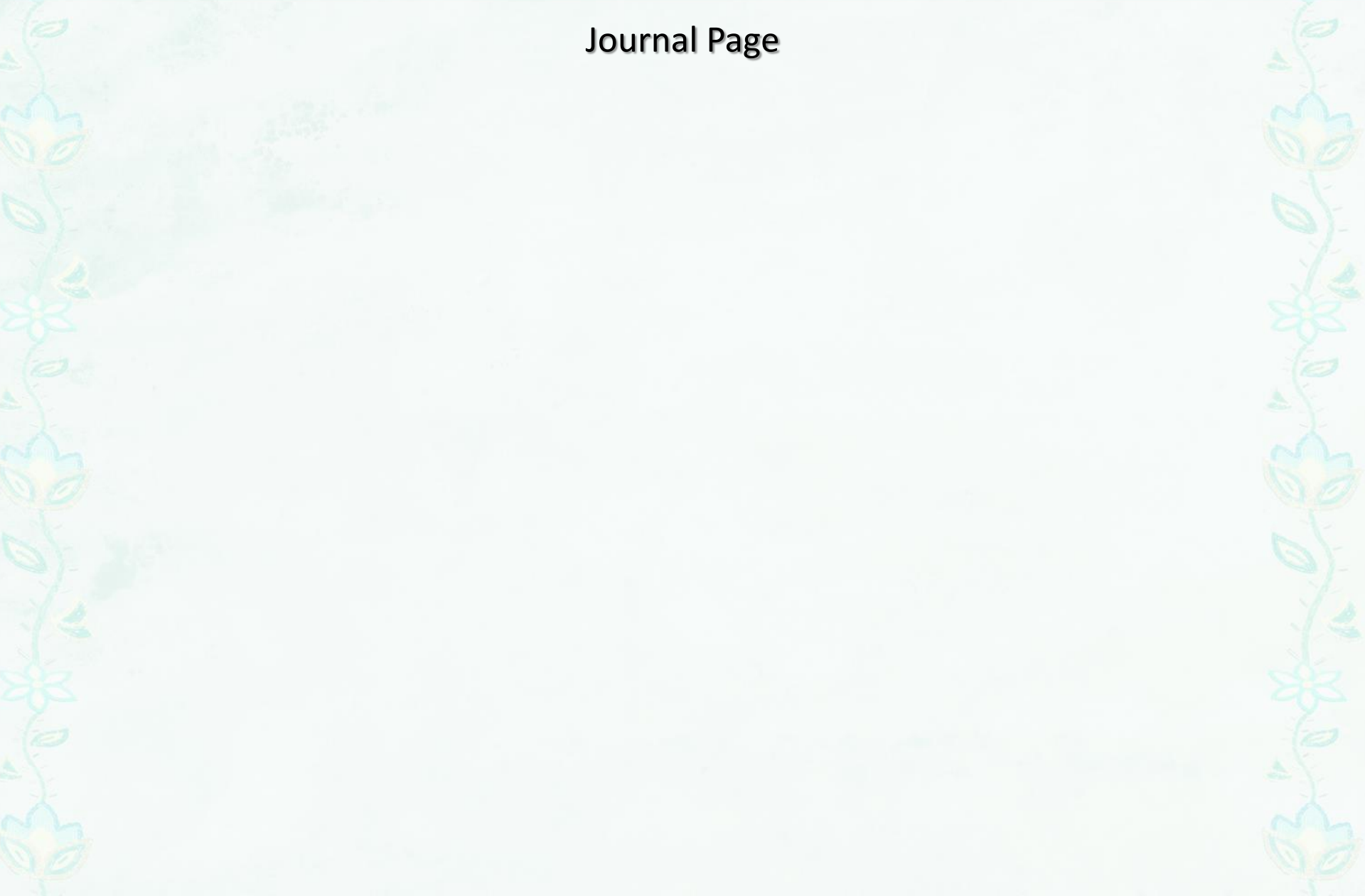
"This is my grandson, my first grandchild. Because I love him so much, I want to make sure I am there for him...I want to stay healthy"



"The top pair of blue jeans are what I wear now, and the bottom ones are what I wore two and a half...three years ago. So I still keep the bottom blue jeans because I want to be able to fit it one of these days."



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*"I share a lot of my life
with other women...and
men...they come see me."*





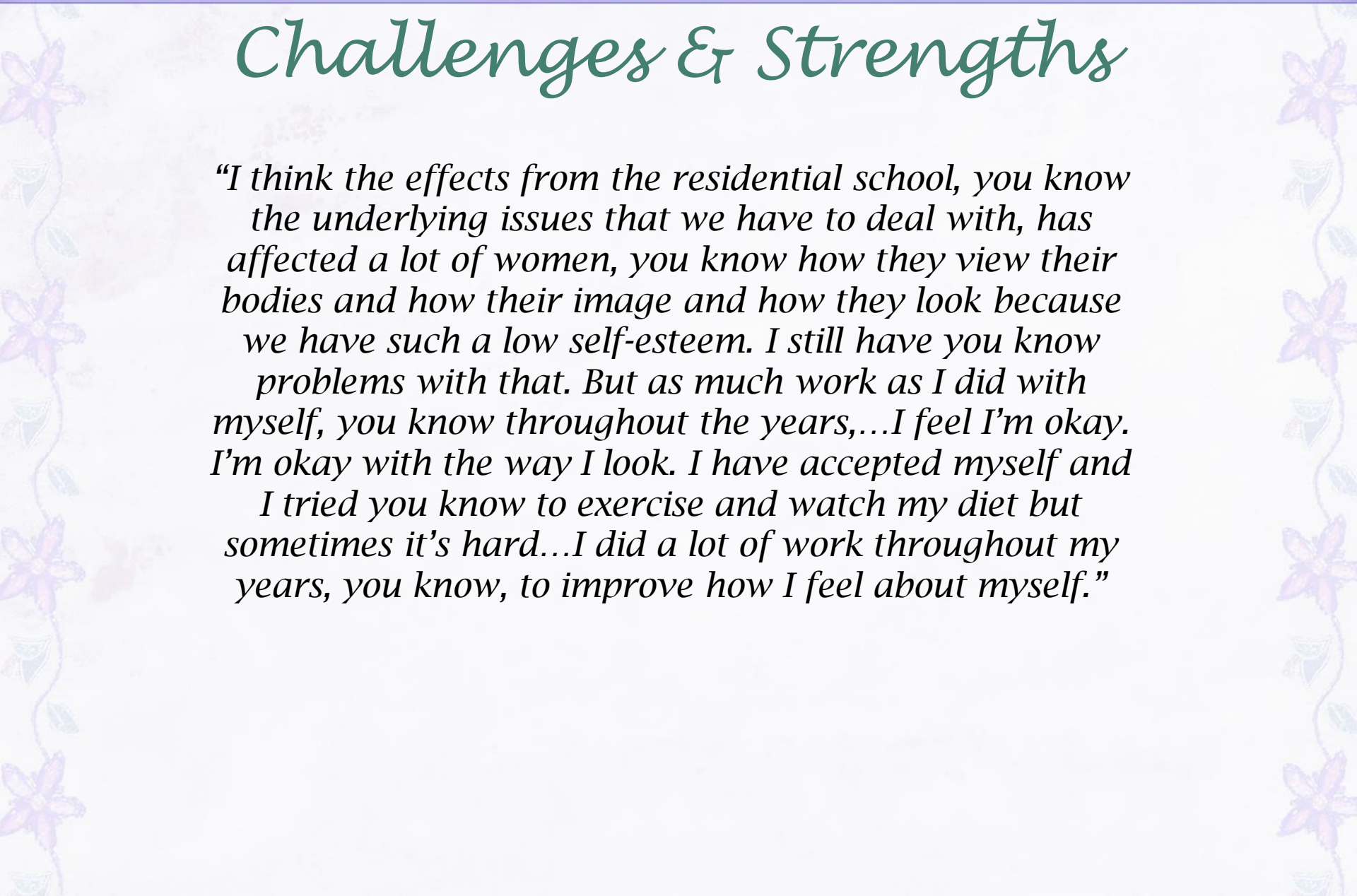
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Challenges & Strengths

“I think the effects from the residential school, you know the underlying issues that we have to deal with, has affected a lot of women, you know how they view their bodies and how their image and how they look because we have such a low self-esteem. I still have you know problems with that. But as much work as I did with myself, you know throughout the years,...I feel I’m okay. I’m okay with the way I look. I have accepted myself and I tried you know to exercise and watch my diet but sometimes it’s hard...I did a lot of work throughout my years, you know, to improve how I feel about myself.”





