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COMBINING INDIGENOUS TEACHINGS WITH HEALTH AND WELLNESS PRACTICES

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THE SEVEN GRANDFATHER TEACHINGS:
COMBINING INDIGENOUS TEACHINGS WITH HEALTH AND WELLNESS PRACTICES

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Abstract

The Seven Grandfather Teachings, (Wisdom, Love, Respect, Bravery, Honesty, Humility, and Truth), are traditional Anishinaabe cultural teachings that promote living a good life (Kading et al. 2019). Using these and other Indigenous methodologies, this thesis describes a framework or system that allows people to build a culturally respectful health or wellness journey. I argue that health and wellness practices can be a path to reclaiming the connection between our bodies, minds, and culture. While settler colonialism and the commercialization of the health and wellness industry create health inequities, we can disrupt this cycle by combining Indigenous knowledge, traditional movement practices, and modern health and wellness practices. Part of disrupting health inequities requires us to examine how we can increase accessibility for people of different levels of wealth, experience, and ability. In this thesis, I discuss ways that tribes and individuals can lower barriers of entry to health and wellness practices. By creating wellness centers, we can create spaces that we can move, learn, and conduct ceremonies in.

The core of this thesis is the use of scalability to create sustainability while reconnecting with our bodies, minds, and culture. By creating a framework that is rooted in cultural teachings, we can create a system that is adaptable to individuals and tribal communities alike. I will give examples of how to create your own wellness plans using the Seven Grandfather Teachings. I also provide a layered approach to creating your own wellness centers.

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Introduction

“The first gift was wisdom, which would allow people to cherish the knowledge they attained. The second was love, because to know it was to know peace. Then, to honor all of the Creation, they gave respect. Bravery in the face of the foe was next, then honesty to face a difficult situation with pride. Humility to know one's place in the expanse of the Creation came next, while the gift of truth to know and understand all of those things came last.”

-The Citizen Potawatomi Nation (2026)

At the root of Anishinaabe culture there is always a quest to live a good life or walk a good path (Kading et al. 2019). The Seven Grandfather Teachings were gifts to humanity to help guide us to walking a good path (Citizen Potawatomi Nation 2026). Walking a good path is an excellent approach to health and wellness because it never asks you to do more than you are capable of (Kading et al. 2019). The good path only asks that you do what is right even if that requires taking care of yourself so that you can better take care of others (Kading et al. 2019).

However, the health and wellness industry has developed barriers of entry while prioritizing “physical appearance, consumerism, and youth” (Luger and Collins 2022). Planning and implementing health and wellness plans for Indigenous communities can be challenging due to barriers of entry to facilities and equipment (Pelletier et al. 2017). Considering the socioeconomic and historical factors like colonization, the residential school system, and the capitalist nature of the health and wellness industry, it is no wonder there is such a large health disparity between Indigenous communities and the average population (Pelletier et al. 2017). For Indigenous communities' health and wellness was displayed through the connection between themselves, others, and the land; physical activity was synonymous with their culture (Tang et al. 2016).

My goal for this research is to create a framework using the Seven Grandfather Teachings that Indigenous people and communities can take to form their own health and wellness plans. Using the Seven Grandfather Teachings, I hope to show how Indigenous peoples can reclaim the connection

between themselves, their culture, and their health. Over the centuries, there have always been people who, whether well-intentioned or not, sought to profit from others who only seek to better themselves (Shephard 2018). From “Natural Wellness” businesses who declare themselves as a place for all while ignoring needs of “bodies of difference” (Bailey et al. 2023, 31) to brands like Nike who pull their products off their shelves every ten months to maximize profits (McDougall 2009). These barriers put in place and amplified by the ongoing process of colonial violence continue to contribute to preventable health inequities (Pelletier et al. 2017).

There is a need for health and wellness programs that develop long-term positive attitudes towards health and wellness (Shephard 2018). This is best achieved by flexible and enjoyable programs that make people confident in themselves and are easily applicable to daily life (Shephard 2018). My framework that combines the Seven Grandfather Teachings and what I have learned about building health and wellness plans can serve as a flexible and scalable tool for others to create their own health and wellness plans.

