Moving Forward Together: A Health and Wellness Guide

JOURNEYS IN FILM™
educating for global understanding

a film by Paige Bethmann

REMAINING NATIVE



A SHE CARRIES HER HOUSE PRODUCTION IN ASSOCIATION WITH RANDOMGOOD FOUNDATION, THE DENOVO INITIATIVE FEATURING KUTOVEN STEVENS, MISTY STEVENS, DELMAR STEVENS
MUSIC BY KINO BENALLY SOUND DESIGN BY TOM PAUL COLORIST NATACHA IKOLI EDITED BY STEPHANIE KHOURY CINEMATOGRAPHY BY SHAI BEN-DOR, PAIGE BETHMANN
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS RANDY GEBHARDT, CHRISTOPHER GEBHARDT, DAWN BONDER, DANIEL J. CHALFEN, MARCI WISEMAN, ANDREA MEDITCH, BILLY MILLS, TRACY RECTOR, WENDY ETTINGER
PRODUCERS PAIGE BETHMANN, JUDD EHRLICH PRODUCED BY JESSICA EPSTEIN DIRECTED BY PAIGE BETHMANN



MOVING FORWARD TOGETHER: A HEALTH AND WELLNESS GUIDE

Inspired by *Remaining Native*

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FACILITATION GUIDELINES

Filmmakers use immersive storytelling to produce intense thoughts and emotions in the viewer. **Journeys in Film** uses this powerful medium as a springboard for meaningful dialogue around humanity's most pressing issues. In this guide, you will find suggestions for leading productive conversations that broaden perspectives, increase global competency, encourage empathy, and build new paradigms for education.

- When watching a film or having a powerful discussion, normalize taking breaks and exercising bodily autonomy. Acknowledge that conversations around complex topics can be vulnerable, complicated, and challenging. Encourage members to voice and do what is right for them without needing to explain or apologize.
- People do their best when they know what to expect. Start and end your meetings on time.
- Share or co-create your intentions for the meeting.
- Create your space. If possible, share snacks or find other ways to create an inviting, comfortable atmosphere.
- Create a trustworthy space. Maintain confidentiality and only speak to your own experience.
- Minimize distractions while you are together. Silence cell phones and devices so you can give your full attention to the conversation.
- Practice whole-body listening. Listen to words, tone, body language, and the feeling in the atmosphere.
- Acknowledge voices that may be absent. Is there a lived experience that isn't represented in your group? Who are the bridge people who might be able to connect you with other people in your community who might bring new perspectives to the table?
- Adopt an attitude of positive intent. If someone says something that bothers you, assume positive intent and ask for more information.
- Ignite your curiosity around other people's views and opinions. Listen to understand, not to respond. You don't need to agree with others in your group or make it known that you are "right" to have a worthwhile conversation.
- Words matter. Be open to learning and practicing new ways to communicate with others.
- Be clear, direct, and kind in your communication. Nobody benefits when you bottle your opinions.
- Everyone has blind spots and biases; cultivate a space of grace as you enter into new territory together.
- If a conversation gets heated, practice acknowledging the tension, pausing as a group, and taking a collective breath together before diving back in or taking a longer break to reset.
- Privilege your relationships with others over the content or agenda of the meeting. Show each other kindness.
- Create a closing ritual that celebrates the time you've spent together and either gives closure or gives members something to think about before your next meeting.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT



***REMAINING NATIVE* Director and Producer PAIGE BETHMANN**

My grandmother once told me that Creator didn't give us our stories in books. Stories are spoken. Words fall off the tongue and onto the land to seep into the dirt. These stories root down and grow back sprouting as living beings to be cared for and harvested as memories to be passed down again. I think about this relationship in *Remaining Native*. The legacy of Indian boarding schools is ugly. It has thorns. Vines that are suffocating and often spread thickly over the lives of many Native American families. Including my own.

As I remember my grandmother's teachings I now ask myself, "What story do I want to be abundant? What story do I want the next caretaker to harvest and share?" The story of Frank Quinn — escaping an Indian boarding school three times as an eight-year-old boy — is profound, but the legacy he leaves behind spans generations through memories, love, and a deep connection to culture. This story flourishes and through time has synthesized into Ku, his great-grandson, as he stretches towards the sun, preparing to bloom.