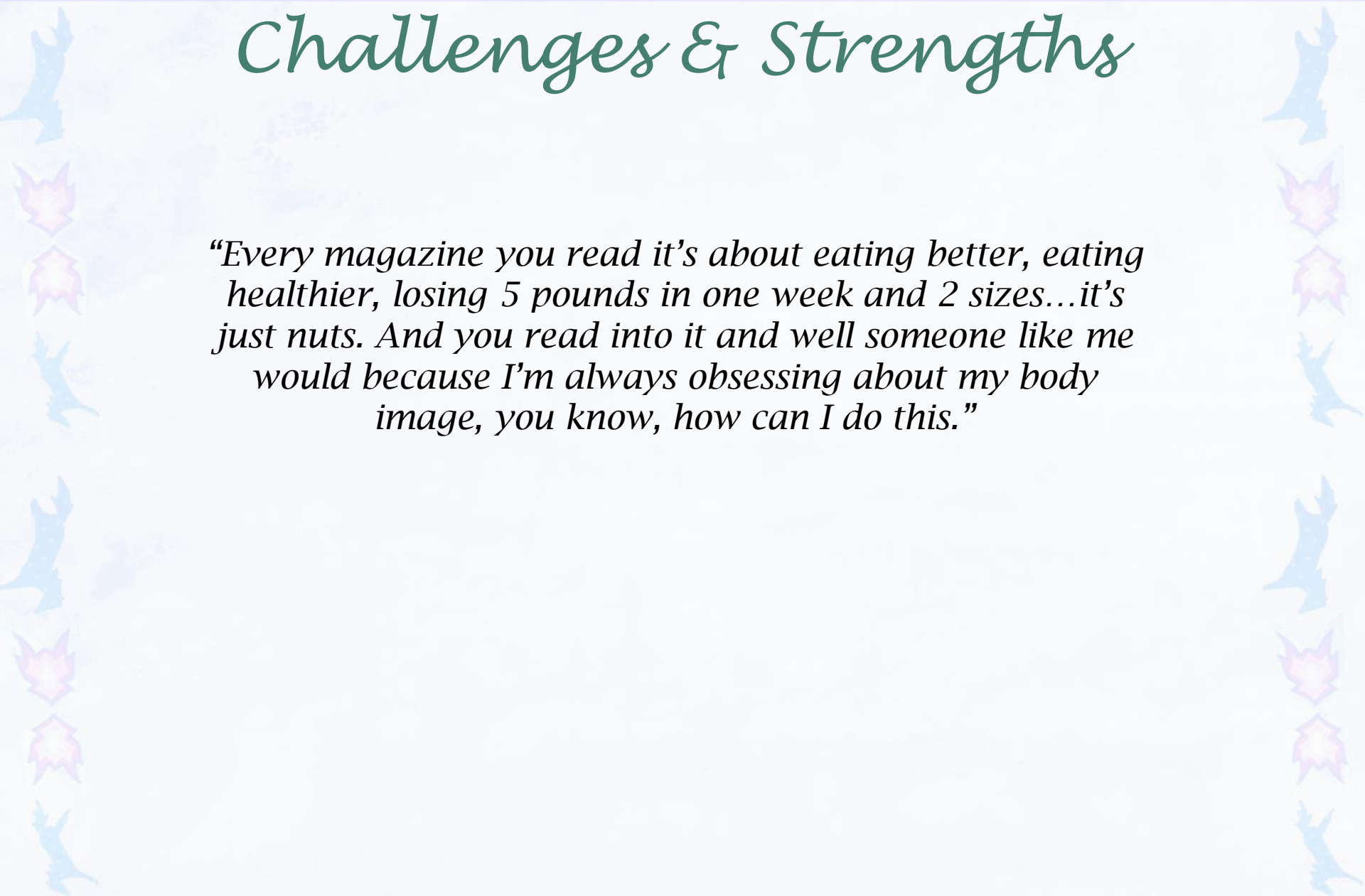
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Challenges & Strengths

“Every magazine you read it’s about eating better, eating healthier, losing 5 pounds in one week and 2 sizes...it’s just nuts. And you read into it and well someone like me would because I’m always obsessing about my body image, you know, how can I do this.”





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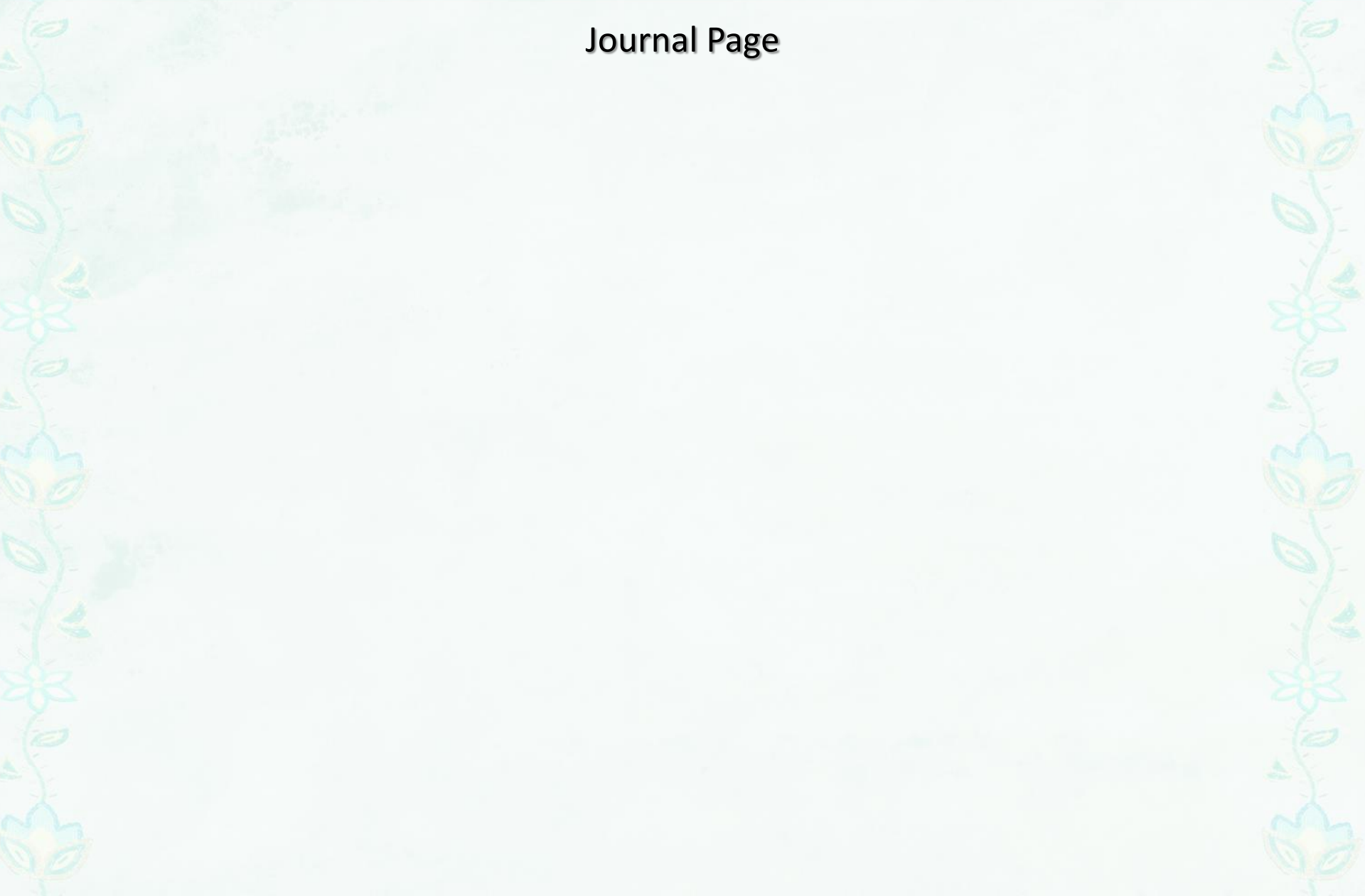
“Symbolically to me, it would probably represent me - old and you know, broken.”



“That’s a perfect body and I’ll never be happy until I reach that.”



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“The ability to be able to work towards finding balance within life and self-care has to do with loving yourself enough and learning that you are number one.”



“First Nations women always wear t-shirts with their bathing suits... but I said ‘No, I am just going to wear my bathing suit’”



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"I like the way they dressed and the way they put their makeup on and everything, their hairstyles....all the girls got all dolled up in their own little way... we're all different in that picture."



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Physical Activity and Building Relationships



“I love soccer. This picture represents the feeling that, you know: ‘Here I am in my backyard. I am just going to make a fool of myself kicking this ball and I don’t care who sees me’”



“Interaction, you’re not afraid to change... young or old, you know you can still be who you are.”