In this thesis, I outline a brief history of health and wellness and share a framework to improve the health and wellness of Indigenous communities. I start in the first chapter by discussing pre- and post-colonial health and wellness practices in North America. In the second chapter, I will go over how the onslaught of colonization has disconnected Indigenous peoples from their bodies and why movement can act as a healing journey to reconnect Indigenous bodies and minds. Then I will go into how I framed my research through four methodologies, *Indigenous Futurity*, *Keeoukaywin*, *the Hollow Bone Theory*, and *To the Fence and Back*. My fourth chapter will go through my experiences interacting with each of the Seven Grandfather Teachings. The bulk of my thesis will be explaining each of the Seven Grandfather Teachings and how they connect and fit into a health and wellness plan. I will then move on to answering what an Indigenous fitness space could look like. I will share guidelines and templates people can use to start applying the Seven Grandfather Teachings. The last chapter of my thesis will share a few journal prompts and a mind mapping exercise you can use to track your progress. At the end of all of this I hope to have given you enough information for you to be comfortable enough to start your wellness journey.

As importantly, I hope to have given you enough information for you to be comfortable Indigenizing your wellness journey within your own communities' frameworks.

Background

“Oral tradition says that our people often lived to older than 100 years, and... could walk, sit comfortably on the ground, stand up without assistance, and generally maintain a level of mobility, strength, and grit that is uncommon in elders today” (Luger and Collins 2022, 41). Our ancestors’ daily life consisted of constant movement; movement was deeply integral to pre-colonial life. Our ceremonies involved dancing, our survival depended upon how well we moved, games were not just extracurricular activities, they were times of bonding and ways to join generations. Games were also methods to improve their ability to perform daily tasks by training certain physical abilities such as strength, flexibility, and endurance (Shephard 2018; Contreras 2019). The Tarahumara, a tribe of legendary runners, plays a game called Rarajipari that lasts up to forty-eight hours (McDougall 2009). McDougall (2009) recalls how a member of the Tarahumara tribe describes Rarajipari, “We say the rarajipari is the game of life. You never know how hard it will be. You never know when it will end. You can’t control it. You can only adjust” (McDougall 2009, 41). The Aztecs and Mayans both played variants of the Meso-American ball game, Tlachtli (Shephard 2018). Inuit tribes have a variety of traditional games that are rooted in athleticism and strength (Contreras 2019). With games, play, and sports being an integral part of Indigenous life there are several accounts of both Native Men and Women being both physically fit and having visible amounts of muscle mass while also having low levels of body fat from doing their daily chores (Mihesuah 2020).

These games strengthened the connection between Indigenous peoples and their bodies, to the land, and to each other. Then for 500 years Indigenous peoples have endured war, conquest, rape, genocide, cultural erasure, and “these depredations have disconnected them from both their land and their own bodies” (Deer 2015, 18). Deer (2015, 20) uses rape as a metaphor for colonization, writing, “The damage to self and spirit that rapists cause has some of the same features that colonial governments perpetrate against entire nations.” This process through which colonial entities continue to harm and exploit tribal lands and communities is the definition of settler colonialism (Luger and Collins 2022).

Settler colonialism also continues to create systems that allow health inequities to exist and prevent tribal communities from achieving total health and wellness (Luger and Collins 2022).

While the enforcement and promotion of diet and weight loss culture is a tool to keep average citizens physically weak (Johnston 2025) there have been horrendous acts perpetrated to keep Indigenous communities from being fully sovereign and strong. In Chester Nez's memoir, *Code Talker* (2011), Nez recounts a story from his childhood when the agents from the Bureau of Indian Affairs came to the Navajo Reservation and slaughtered the sheep population from 1.6 million to 400,000. While the sheep slaughter was the result of a New Deal effort to reduce overgrazing, it was also to create a huge national park on Navajo land (Nez 2011). However, this massacre also turned into a way to keep Nez's (2011) community in a weakened state, but it also brought other issues to the surface. Nez (2011) recalls that after the reduction of the sheep population there was an unintentional hierarchy that formed and caused conflict between neighbors and friends. There was also a negative effect on the family's self-respect as they felt powerless and unable to protect what they had worked so hard to build (Nez 2011). Nez (2011) further described the impact of this event by saying that it is the second worst event to have happened to the Navajo, only second to their removal story.