About the process

When I started this project in 2021, I was inspired by not only the visuals of Ku running across the desert, but also how Ku as a young person was stepping up to honor his relatives. Like Ku, I am a descendant of a Native American boarding school survivor, and the impact assimilation had on my family was felt heavily. As a team, this film is an opportunity for us to show how love, family, and memory can provide healing while also celebrating Indigenous resilience and forging a path for generational healing.

Upon receiving an invitation to film the first Remembrance Run, I connected with organizers and the Stewart Indian School, including those at the forefront of the Indian Boarding School healing, such as the Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition (NABS), to ensure I had support in this project. When I first met Ku, we spent a long time talking about our shared experiences and the need for healing. Following filming the first run, I decided to relocate from New York City to Reno to be closer to the Stevenses, the larger community, and the land.

On every shoot, I wanted to make sure I was invited in. I have spent a lot of time without the camera, to get to know and understand the lives of the Stevens and others, creating space, trust, and vulnerability. Throughout our filming process, I've reviewed the footage with the Stevens, shared samples, and made sure to have consented when filming cultural moments, community vents, and family time.

INTRODUCTION

The Journey of a Thousand Miles Begins with a Single Breath

Welcome to *Moving Forward Together,* a health, wellness, and physical education guide that accompanies the documentary film *Remaining Native.*

This guide is designed for everyone — from young children discovering the joy of movement through running, to adults seeking mindful exercise, to elders looking for accessible ways to stay active — and specifically for running clubs seeking to add deeper purpose to their miles.

Directed by Paige Bethmann, *Remaining Native* is a documentary film that follows the inspiring journey of Kutoven "Ku" Stevens, a 17-year-old Yerington Paiute teenager. Ku embarked on a 50-mile Remembrance Run across his ancestral lands in Nevada to honor his great-grandfather, Frank Quinn, who ran away from the Stewart Indian School three times, first when he was only eight years old.

Ku's story is not just about a historical event; it is a living, breathing testament to intergenerational resilience, the healing power of movement, and the profound connection between our bodies, our communities, and the land we inhabit.

Safety and Wellness Disclaimer

Every body carries its own unique history, strengths, and limitations. The movements and exercises in this guide are invitations, not requirements. Before engaging in any physical activity, please use your best judgment and listen closely to what your body is telling you today.

Feel free to modify any movement to better suit your abilities or simply choose to rest and reflect instead. If you have pre-existing health conditions, injuries, or concerns, consult with a healthcare or medical professional before beginning any new exercise program.

You are the ultimate expert on your own body. Honor its boundaries, celebrate its capabilities, and move at a pace that feels safe and supportive for you.

How to Use This Guide

Each section contains **facilitator notes** (the "why" and the science behind the activity) and a **participant handout** (the "how-to" instructions to give directly to participants).

Let us lace up our shoes, take a deep breath, and move forward together.



Section 1: Setting a Goal and Moving through Challenges — Navigating Discomfort, Honoring Rest and Recovery, and Knowing When to Stop

Motivated by his family's story and a desire to engage with the past and honor those who suffered at Stewart Indian Boarding School, Ku created the Remembrance Run, a 50-mile run that required not only physical discipline and commitment, but also mental and emotional fortitude. Other experienced athletes joined in the run, but also community members who were not runners. However, all of these individuals shared a commitment and goal, one that would involve discomfort and challenge. At many moments, in preparation and during the race, physical discomfort from the heat and even some aches and pains would be challenges for participants to overcome. When anyone sets a goal, particularly a physical one, there will be moments of discomfort amidst the training process. Putting together a plan that is incremental and appropriate to one's starting physical level can lead to success. One's mental approach and overall mentality is also important to reach the goal. This means that *how* a person experiences physical discomfort and stress is heavily influenced by the stories we tell ourselves while it is happening, which can support success or serve as a barrier.

The Psychology of Exertion and Narrative

In sports psychology, the way an athlete interprets physical stress is known as *cognitive appraisal*. When your muscles burn and your lungs ache, your brain receives those signals and asks a crucial question: "What does this mean?"

