

# Running Medicine

## Family, Fun, and Fitness: Growing a Community Wellness Program

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### Introduction:

The Native Health Initiative (NHI) has supported wellness and fitness programs throughout our existence, and made a decision in January 2016 to create the Running Medicine program.

#### Who we are:

Running Medicine is based on the understanding that running and exercise is a beautiful and potent medicine for mind, body, and spirit. Formed as a program of the Native Health Initiative (NHI), our vision is to create a culture of wellness through a supportive, loving community.

#### Our core values for RM:

- Inclusive to all people, all fitness and ability levels
- Provide high quality, individualized coaching to all participants at minimal cost
- Loving community where everyone supports each other's wellness
- Intergenerational – youth, elders and everyone in between!
- Emphasize the elements of “fun” and “play” in all that we do together
- Cultural, mental and spiritual aspects of running/walking will be emphasized
- Sustainability – our goal is zero waste
- Outreach to local communities and efforts to create cultures of wellness

Less than two months from the initial planning meeting, Running Medicine began!



### Diverse goals of our participants

- I want to exercise on a regular basis for the first time in 30 years
- We want our family to become more active together
- I want to train my body to run my first 5k
- I am a hoop dancer and want some conditioning for upcoming competitions
- I am a walker but I want to begin running
- I want to get in better shape for my upcoming Navajo puberty ceremony (Kinaalda)
- I want to begin to live healthier
- I want to see more positive outlets for fitness and wellness in my neighborhood
- I want my children to learn the joy of running
- Desire to see Native American fitness groups in Albuquerque

### Love funds this wellness program!

*NHI runs all of its work with loving service as the primary funding source. Usually 90-99% of our total funding is loving service.*

#### Loving Service Funding in 2016 = 8,163 LOVING SERVICE HOURS!!!!

(To put that in perspective, that is equivalent to having a 4 people working full time (40 hours a week) for 12 months!!!!)

*Example: Summer 2016 season*

*Coaches - 10 leaders x 5 hours a week x 12 weeks = 600 loving service hours*

*Participants – 40 per practice x 23 practices x 1.5 hours per practice = 1380 loving service hours*

*Partners – 10 partners x 5 hours each = 50 loving service hours*

*TOTAL: 2,030 HOURS OF LOVING SERVICE*

#### Monetary Funding in 2016 = \$13,790

\* Note: Our goal was to make RM a low-cost program with the majority of funding coming outside of registration fees. How did we do? Registrations were kept low (A participant who did all 3 seasons would have paid a grand total of \$30 for the year. As a total, 74% of our funding came sources beyond registration fees (e.g. donations, support from businesses).



**RUNNING MEDICINE FALL 2016**  
BUILDING COMMUNITY THROUGH RUNNING

### Outcomes:

- **Large numbers reached**  
300+ people attended practices in 2016, the first year of RM
- **Reaching families that are not already exercising**  
50% of our participants reported exercising 0-2 days a week as a family before Running Medicine
- **Attendance continued to rise**  
Attendance at practices continued to increase, from an average of 35 people per practice in Spring 2016 to an average of 70 people in early fall 2016 and increasing further to 90 people per practice in late fall 2016
- **Creating a unique balance**  
92% were happy with the amount of emphasis RM spent on emotional, mental, spiritual and cultural aspects of running/walking
- **Contributing to a larger culture of wellness**
  - Running Medicine Grant Program
  - Gratitude Run/Walk on Thanksgiving
  - Supporting local wellness efforts and events (approx. 5 per month currently)

### A Web of Partners Supports RM!

NHI's work always involves an array of partners, and this program was no different. In 2016, we had 65 partners that contributed to the program:

- Indigenous Nations
- Health Organizations (including clinics)
- Community Organizations
- Fitness/wellness Organizations
- \* Schools
- \* Media
- \* Businesses

### Lessons Learned:

- Communal aspects of exercise programs are a key aspect to helping individuals and families get motivated to begin exercising
- Communal ownership/leadership model works well for organizing fitness programs
- Inter-generational approach has been very successful in getting families together for exercise
- Running/walking is a low-cost activity that can reduce barriers to families being able to afford fitness programs
- Love is an effective tool for funding wellness programs, particularly in Indigenous Communities

### Next steps:

- Work on ways to implement nutrition, stress relief and other elements of wellness into the program
- Continue to contribute to creating a culture of wellness in Albuquerque and in our Indigenous communities
- Keep having fun!!!!

*Come join us to see for yourself!!! RM Celebrations are Tues/Thurs/Sat  
For More information, Email us (runningmedicineabq@gmail.com), visit  
Running Medicine on Facebook, or visit our NHI Website: [www.loving-service.us](http://www.loving-service.us)*