Health inequities not only exist in food sovereignty but also in the access Indigenous communities have to physical education and the ability to move. Our modern concept of working out to improve our health comes from a group of socialist-minded Germans called the Turners (Johnston 2025). The Turners saw working out not only to improve health but also as a method of strengthening the personal sovereignty of the average citizen (Johnston 2025). When the Turners immigrated to the United States in 1848, they became advocates for accessible physical education, abolition, and socialism (Johnston 2025). By the 1900's Christian, capitalist, and fascist propagandists got ahold of physical fitness and turned it into a "tradition" that served them making "subservience to power" the only reason to have personal strength (Johnston 2025, 126). Using the Turners' history of unionization and rebellion to oppression as evidence it became clear to capitalists that keeping "equitable physical education" away from average citizens, so they do not feel "enabled to stand with each other against oppression" (Johnston

2025,126). Even now with the rise in popularity of GLP-1 medications like Ozempic, there is an over commercialization of these medications that further increases health disparities set up by capitalists and the colonial world (Ngokila 2024).

Now that physical activity is separate from the communal and ceremonial practices that was prevalent in precolonial life Indigenous communities must reclaim this connection. Stickball and Lacrosse were games centered in community and culture (Vennum 1994). Stories described how the game was played; dances and ceremonies prepared the players' bodies and spirits, newborn babies were given sticks, and the best players were laid to rest with their sticks (Vennum 1994). Stickball and Lacrosse are the ultimate metaphor for the connection between Indigenous peoples and movement. Reclaiming this connection between movement, culture, and our bodies is important in strengthening tribal sovereignty. This process of reclamation starts with tribal members starting their own healing journeys that involves forgiveness and “feeling worthy enough to embrace new thoughts and behaviors” (Joseph 2023,99). Healing journeys are not an act of self-indulgence; it is an act of self-preservation and thus, an act of political warfare (Luger and Collins 2022).

Theory

Reclaiming the levels of health and total wellbeing that our ancestors experienced (Luger and Collins 2022) is in direct opposition to the barriers of entry and systems set up by the colonial engine (Johnston 2025). The rejection of those barriers and system makes health and wellness an act of political warfare (Luger and Collins 2022). Deer (2015, 18) writes, “It is impossible to have a truly self-determining nation when its members have been denied self-determination over their own bodies.” Albert White Hat (, Lakota), said “the only possession we have, that we can claim, is our body” (Luger and Collins 2022, 38). Returning to the past levels of health and wellness of our ancestors involves increasing personal sovereignty by reclaiming the connection between Indigenous people and their bodies, culture, and language. Thus, by increasing the personal sovereignty of Indigenous peoples we can also increase the sovereignty of the entire Indigenous community.

Increasing our personal sovereignty starts with reintegrating movement into our daily lives. This reintegration begins with the re-conceptualization of our relationship movement (Bailey et al. 2023). We need to view movement as a method of reconnecting to ourselves, our communities, and our tribal lands (Bailey et al. 2023). Reclaiming your body involves your understanding of what it means to be strong, Indigenous, and healthy on your own terms (Metekingi 2025). Reclaiming our self-determination is not just about working out but it is a way to “restore what colonization has attempted to sever, the connection between body, land, knowledge, and identity (Metekingi 2025, 23).

Reconnecting with our bodies requires us to be in conversation with our bodies and learning how to move and continuing our health and wellness journeys allow us to reconnect with our bodies. When performing an exercise, be aware of the muscles that are working, try and feel them contract and relax and when you can feel this you have made the connection between your body and mind (Schwarzenegger 1993). Schwarzenegger (1993, 192) also says, “Somehow you will have to trust your body to tell you when you are overtraining.” Luger and Collins (2022, 57) have talked about using different movements to help “relieve stress, to bring peace, or to release anger.”

Reconnecting to our bodies is only one part of increasing our personal sovereignty we also must reconnect to our cultures and languages. While Western culture divides and compartmentalizes learning as a mental pursuit and exercise as an entirely physical practice (Luger and Collins 2022). We need to let movement be a form of storytelling, of connection, and of cultural strength just as the Hopi used running to map land and form bonds between tribal members (Sakiestewa Gilbert 2018). Already Indigenous communities are starting to reclaim their traditional games like Tlachtli (Aguilar-Moreno 2016) while other Indigenous communities, like the Toronto O’Odham Nation have kept their stick and ball game, Tóka, alive (SFA Staff 2014).