The Threat Narrative: If your internal narrative is "This is too hard, I am failing," your brain interprets the physical signals as a threat. It responds by amplifying the sensation of pain and triggering a panic response, making you want to quit.

The Purpose Narrative: If your internal narrative is "This is the feeling of getting stronger; I am safe, this has a purpose," your brain dampens the distress. The physical sensation remains, but the suffering decreases.

By changing the story we attach to our physical sensations, we can fundamentally alter our experience and support ourselves as we seek to reach a training goal.

Ku's Narrative: An Intergenerational Dialogue

In *Remaining Native*, Ku provides a profound example of how narrative can be used to navigate physical suffering. When Ku hits the point in a run where physical and mental discomfort occurs, he does not rely on modern sports mantras. Instead, he places his physical stress and discomfort in dialogue with his grandfather. By imagining his grandfather's journey, Ku achieves several powerful psychological and spiritual shifts:

From isolation to connection: Extreme physical exertion can feel incredibly lonely. By bringing his grandfather into the moment, Ku is no longer running alone. The burden is shared.

Reframing the sensation: The discomfort and physical stress is not a meaningless biological punishment. It transforms into a bridge connecting him to his lineage. It becomes a space where he can commune with his ancestors, seeking their strength and honoring their resilience.

Expanding the "Why": When Ku's discomfort and physical stress is contextualized within his family's history and his grandfather's memory, Ku's motivation transcends his own ego. He is no longer just running for his own fitness or future goals; he is moving as an act of remembrance and continuation.

Reflection for Participants:

When you face a difficult moment in your own training or daily life, who or what can you bring into dialogue with you? What story can you tell yourself that transforms your discomfort into a meaningful experience?

Honoring the Body: When Pain Means "Stop"

In the film, Ku draws on his family's history often as he runs and trains. This is especially important with the challenging 50-mile Remembrance Run. Ku describes it in this way: "I'm going to retrace the footsteps of my great-grandfather. I want to honor him for going through that journey. I want to hurt for him and all my other ancestors." This is an excellent example of hurt because of exertion and strength versus a pain that signals that it is time to stop. In this case, Ku is focused and aware of the challenge the run is for his body and is using narrative and mental resilience to reach his goal and move through the hurt involved in an appropriate physical challenge.

Narrative and mental resilience are important and are powerful tools for pushing through the discomfort of exertion that Ku references in the Remembrance Run. However, they must never be used to ignore the body's warning signals. Part of honoring your body — and honoring the ancestors who gave it to you — is knowing when to rest.

It is vital to distinguish between discomfort or exertion (which you can push through) and injury pain (which means you must stop).

Green Light: The Discomfort of Growth (Use your narrative.)

This is the discomfort of exertion. It is generally safe to use mental strategies, breathing, and narrative to move through these sensations:

- Dull, generalized, and symmetrical burning in the muscles (e.g., both thighs feel heavy and tired).
- Breathlessness or heart rate matches your level of exertion.
- The mental desire to quit simply because the activity feels tedious or physically taxing.
- Fatigue that resolves relatively quickly after you stop moving and catch your breath.

It is important to check in with yourself to assess if deep breaths and mental strategies can support you as you move through physical challenges. Some signs of discomfort are indications of inadequate hydration. Hydration is important in physical training. Keep water nearby as you train. You may notice that a quick water break can support you as you seek to achieve the next phase in a challenging training session.

Red Light: The Warning of Injury (Stop and rest.)

When setting a goal and training physically, it is important to be in tune with one's body and to listen to one's body. Pushing through the wrong kind of discomfort or adopting a mentality that pain is required for physical success can be dangerous and turn a minor injury, which will heal with a brief period of rest, into a major injury, which may take weeks, months, or could never resolve. If you experience any of the following, drop the narrative of "pushing through"; your body is signaling a mechanical failure or injury. Stop immediately, rest, and seek medical advice if necessary:

- Sharp, stabbing, or shooting pain (Unlike the dull ache of fatigue, injury pain is often acute and sudden.)
- Asymmetrical pain (e.g., your right knee hurts sharply, but your left knee feels fine)
- Pain in the joints or bones (Muscle fatigue is normal; joint, ligament, or bone pain is not.)
- Pain that alters your mechanics (If the pain forces you to limp, alter your stride, or compensate with other muscles, you are risking further, more severe injury.)
- Numbness, tingling, or a "popping" sensation
- Pain (not muscle soreness) that lingers after training has been completed and after recovery processes have been completed

The Wisdom of Rest and Recovery

Listening to one's body and learning to connect to the body's needs are important at all times, but particularly so when working toward a specific physical activity goal. Adequate hydration and appropriate nutrition/dietary choices can improve recovery and training results. Electrolytes are important, with attention to added sugar and dyes in some sports drinks. Focusing on water as the primary hydration tool is helpful. Other recovery supports can include honey sticks, electrolyte packages (gummies, drinks in moderation), fruit (especially oranges), and nut butters. Seek out local resources around healthy pre-run and post-run foods and drinks. Many running clubs will have recommendations.

In a culture that often glorifies "grinding" and "pushing past the limit," remember that rest is not a weakness. Rest is the biological phase where you actually grow stronger. Rest is when muscles repair and build strength so that you can improve your stamina. Integrating rest and recovery routines (stretching, foam rolling, massage, heat and/or ice therapy) into your training process can help you reach your goals. If your body flashes a red light, the most resilient, courageous, and wise choice you can make is to stop, listen, and allow yourself to heal.



Section 2: Grounding and Breath — The Foundation of Movement

In *Remaining Native,* Ku's feet pound the pavement in rhythm with his breath. Before we can move safely and effectively, we must first learn to breathe and ground ourselves in our environment.

The Science of Breath

From a physiological standpoint, controlled, deep breathing is one of the most effective ways to regulate the nervous system. When we experience stress — whether from daily life or historical trauma — our sympathetic nervous system (the "fight or flight" response) activates, increasing heart rate and shallowing our breath. In contrast, diaphragmatic breathing (belly breathing) stimulates the vagus nerve, which activates the parasympathetic nervous system (the "rest and digest" state). This lowers cortisol levels, reduces blood pressure, and improves focus. Grounding exercises also improve proprioception (our body's awareness of its position in space), which is crucial for fall prevention in elders and motor development in children.

Goal of this Section:

To teach participants how to use their breath to find calm, center their minds, and prepare their bodies for physical activity.

THE "MOUNTAIN PEAK" BREATH

"I get lost in my thoughts. The miles start to melt away. And I float along the trails."
— Ku Stevens.

Before Ku runs 50 miles, he must take his first breath. This exercise helps you connect your body to the space around you. It can be done standing, sitting in a chair, or lying down.

Instructions

1. **Find Your Roots:** Place your feet flat on the ground. Imagine roots growing from the bottoms of your feet deep into the earth. Notice how the temperature of the air feels on your skin and in your nostrils, and then expand your awareness to the sounds around you.

2. **The Climb (Inhale):** Place your hands on your belly. Breathe in slowly through your nose for a count of **4 seconds**. Feel your belly push out against your hands like a balloon filling with air, and imagine you are filling with a sense of accomplishment as your belly expands.

3. **The Summit (Hold):** Hold that breath gently for a count of **4 seconds**. Imagine standing at the very top of the peak, enjoying the stillness and the view. Feel the energy of the oxygen in your body.

4. **The Descent (Exhale):** Slowly release the breath through your mouth (like blowing through a straw) for a count of **6 seconds**. Imagine your breath gently traveling down the other side of the mountain. Feel your belly deflate, and if you notice tension, allow your shoulders to drop away from your ears.

5. **The Valley (Rest):** Pause at the bottom of your breath for **2 seconds**, resting in the quiet valley before beginning the next climb.

6. **Repeat:** Complete this cycle four times.

Modifications and Notes

- *For young children:* It may be helpful to call this "Balloon Breathing." Children can pretend their belly is a balloon of their favorite color that they are inflating and deflating.
- *For limited mobility:* This can be done entirely from a seated or reclined position or laying down.
- Another modification may include a preference to focus purely on the sensation of the breath rather than the counting if the numbers feel stressful.
- *Contraindications/warnings:* Instruct participants to stop immediately if they feel dizzy, experience chest tightness, or have to gasp at the end of a cycle. While this exercise is safe for many people, breath holding is not recommended for people with uncontrolled high blood pressure, cardiovascular diseases, or panic disorders.