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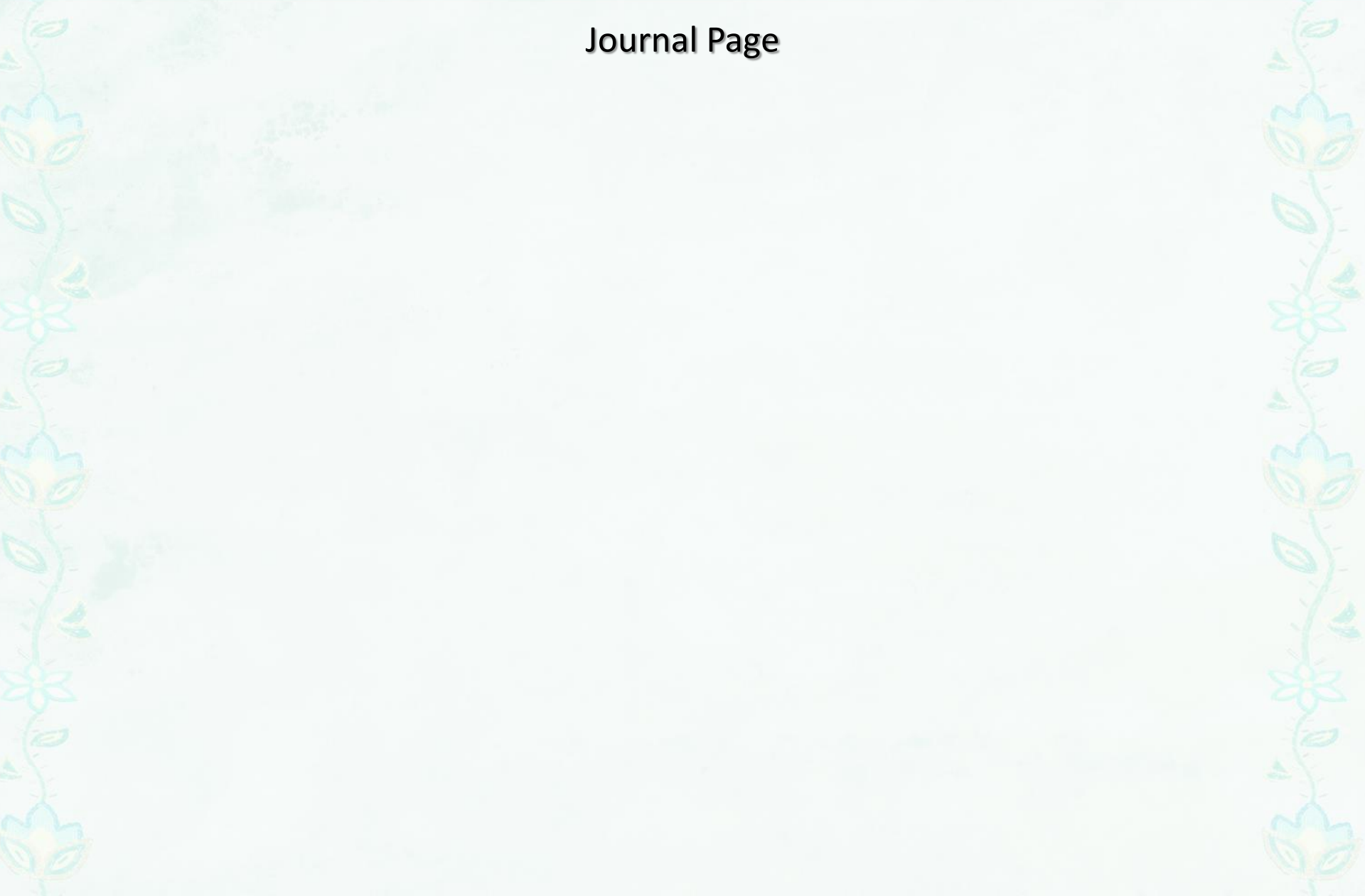




*“It’s more than just a game...you’re
building bonds with friends, your
relationships.”*



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“I took up cross country skiing this winter and I really enjoyed it... I made my own trail.”



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*“It used to be calming for me,
so I used to just go out there
and walk.”*



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Challenges to Healthy Eating



“I wish people would eat more fruit. So that [photo] of the fruit, I like it. It is a comparison between \$35 of fruit and a large pizza. I didn’t have the pizza box there, but how much further would [fruit] go for you as an individual, or a family? It’s healthier.”



“Some days its so hectic, with work and looking after children and grandchildren. I don’t take the time to eat properly, to take care of myself.”



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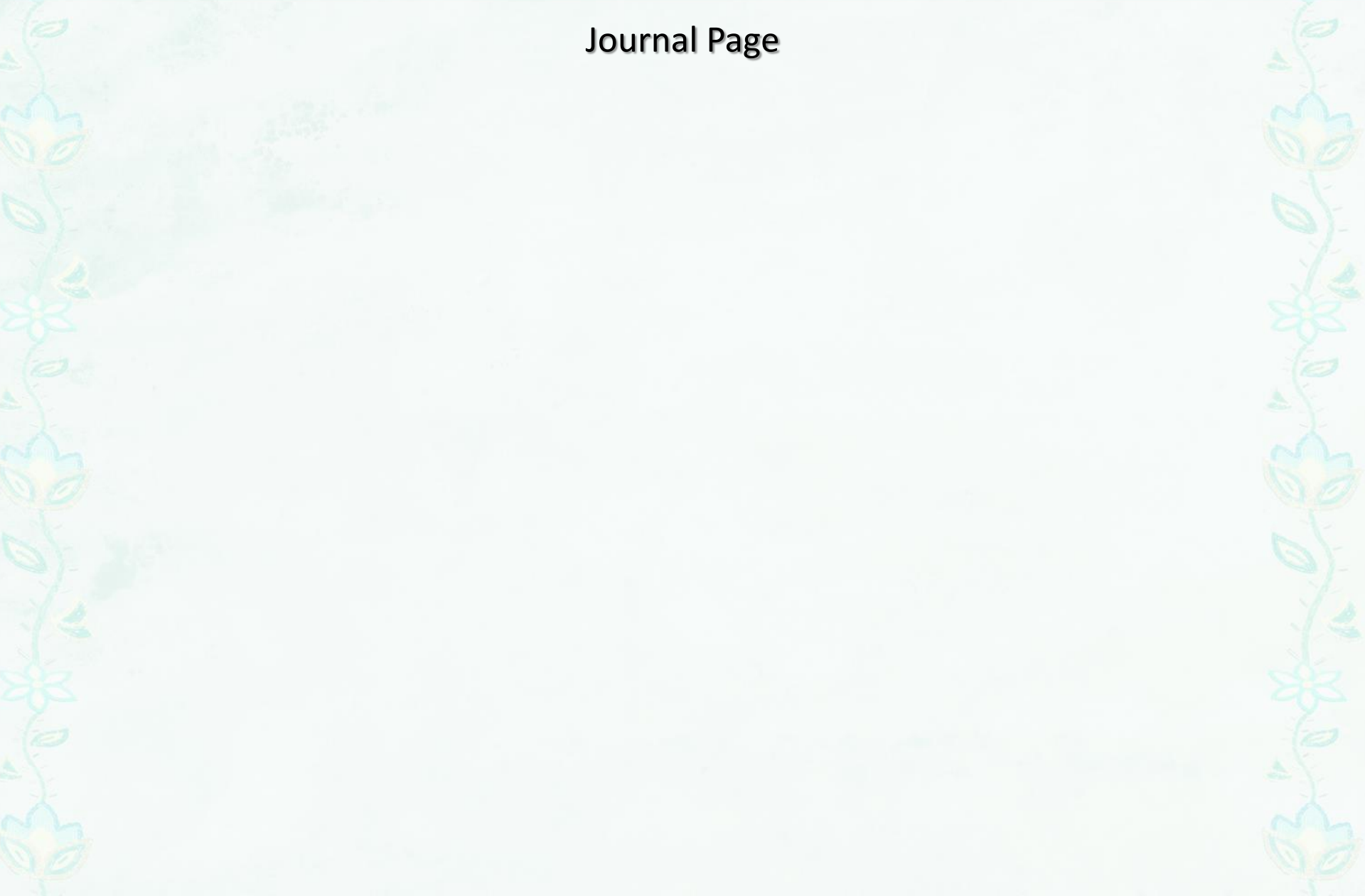


"I thought this is a healthy meal...a lot of times when we don't have time to cook we have something really fast."