Reconnecting to language starts with the community itself (Wiltshire et al. 2022). Physically active elders show tribal youth how to approach health and wellness (Tang et al. 2016) but including elders can help spread cultural teachings by allowing elders to teach stories while joining in movement practices with tribal youth (Paul et al. 2019). Language loss is a result of interrupted intergenerational transmission which is a result of the ongoing process of settler colonization (Wiltshire et al. 2022). Starrett (2015) discusses how effective training systems and programs require a common language, and this can build into cultural revitalization efforts by including tribal specific language to your health and wellness program. The traditional Haudenosaunee words for one, two, and three (én:ska, tékeni, and áshen) are deeply tied to their creation story so every time they “count to three in their own language, they reaffirm their bond to Creation” (Kimmerer 2013, 258). Integrating language into the health and wellness plans of Indigenous people allows language revitalization to exist in everyday use which prioritizes effective communication over grammatical correctness and can make community members feel safe and increase their confidence and self-esteem. (Wiltshire et al. 2022).

Language learning can increase personal and tribal sovereignty (Wiltshire et al. 2022). Reclaiming self-determination over our bodies starts with a healing journey to reclaim the connection between movement, culture, and our bodies which is important in improving the health of Indigenous communities while strengthening our sovereignty. Just as the Turners saw everyone as “a link the chain” (Johnston 2025,107) tribes see powwow dancers as a part of the whole, linked to the heartbeat of the

drum and the tribe. Strengthening each link in the chain of an Indigenous community by helping the community members reconnect with their bodies, culture, and language will contribute to and increase the sovereignty of the Indigenous community.

Methodology

When approaching this research, I first wanted to center my research around three concepts I learned from Margaret Kovach's "Emerging From the Margins: Indigenous Methodologies," (2008) *Knowledge is Knowledge, Respect the Community, and Write to be accessible*. Knowledge is Knowledge is the idea that Indigenous knowledge, Indigenous ways of knowing, oral stories, etc., are all valid forms of knowledge, even if Western academia does not confirm them (Kovach 2008). The second point, Respect the Community, involves researching, working with, or discussing Indigenous communities, giving them respect, and developing relationships with them is not just the obligation of the researcher but the responsibility of the researcher (Kovach 2008). The final and most vital point to my research is the importance of making sure your research is accessible to anyone (Kovach 2008). Building upon the base from Kovach's three ideas I used four methodologies to frame the rest of my research, Indigenous Futurity, Keeoukaywin (The Visiting Way), the Hollow Bone Theory, and *To the Fence and Back*. I used these methodologies to help ground my research in accessibility and scalability.

Indigenous Futurity is the act of applying the theories and practices that activate our ancestors' unrealized possibilities, the act of living out futures we wish for in a contemporary moment, and the creation of the conditions for these futures (Harjo 2019). While he attended Carlisle Indian Industrial School as a prisoner far removed from his homelands; he used his prowess as a runner to resist the assimilationist practices that laid the foundation of boarding schools (Sakiestewa Gilbert 2018). Over the course of interment at Carlisle, Tewanima competed for the track team and eventually would represent the United States and his tribe on the world stage at the Olympics (Sakiestewa Gilbert 2018). Tewanima never ran to glorify Carlisle, he ran to escape the confines of the school grounds and to increase his own personal sovereignty while continuing the Hopi practice of running to connect the land and his relatives (Sakiestewa Gilbert 2018). Tewanima used the Hopi tradition of running to connect with his ancestors and relatives simultaneously existing in the past, present, and future escaping the prison of Carlisle which intentionally tried to push his indigeneity into the past and erase it from history altogether. I use Indigenous Futurity as a framework to apply the Seven Grandfather Teachings to my present knowledge

about exercise programming in the hope to help future generations on their health and wellness journeys (Harjo 2019). Thus, tying the past, present, and future together, while tying culture, movement, and health and wellness together.