Safety Note

Please use your best judgment before engaging in this activity. Listen to your body, modify your movements as needed, and stop if you feel any pain or discomfort. You are the expert on your own body!



Section 3: Moving Your Way — Body Positivity and Accessibility

Ku's great-grandfather ran because of a clear survival instinct and the need to protect himself and escape the abuses of a Boarding School. Today, Ku runs to thrive, to heal, and to honor his family. This transition highlights a crucial aspect of physical education: Allow your movement to be a celebration of what your body can do, not a punishment for what it cannot.

The Science of Accessible Movement

The human body is designed to move, but "movement" does not have to mean high-intensity exercise. Health science emphasizes the importance of Non-Exercise Activity Thermogenesis (NEAT) — the energy expended for everything we do that is not sleeping, eating, or sports-like exercise. Furthermore, engaging in joyful movement releases endorphins and endocannabinoids, which are natural mood elevators and pain relievers. Regular, accessible movement improves joint lubrication (synovial fluid production), maintains bone density, and fosters neuroplasticity (the brain's ability to form new neural connections).

Promoting body positivity means creating an environment where all body types, ages, and physical abilities are respected. It also requires removing the shame often associated with fitness culture and replacing it with gratitude for the body's aliveness and resilience.

Goal of this Section:

To encourage participants to find joy in movement tailored to their unique abilities and to foster a positive relationship with their physical selves.

"MY BODY'S STORY" MOVEMENT EXPLORATION

Our bodies carry the stories of our ancestors, our past experiences, and our hopes for the future. Today, we move to celebrate the story your body is writing right now.

This activity is about exploring how your body likes to move. There is no "wrong" way to do this.

Instructions

1. **The Warm-Up (Check-In):** Start by wiggling your toes. Move up to your ankles, your knees, your hips, your shoulders, and your neck. Which parts of your body feel stiff today? Which parts feel energetic? Acknowledge these physical sensations without judgment.

2. **The Story Flow (10–15 minutes):**

   - Move around your space (a park, a gym, a classroom, or your living room) at a pace that feels good to you. Do this in whatever way is accessible to you. This can be by walking or from a seated position or in a wheelchair. This flow can involve moving arms, torso, or head. This can also be done lying down and can involve minor movement or wiggles if that is most accessible in your body.

   - As you move, think about a physical trait, ability, or motivation you inherited or are inspired by from someone you love. (E.g., "I have my grandmother's strong hands," or "I have my uncle's steady balance," or "I have fun running with my friends.")

   - Let that thought guide your movement. If you are thinking of strong hands, maybe swing your arms with purpose.

3. **The Gratitude Stretch:** Stop moving and find a comfortable position. Place your hand on your heart. Say silently or out loud: *"Thank you, body, for carrying me through today."*

Modifications

- *For young children:* Play "Animal Ancestors." Have them move like different animals native to your local environment (e.g., soaring like a hawk, stepping quietly like a deer) to teach them about local ecology while they move.

Safety Note

Please use your best judgment before engaging in this activity. Listen to your body, modify your movements as needed, and stop if you feel any pain or discomfort. You are the expert on your own body! If this is being done in a group, please make sure everyone has the space they need to move without harming others.



Section 4: The Remembrance Run — For Running Clubs

Ku Stevens's ultimate goal was to become a Division 1 runner, but his 50-mile Remembrance Run was about much more than an athletic achievement; it was a community event that brought together members of various tribes and allies to run alongside him. Running is a deeply human activity, but it is often treated purely as a metric-driven sport. This section aims to help running clubs and individuals infuse their miles with mindfulness, community, and purpose.

The Science of Running and Community

Aerobic exercise, such as running, induces cardiovascular adaptations: It increases stroke volume (the amount of blood the heart pumps per beat), enhances capillary density in muscles, and improves mitochondrial efficiency. Mentally, running stimulates neurogenesis (the creation of new brain cells) in the hippocampus, which is associated with memory and learning.