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Youth Photovoice Project





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LIFETIME FITNESS



“Healthy means active and fit and muscles and eating right and having the big 4...the food groups”





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Wish for community:

*“I wish ... bigger stuff, more stuff.
Because there’s really nothing”*





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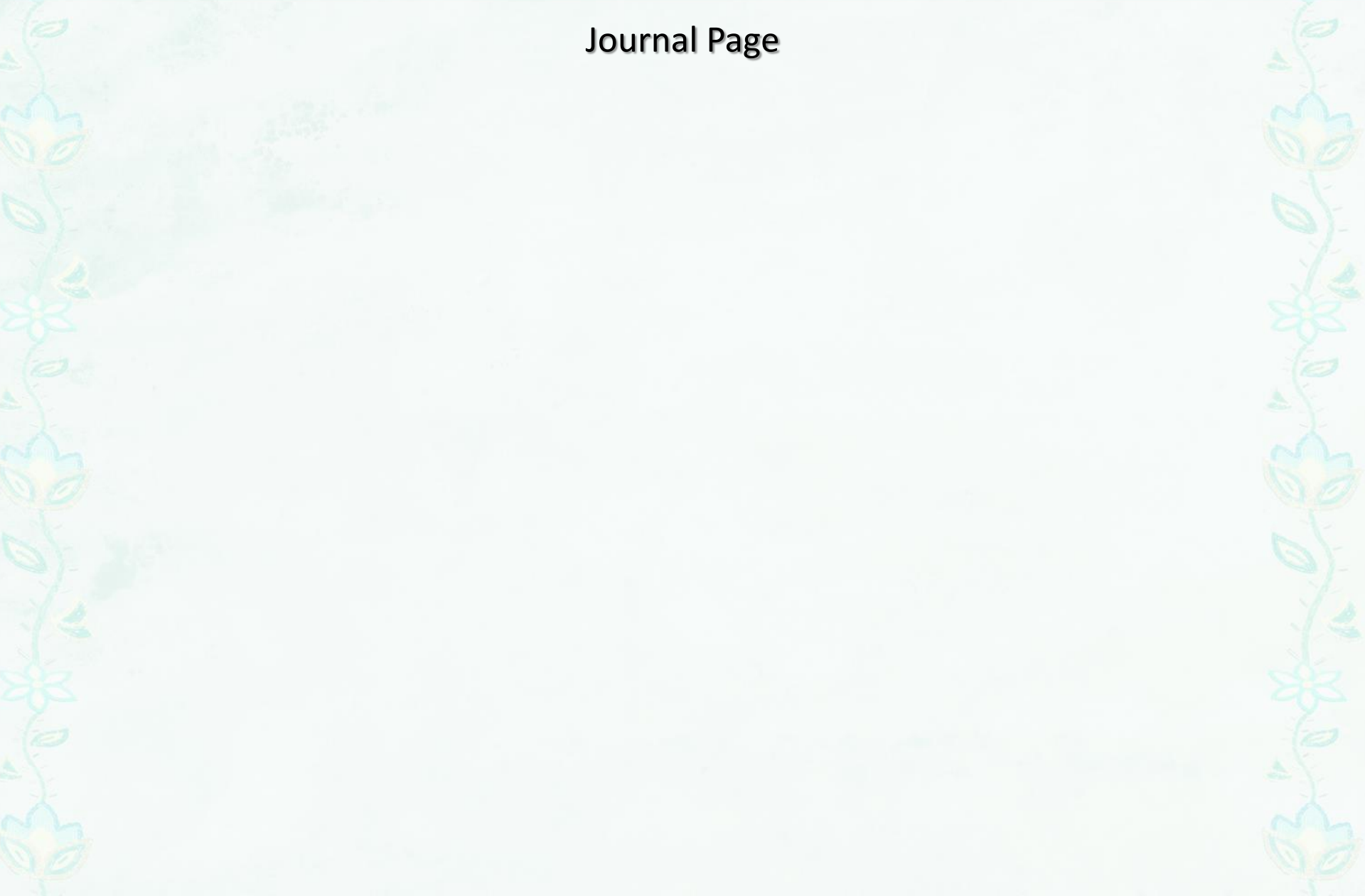




What young girls need to learn:
“how to respect themselves, their body...at parties and stuff, they give themselves away.”



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What does a healthy body look like?

“It can look like anything but as long as ...you’re trying to at least work out and stuff like that...just eating right, like vegetables, apples and stuff like that. You can look like anything”





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Beauty is:
“what’s on the inside”



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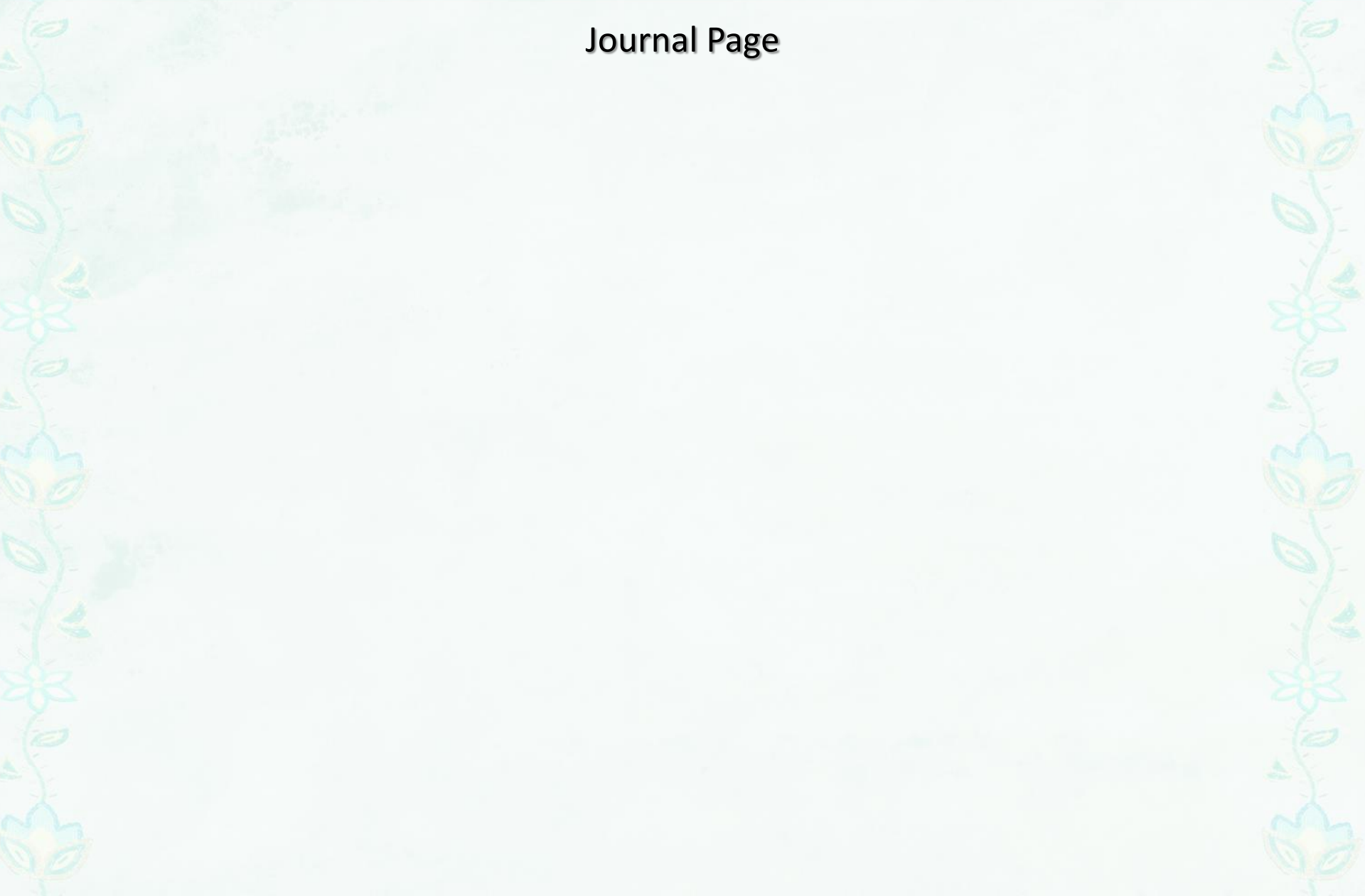


A quote Karryn wrote on her collage: *“stick up for your body and health there is nothing wrong with your body and you know that you’re always beautiful”.*





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Wish for community:
“more things for the weekends, clubs for the weekend so that kids could go there and do stuff, activities, sports like you do in schools...open a stadium rink for weekends so people could go skate.”





Journal Page





*“I like the gym period...
we play basketball”*





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How can we help girls like you?