In the context of my research and thesis, conversation has been the web that ties my thoughts together. Janice Cindy Gaudet (2019) called this “Keeoukaywin” or “The Visiting Way.” Keeoukaywin methodology holds relationality at its core, recentering Metis and Cree ways of being and presenting a methodology that holds space for *milo pimatisiwin* (the good life), living and being well in relation (Gaudet 2019). Using Keeoukaywin as way to tie my thoughts together is also like how I envision movement reconnecting Indigenous people with their culture and community. Just as Hopi elders and uncles teach younger tribal members how to run the Hopi way, they are in constant conversation with each other (Sakiestewa Gilbert 2018) and I view my research as being in constant conversation with my experiences while trying to escape traditional research methods and methodologies. Indigenous research methods and methodologies rely on what is. What is the community feeling? What do their oral traditions say? What are the troubles they are facing today? How have they stayed resilient? Gaudet (2019, 55) states that “Keeoukaywin promotes self-recognition from within.” I have used Keeoukaywin to tie my research together in a meaningful way that centers community and Anishinaabe values (Gaudet 2019).

Luger and Collins (2022) cite the Hollow Bone teaching from Lakota Medicine Man and Sun Dance Chief, Frank Fools Crow, that they named the Hollow Bone Theory. Luger and Collins (2022) describe The Hollow Bone teaching emphasizes the importance of remaining open to learning while acknowledging the responsibility you have to pass it on from generation to generation. I am using the Hollow Bone teaching as methodology because while conducting my research I want to remain open to any idea and learn from any experience while acknowledging the responsibility to pass knowledge on to future generations (Luger and Collins 2022). The Hollow Bone teaching also applies to our health wellness journeys. While on your health and wellness journey, it is important to be open to learning from others and yourself. Remaining open to growth is what will allow you to develop your own path and your

own health and wellness plan. I have used the Hollow Bone teaching in my research and in my life to gather information and knowledge from every source possible.

My last methodology comes from Matthew Sakiestewa Gilbert's book, *Hopi Runners: Crossing the Terrain between Indian and American* (2018). While writing this book, Gilbert (2018) had the opportunity to run with fellow Hopi, Victor Masayesva Jr., a Hopi filmmaker and farmer. During this run Gilbert (2018, 4) asked Masayesva Jr. some questions one of which was, "So, when you run back home, how many miles do you usually cover?" Masayesva Jr. replied, "Oh, you know to the fence and back" (Sakiestewa Gilbert 2018, 4). This answer frustrated Gilbert (2018) at first but as he unpacked *To the Fence and Back* Gilbert realized that it encapsulated the core values of Hopi running. Running to the Hopi is not just a way to change their bodies, whether aesthetically or for health benefits; it is their method of connecting with the land and their relatives (Sakiestewa Gilbert 2018). The act of running is more important than the outcome itself, so Hopi runners do not have to meticulously measure mileage, heart rates, or times (Sakiestewa Gilbert 2018). Hopi simply run *To the Fence and Back* (Sakiestewa Gilbert 2018).

The "fence" is not a static place; it is simply a destination it has changed and evolved overtime (Sakiestewa Gilbert 2018). The fence has been other Hopi villages, Arizona towns, Pueblo villages in New Mexico, Indigenous communities in central Mexico, and even the coastline of California (Sakiestewa Gilbert 2018). As more borders have blocked the Hopi from their running trails, the Hopi have continually adapted their training and continued to run *To the Fence and Back* (Sakiestewa Gilbert 2018). Just as the Hopi have used *To the Fence and Back* to adapt and scale their running, I used *To the Fence and Back* as a framework to view my research in a way that applies to various levels of experience and access. Just as Gaudet (2019, 58) says that Indigenous Research Methodologies are supposed to "disrupt rigid and individualistic" research methodologies, I use *To the Fence and Back* to disrupt my own rigid interpretations of what should be included in a health and wellness plan.

To the Fence and Back is also the method and phrase I want you, the reader, to keep in mind as you are working through this thesis and starting your own journey. As you read, just think about how you

can apply what I write about to your situation. That means how much experience training you have, how much money and access you have, and most importantly how your body feels. When children are playing and competing, they never say “let’s see who can lift fifty pounds or run a hundred meters the fastest.” Kids would instead say “I bet I can pick up a bigger rock than you.” “Well, I can throw a rock farther than you.” Children only rely on *To the Fence and Back* and in that, they all have the freedom in the world.