When running is done in a community (like a running club), the biopsychosocial benefits multiply. Group exercise increases accountability, reduces feelings of isolation, and triggers the release of oxytocin (the "bonding hormone") alongside standard endorphins. Synchronized movement, such as matching strides or breathing rates with a running partner, has been shown to increase social cohesion and empathy.

Goal of this Section:

To transform a standard group run into a mindful, community-building experience that honors personal and collective histories.

THE "MINDFUL MILES" GROUP RUN

"But out here, there's a history. I think about my great-grandfather... running away over 50 miles." — Ku Stevens

Whether your club is running two miles or 20, this session is designed to shift your focus away from your smartwatch and toward your surroundings and your community.

Instructions

1. **The Dedication Circle (Pre-run):** Before starting your smartwatches, gather in a circle. The run leader will ask everyone to silently dedicate today's run to someone who paved the way for them — an ancestor, a mentor, or a loved one.

2. **The Silent Mile (Mile 1):** Run the first mile of your route in complete silence. Focus entirely on the sound of your feet hitting the pavement, the rhythm of your breath, and the landscape around you. Notice the trees, the architecture, or the hills. Let the landscape become a "living, breathing character" in your run.

3. **The Connection Pacing (Middle Miles):** Break into pairs or small groups. For the next segment of the run, your goal is not to hit a specific pace, but to match the stride and breathing of the person next to you. Engage in a "talk test" pace — you should be able to hold a conversation. Ask your running partner: *"What is a tradition or value that shapes your identity?"* or *"Why is it important for you to run today?"*

4. **The Anchor Sprint (Final Stretch — Optional):** For the last 100 meters, if your body allows, pick up the pace. Imagine you are running toward your future, actively creating the world you want to live in, just as Ku runs toward his future.

5. **The Cool Down:** Walk together for 5–10 minutes. Stretch your calves, quads, and hamstrings while thanking your running partners for sharing the miles.

Modifications

- *For walkers/beginners:* This structure works perfectly for a walking club. The "Silent Mile" becomes a "Silent 10 Minutes."
- *For virtual clubs:* Share your dedications in your club's group chat or app before heading out on your solo runs, and post a photo of the landscape you ran through afterward.

Safety Note

Please use your best judgment before engaging in this activity. Listen to your body, modify your movements as needed, and stop if you feel any pain or discomfort. You are the expert on your own body! Please select running paths that are safe and well lit and away from traffic.



Section 5: Moving in Community — Ecosystems of Health

Filmmaker Paige Bethmann realized that Ku's story needed to be treated as an "eco-system." She couldn't just extract the story; she had to live and work within the community. Health and wellness operate on the exact same principle. We do not exist in a vacuum.

The Science of Social Health

The World Health Organization recognizes that health is multi-faceted and includes physical, mental, and social well-being. Social determinants of health — the conditions in which we are born, grow, live, work, and age — play a massive role in our physical outcomes. Chronic loneliness and social isolation are associated with a significantly increased risk of heart disease, dementia, and premature death. Conversely, participating in group physical activities builds "social capital" and intergenerational resilience. When a community moves together, they build a shared environment of high trust and low stress, which is optimal for both learning and physical recovery.

Goal of this Section:

To provide scalable group activities that foster teamwork, communication, and a sense of belonging among participants of varying ages.

THE "ECOSYSTEM" MOVEMENT CHALLENGE

In an ecosystem, every living thing relies on others to thrive.
Today, we are going to build our own ecosystem through movement.

This activity requires teamwork and communication. It is best done in groups of 4–20 people.

Instructions

1. **The Web of Connection:** Stand in a circle. One person starts with a ball of yarn or string. They state their name and one activity they love to do (e.g., "I'm Sarah, and I love to garden"). They then toss the yarn/string to someone across the circle.

2. **Building the Web:** The next person catches it, states their name and favorite activity, and tosses it to another person. If using yarn, hold onto your piece of the string before tossing the ball, creating a visible web across the circle.

3. **The Balance Challenge:** Once everyone is connected by the yarn (or has received and thrown the ball), the group must work together to complete physical tasks without breaking the web.