“Accept...that you can’t be perfect”





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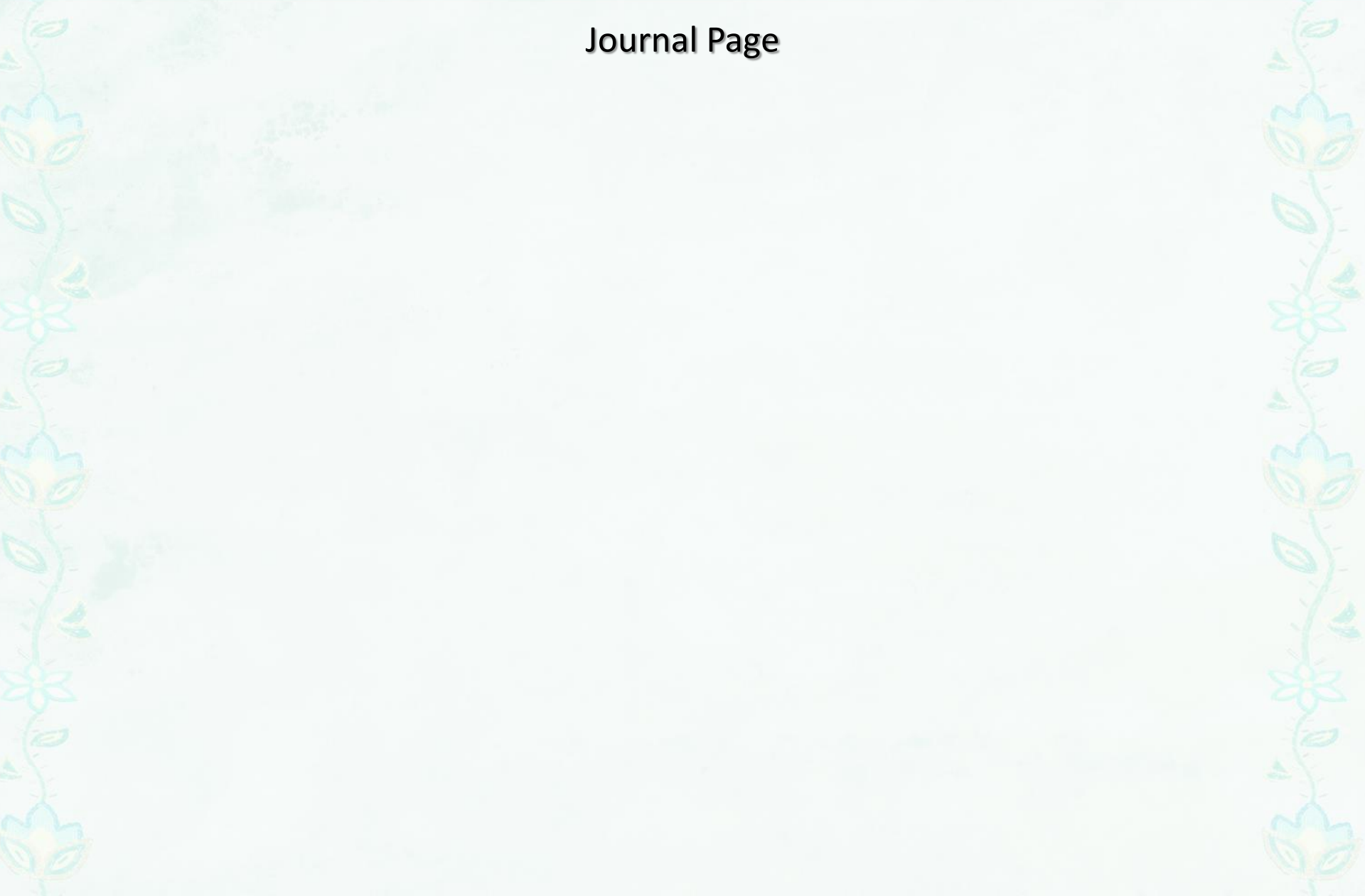




“healthy bananas...because you need to eat healthy to be healthy”



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“walking is energetic and this right here is a family, she’s a home mom or something”





Journal Page



What does a healthy body look like?
"It looks real...nothing's perfect"





Journal Page





*“I like to play volleyball,
soccer, sometimes
basketball...badminton, and
... lacrosse”*



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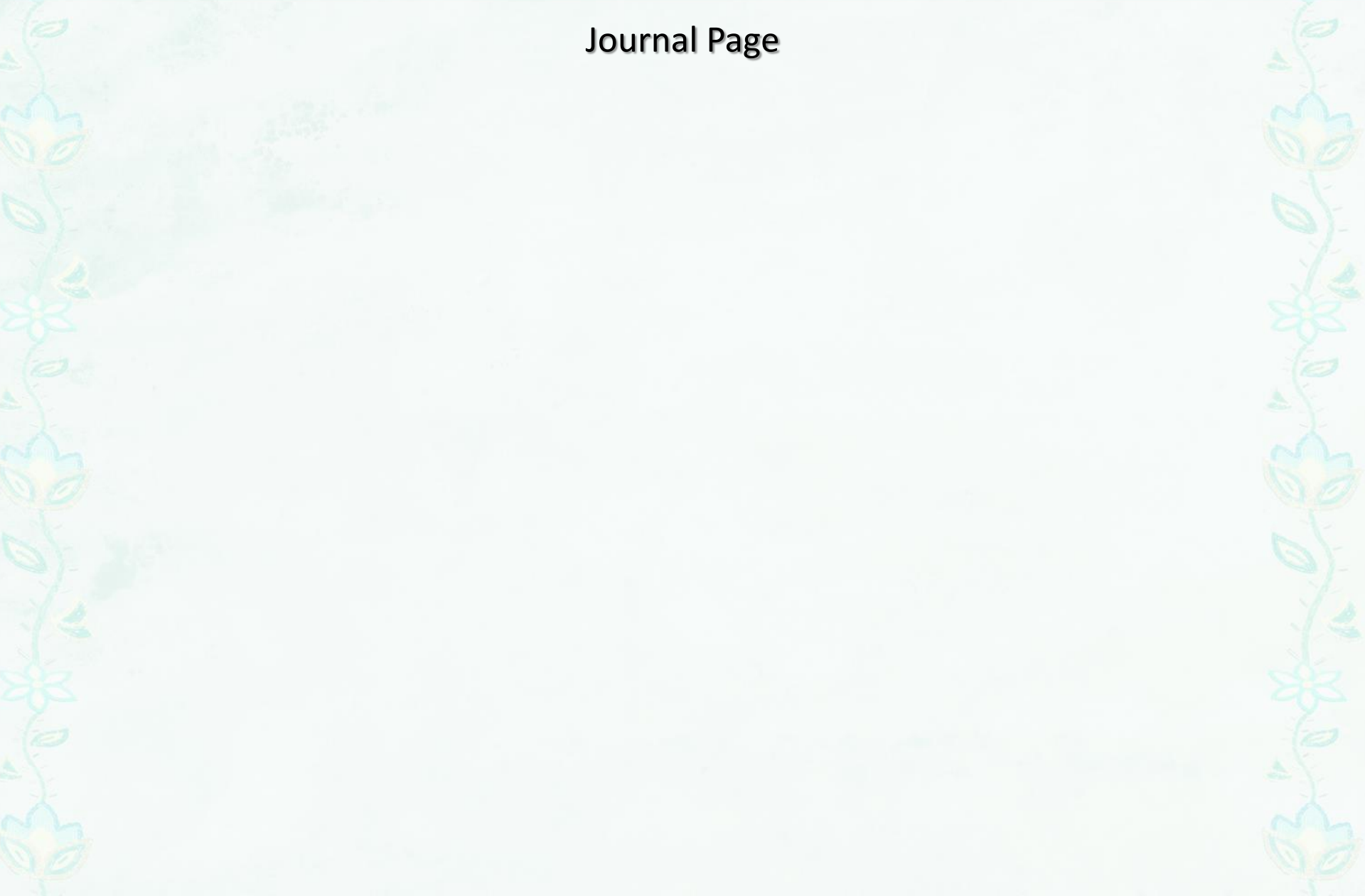


"We ask our elders to pray for us and offer them tobacco or tea...as thanks for them, and we have to do it. Or for healing the body pain and all that. Once a year we have a feast on our graveyard for our passed on relatives and family. I took a picture of the elder because she prayed for us".





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“Stop at a stop sign...stop eating junk...keep exercising...don't stop”



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“I like the one where we’re under the bridge, that’s a beautiful one, the way it looks when I’m under there”.