   - *Task 1:* Everyone slowly lowers into a squat (or leans forward in their chair), and stands back up together.
   - *Task 2:* Everyone takes three steps to the left, then three steps to the right, moving as a single unit.
   - *Task 3:* Everyone balances on one foot for 10 seconds. If one person wobbles, the whole web feels it. Support each other!

4. **Reflection:** How did it feel to rely on the group? How did your movements affect the person next to you?

Modifications

- *For large groups/gym classes:* Break into several smaller circles.

- *For elders or individuals with limited mobility:* Perform the activities seated. The physical tasks can be raising arms together, tapping toes in unison, or passing a ball or lightweight object around the circle to a specific rhythm (instead of tossing/catching).

Safety Note

Please use your best judgment before engaging in this activity. Listen to your body, modify your movements as needed, and stop if you feel any pain or discomfort. You are the expert on your own body!

SECTION 6: CONNECTING WITH LOCAL INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES



Section 6: Connecting with Local Indigenous Communities

Remaining Native is deeply rooted in the specific geography and history of the Yerington Paiute Tribe and the legacy of the Stewart Indian School in Nevada. However, the legacy of colonization, boarding schools, and Indigenous resilience exists all across North America. True wellness involves understanding the history of the land we move on and building respectful, reciprocal relationships with the original stewards of that land.

The Science of Truth and Healing

Psychological research into intergenerational trauma shows that acknowledgment and truth-telling are vital components of community healing. For non-Indigenous participants, learning about and respecting Indigenous histories fosters empathy and cognitive flexibility. For Indigenous participants, seeing their culture and history respected in community spaces reinforces cultural identity, which is a known protective factor against mental health struggles.

Goal of this Section:

To guide facilitators and participants in taking actionable, respectful steps to connect with and learn from local Indigenous populations.

STEPS TOWARD MEANINGFUL CONNECTION

Ku's run traced the exact path his great-grandfather took. The land you walk, run, and play on today also has a deep history. Here is how you can honor it.

1. Know Whose Land You Are On

Before your next run, walk, or outdoor activity, visit Native-Land.ca (Native Land Digital). Input your address or the location of your local park. Learn the names of the tribes, the languages spoken, and the treaties connected to the place you live.
Many Native American nations (and Indigenous communities throughout the Americas) have strong running traditions and history, predating colonization. Running was necessary for hunting, communication between tribes, and trade. It was also an important aspect of resistance against colonialism, as running messengers played important roles in the Pueblo Revolt of 1680.
For some nations, running has spiritual significance and was an important practice and tradition handed down from generation to generation, building a connection to the land, its pathways, and to the generations that came before. You may also want to research these traditions as part of your running practice.

2. Move with Intention (Land Acknowledgment in Action)

A land acknowledgment is a statement recognizing the Indigenous peoples who are the original stewards of the land. Keep in mind that while land acknowledgements are important and meaningful, words must be paired with action.

- *Action step:* While exercising outdoors, practice environmental stewardship. Pick up trash on your running route, stay on marked trails to prevent erosion, and protect local waterways.

3. Support Indigenous Health and Wellness Initiatives

Indigenous communities have vibrant, ongoing health and athletic traditions. If you are interested in working with an existing Indigenous Nation and/or running program, be mindful regarding your request and their role. If they are being asked to facilitate a run or activity, consider offering an appropriate honorarium or ask about the best way to partner and work together. Also, research existing opportunities near you. Here are some possibilities:

- **Running clubs:** Look into organizations like Wings of America or Running Strong for American Indian Youth, which empower Native youth through running. Consider hosting a fundraiser run for such organizations.
- **Attend public events:** Look for local powwows or cultural gatherings that are open to the public. Attend respectfully as a listener and a learner. These are incredible spaces of community, dance, and intergenerational connection.
- **Museums and cultural centers:** Just as the Stewart Indian School is now a Cultural Center and Museum, look for Indigenous-led cultural centers in your state. Organize a group trip to visit, learn, and pay admission fees that support their work.

4. Listen without Assumptions

If you have the opportunity to connect with Indigenous community members, remember to recognize the assumptions you may bring to an interaction, especially if your ideas of a culture have come through an outdated textbook or a media representation meant to capture your attention without a commitment to accuracy. Indigenous peoples are not a monolith. There are over 570 federally recognized Tribal Nations in the U.S., each with distinct cultures, languages, and experiences. Approach conversations with humility, prioritizing listening and learning.



Circles of Care and Learning

In *Remaining Native*, the viewer comes to see the stories of Ku, his parents, and his great-grandfather as a circular pattern of leaving, returning, and creating home through participating in and building community.

Health and wellness are also circular. We rest, we move, we recover, and we move again. We learn from the past, we practice in the present, and we build strength for the future.

Whether you use this guide to run five miles with a club, to practice deep breathing in your living room, or to play a movement game with children, you have taken a step forward. You have participated in the ecosystem of your own well-being.

Keep moving, keep breathing, and keep learning. Honor the land and your body for the next seven generations to come.

Get Inspired: Indigenous Movement and Wellness Organizations

Healthy Aging in Parks

The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) runs specific initiatives aimed at combating social isolation and fostering intergenerational connectedness through movement. They activate local park systems to offer evidence-based physical activities (like walking groups and Tai Chi) that encourage different generations to exercise together in shared community spaces.

Indigenous Physical Activity and Cultural Circle

The Indigenous Physical Activity and Cultural Circle (IPACC) is a network for Indigenous people who are involved in traditional activities, fitness, recreation, and sports based in Canada.

Indigenous Sport and Wellness Ontario

ISWO empowers Indigenous peoples across Ontario through the transformative power of sport, recreation, and cultural connection. They focus heavily on youth, family, and community engagement, ensuring that Indigenous people have access to wellness in a way that respects tradition and strengthens community ties.

Pow Wow FitNish

Pow Wow FitNish is an Indigenous-owned and -led social enterprise, merging the spirit of traditional Pow Wow dance, uplifting Indigenous storytelling, and modern fitness to nurture holistic well-being, sustain traditional legacies, and strengthen community unity.

Rising Hearts

An Indigenous-led grassroots group devoted to elevating Indigenous voices and promoting intersectional collaborative efforts through movement. Their "Running with Purpose" program supports athletes advocating for social change, and their "Running on Native Lands" initiative partners with race directors to acknowledge and honor the Indigenous lands on which events take place.

Running Strong for American Indian Youth

Running Strong for American Indian Youth's mission is to strengthen Native American youth by creating sustainable generational change and giving families the tools and hope to build better lives.

Well for Culture

Co-founded by Chelsey Luger (Lakota/Anishinaabe) and Thosh Collins (Akimel O'odham/Haudenosaunee), this grassroots initiative focuses on reclaiming active lifestyles, ancestral foodways, and holistic wellness practices.

Wings of America

For nearly four decades, Wings of America has supported Native youth through running by creating opportunities for movement, mentorship, and leadership development. What began as a focus on competitive running has evolved into a broader youth development model that serves Tribal communities across the country.

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One Sky Center is a National Resource Center for American Indian and Alaska Native health,education and research. It is dedicated to quality healthcare across Indian Country.
We R Native is a comprehensive health resource for Native youth, by Native youth, providing content and stories about the topics that matter most to them. The nationwide website includes an “ask your relative” chat feature, articles, and videos on current events, cultural teachings, healthcare, self-care, and much more.



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EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS

Randy Gebhardt, Christopher Gebhardt, Dawn Bonder, Daniel J. Chalfen, Marci Wiseman, Andrea Meditch, Billy Mills, Tracy Rector, Wendy Ettinger

SOUND DESIGN

Tom Paul

MUSIC BY

Kino Benally

CINEMATOGRAPHY BY

Shai Ben-Dor, Paige Bethmann

EDITING BY

Stephanie Khoury

PRODUCERS

Paige Bethmann, P.G.A, Judd Ehrlich

PRODUCED BY

Jessica Epstein, P.G.A

FILM CREDITS

Continued

DIRECTED BY

Paige Bethmann

CONTRIBUTORS

Good Trade Productions

Jessica Epstein

Paige Bethmann

Wings of America

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