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“Healthy...looking after myself, cleaning myself, eating right and not taking medication if I’m not sick”

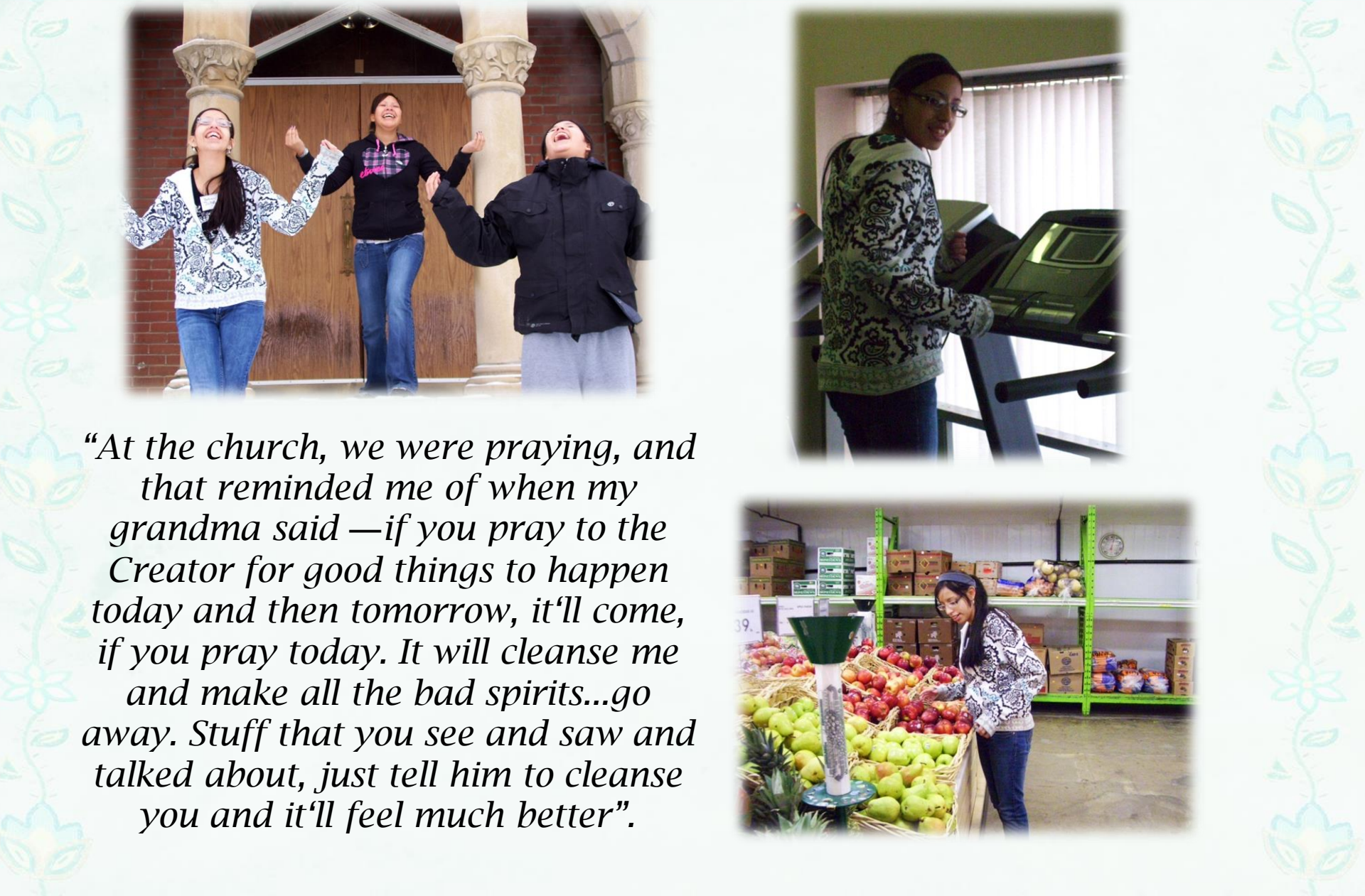


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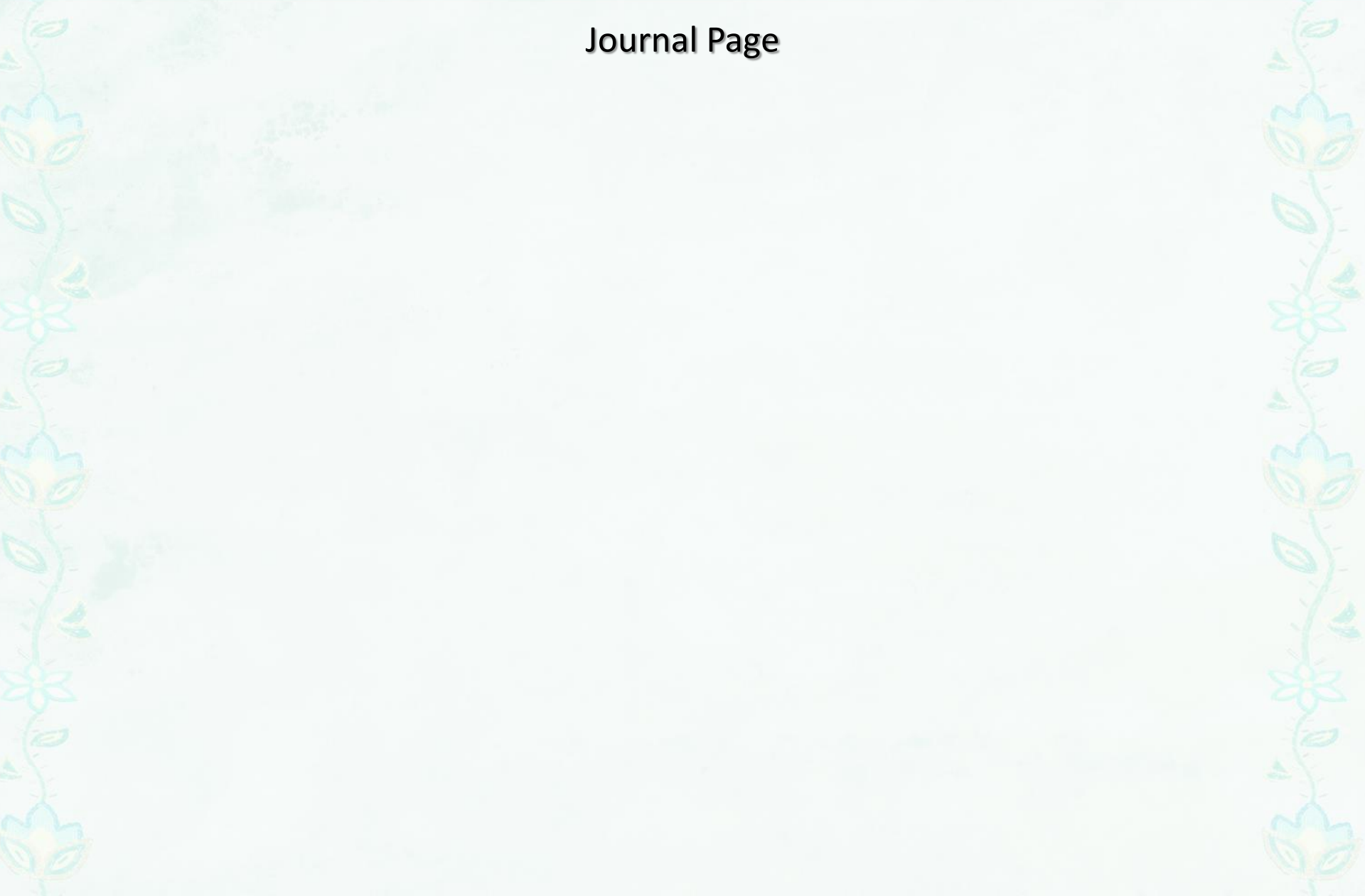


“At the church, we were praying, and that reminded me of when my grandma said —if you pray to the Creator for good things to happen today and then tomorrow, it’ll come, if you pray today. It will cleanse me and make all the bad spirits...go away. Stuff that you see and saw and talked about, just tell him to cleanse you and it’ll feel much better”.





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“I think that its healthy for people to have friends and not just be alone...the way that people treat them I think...just be friends with everybody and even if you don't like the person just try being friends with them because its better that way”.





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Youth Project Researcher



“This project has been such an amazing experience centered on collaboration and relationships, and how I feel is hard to put into words. The twenty beautiful girls that participated in this project were all so amazing, strong and very wise. They taught me so much not only about their experiences of the healthy body, but also the importance of relationships, strength and resilience.

The community youth outreach workers Jessica, Lenore, Kim and Kellie went above and beyond to make sure the events with the girls took place. I will also treasure your enthusiasm and drive. Thank you all for allowing me the pleasure and honour to learn from you”.

Jennifer Shea, PhD
University of Saskatchewan, Sociology



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Youth Project Coordinator



“My experience started off with working with the Jennifer's and finding out what they needed for their photovoice project. It sounded fun and educating from the start and it sure was.

Our job as youth workers was to recruit young girls between the ages of 12-16 years old. The girls that attended the sessions really enjoyed their time with the Jenn's and us workers. Capturing the pictures they did on what they thought healthy images were, was inspirational. Not only the girls but myself learned a lot through this experience.

Being a front line worker and getting to see these beautiful young girls grow into respectful young woman is uplifting to see. Thank you for this wonderful opportunity. Hiy Hiy”

Jessica Rae Atcheynum
Youth Wellness Counsellor



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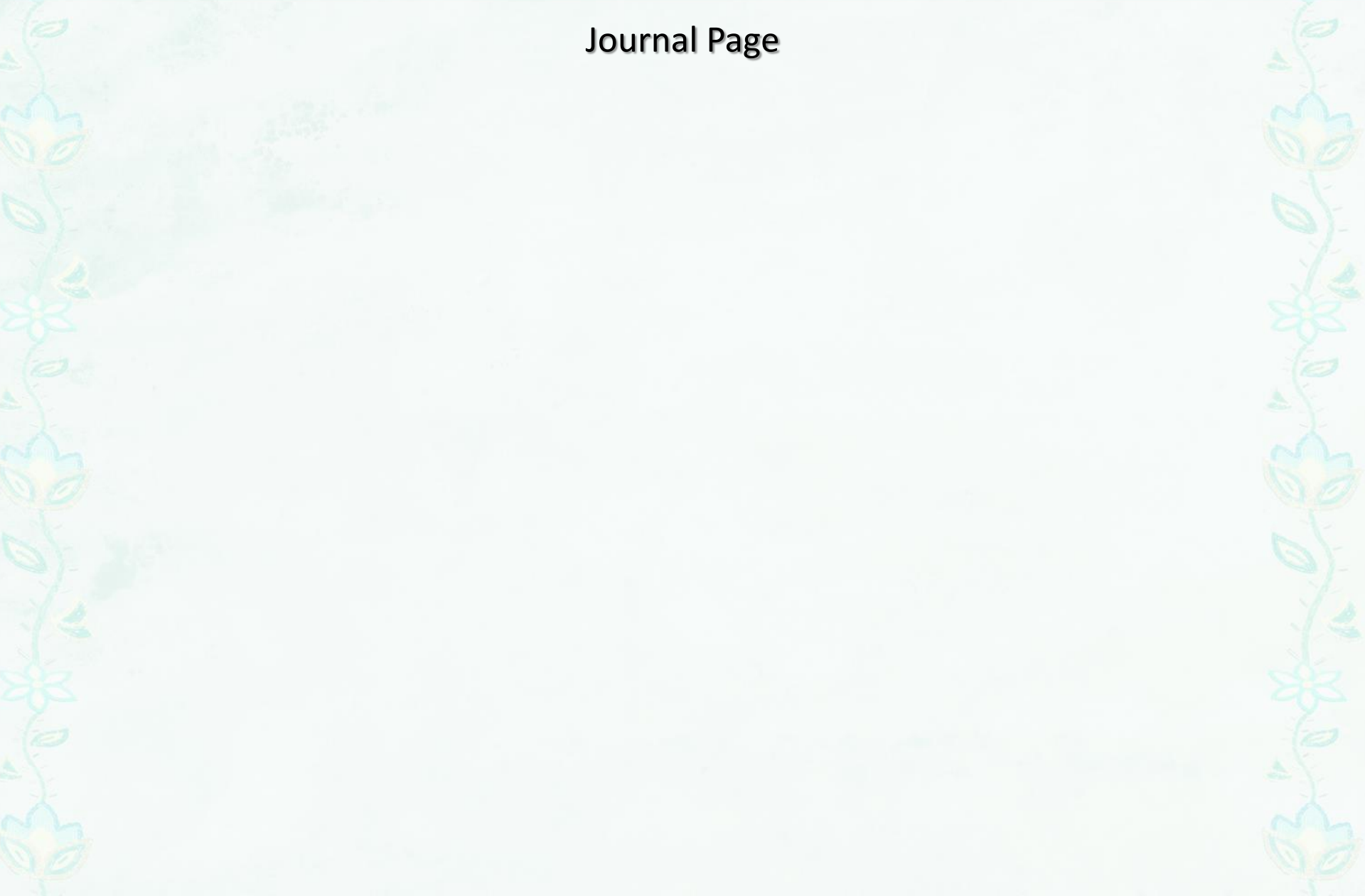
The Gala Evening



“You’re beautiful in your own way”



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Gala Host and Guest Speakers



Janice Kennedy



Grace Okemow



Kelly Wuttunee



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Christine Wahobin



Denise Bird



Lynn Tootosis





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Kimberly Tootosis



Lillian Pooyak

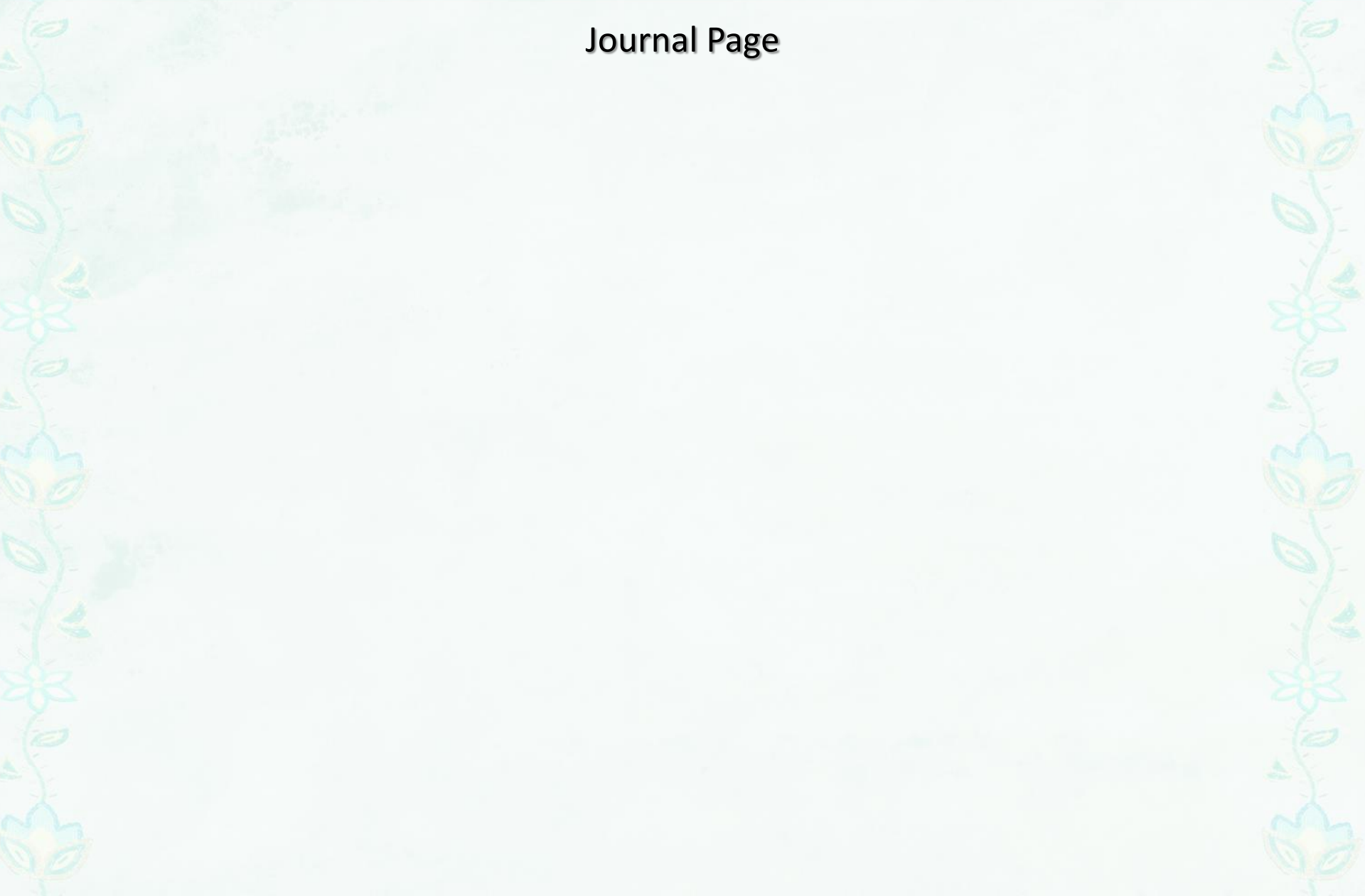


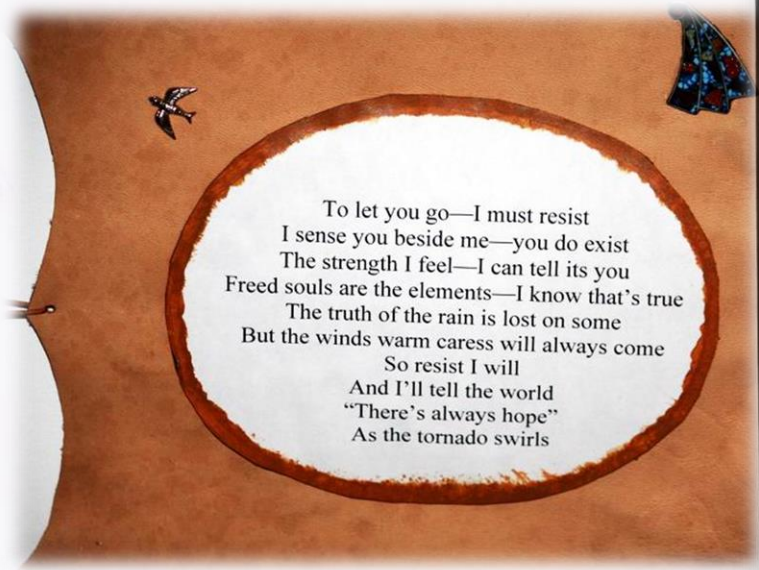
Kaylin Semaganis & Drum Group





Journal Page





To let you go—I must resist
I sense you beside me—you do exist
The strength I feel—I can tell its you
Freed souls are the elements—I know that's true
The truth of the rain is lost on some
But the winds warm caress will always come
So resist I will
And I'll tell the world
"There's always hope"
As the tornado swirls



girls come from unexpected sources
and are everywhere...



Journal Page







Journal Page





"I like to
see
Positive
things
on the
Reserve."
#

You just have
to believe in
yourself -
I did it.
Anyone can
do it.
Education
is
Key!

Taking Steps...

"As a
Community
We need
To Work
more
With
Young
People"

"I think we
need to stay
active in our
self image"
"I think
it's so
healthy to eat
fruit "
everyday"





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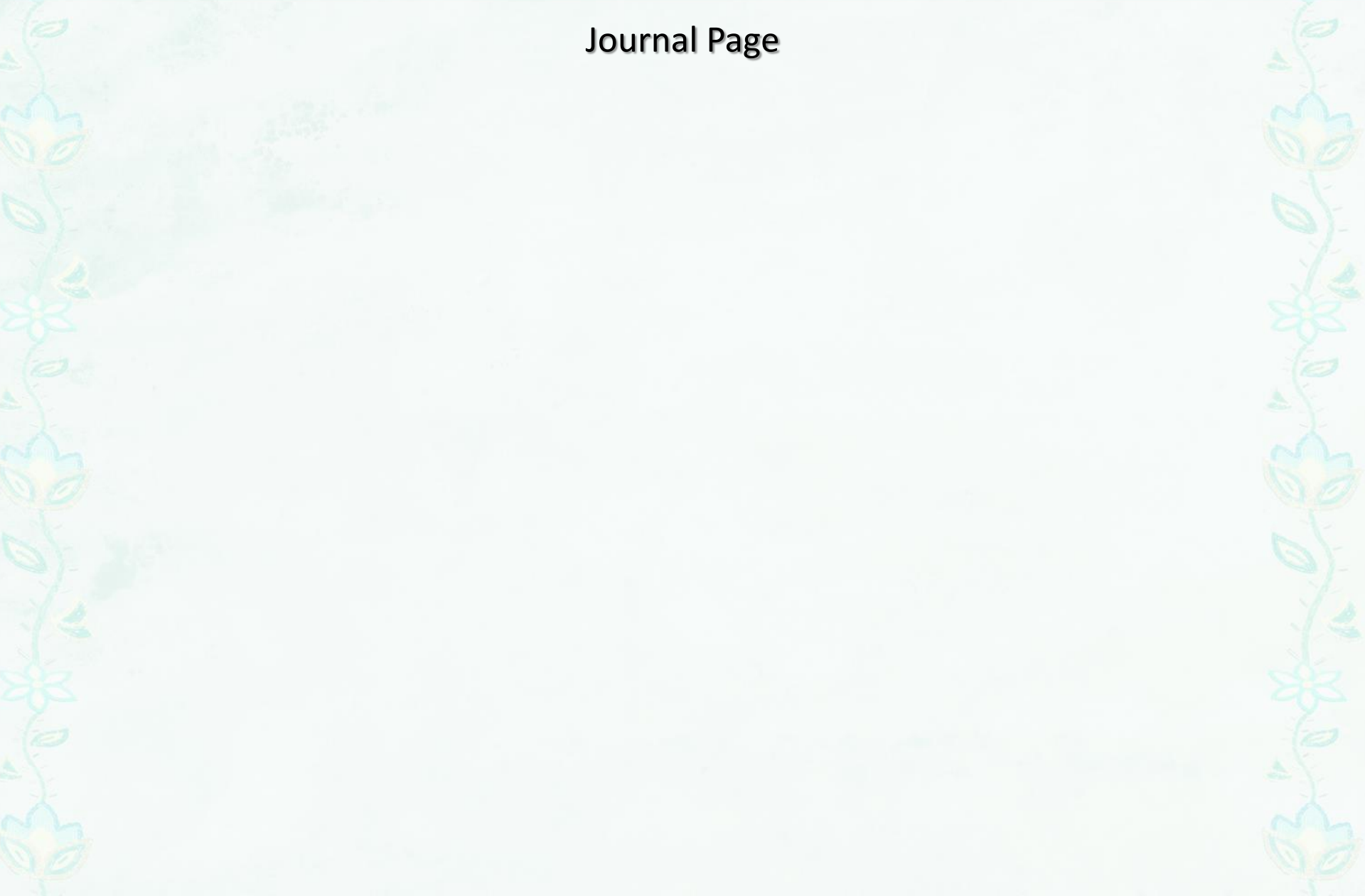


*Healthy Mothers...
Healthy Nations*





Journal Page





Engaging the Community



Community Meetings and
Knowledge Translation Gatherings





Quilts were presented to Jennifer Poudrier and the University of Saskatchewan research team.

Quilts were made by community members: Grace Okemow, late Josephine Frank, Adele Pete, and Gloria Lee



Quilts admired during a knowledge translation meeting with participants at BTC Indian Health Services.



Jennifer Poudrier and Janice Kennedy co-presented a poster surrounding the project at the 35th Annual North American Primary Care Research Group, October 20-23, Vancouver, BC.

Community Advisory Committee



Sitting:

- Mary Wagner (Saulteaux First Nation)

Standing:

- Jean Whitecalf (Sweetgrass First Nation)
- Mary Kam (Little Pine First Nation)
- Mabel Oullette (Red Pheasant First Nation)



BTC Indian Health Services (BTCIHS) Research Team (above):
Patricia Ironstand, Marcella Bird, Susan Hartman, Sandra Favel-Rewerts, Janice Kennedy, Jessilee Kohut, Laurie Ironstand, Erin Stacey, Jacquie Hoppe, Joan Wentworth – Missing: Louise Churchman, Tanya Delorme

Community and University Research Teams

U of S Research Team (below):
Carolyn Brooks, Janice Kennedy, Jan Baxter-Jones, Roanne Thomas-MacLean, Laurie Schimpf, Sylvia Abonyi, Jennifer Poudrier, Jenn Shea – Missing: Karen Chad, Joelena Leader





Acknowledgements



Research Participators:
Battlefords Tribal Council Indian Health Services (BTCIHS) and the University of Saskatchewan

Project Funding:
CIHR and IPHRC

Photojournal Design:
Joelena Leader

Border Images:
Bead work by Lacey Albert
Digital editing by Joelena Leader





Acknowledgements

IPHRC

The Indigenous Peoples' Health Research Centre (IPHRC) is a partnership between the University of Regina, First Nations University of Canada and the University of Saskatchewan, with broad support from various health boards and Aboriginal health organizations. We are supported by the Institute of Aboriginal Peoples' Health (IAPH), an Institute of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR).

Funding provided to IPHRC is primarily focused on building capacity in health research among Aboriginal people, communities and institutions through trainee support, and promoting research into areas of Aboriginal health.