Methods

Building upon these four methodologies I used Kovach's (2019) Conversational Method to remember and reflect on my previous experiences and conversations to fully develop my findings. Over the course of my research, I have also been a college track and field coach and the experiences I had as a coach led to the connection I discovered between the Seven Grandfather Teachings and health and wellness practices. I have unknowingly learned and applied each of the Seven Grandfather Teachings to my own life and the training plans I have written for athletes while refining my own training methods through conversations with the people around me.

I have used Wisdom and Love to help my athletes become more well-rounded athletes. When I first got to Oklahoma Baptist University, where I competed and coached on the track and field team, the throwers would play sand volleyball with the other event groups on our track team. My dad, who was also a volunteer coach for the track team, and I recognized that the throwers were bad at volleyball in comparison to the rest of the team. To address this, my dad and I started using volleyball as a warm-up and we quickly saw how much it helped our throwers. In volleyball, you must be light on your feet and sequence your body parts into extension at the right time with a great amount of finesse. Once the throwers got good at volleyball, we further practiced Wisdom and Love by trying to get better at hacky sack to improve our throwers' foot-eye coordination. While volleyball and hacky sack might just seem like a way to have fun for track athletes, it added variety to our days, and the acquisition of new skills helped our throwers become better overall athletes. These games also greatly improved the moods of our throwers by allowing them to have fun. We broke up the stress that can be prevalent during a long year of training and competition.

Respect has taught me the greatest number of lessons as I have continually disrespected my body and learned the hard way the importance of Respect. There were so many experiences where I learned the importance of warming up, doing technique work, and rest and recovery. There is always a risk of injury when doing any form of movement, especially repetitively, but we can take steps to reduce that risk. One

of the ways that we can reduce that risk is by focusing on good technique with lighter weights while you are working on technique or learning new movement patterns. I have overtrained multiple times in my career and experienced severe burnout, so much so that I am protective and careful about not allowing my athletes to overtrain.

When I first started making connections between the Seven Grandfather Teachings and movement practices, I at once connected Bravery with plyometrics or jumping. My mom has just recently restarted her wellness journey after I talked her into going to CrossFit with me. One thing she was most afraid of was starting to jump again. We have had many talks about this, as she has repeatedly mentioned how worried she was at even the thought of it. I also had an athlete that had a lot of trust issues in their knees when it came to anything about jumping. I had to do a lot of work with them to overcome their fears.

I have also learned and preached the importance of Honesty when it comes to lifting heavy. Lifting heavy is an important part of training but I have seen so many athletes who are not honest with themselves and end up injuring themselves. While this could also be a form of Humility, I have also used accessories to correct their lifting flaws where they can load their body safely at the weight those overzealous athletes want to. Humility to me is also just going where you know you need to go to make progress on your health and wellness journey. My mom and I both struggle with social anxiety and self-confidence but we have both forced ourselves to start going to CrossFit because we know that the community aspect of CrossFit may be annoying to us but it is also the type of support that we need to keep going.

I have also learned the importance of consistent and regular assessments with my throwers. I would get upset because every time we would do overhead backward throws with a shot put for distance. This is a common test of power for track and field athletes, but we would only test it once every twelve weeks, so our numbers would not be where I want them to be. I eventually learned that it was frequency that was the problem, so I started testing the throwers is overhead shot put throw for distance every week

and their numbers started going up. I also learned the importance of journaling in my own training to help me keep track of my workouts. I also used mental check-ins to keep my head clear and reduce my anxiety while also trying to create new habits.

By using and learning from each of the Seven Grandfather Teachings in my own experiences as a coach and researcher I simultaneously found a deeper connection to my own cultural teachings and discovered a correlation between each of the teachings and fundamental parts of training plans. From using volleyball and hackey sack to improve my throwers athletic abilities to instilling Bravery in my athletes through plyometrics I have learned the importance of each of the Seven Grandfather Teachings as well as learning the importance of scaling weight programming for various levels of experience and age.

Seven Grandfather Teachings

When the colonial powers decided physical education was too powerful a tool for the masses to have access too, it became a privilege to move (Johnston 2025). Even now physical education is expensive and exclusive. Gym costs, private training costs, and online influencers make movement costly and seem so complicated that only those elite trainers know how people should move.

However, movement can be simple if you have a system. A health and wellness system is a device or framework that you can use to navigate your health and wellness journey. From my experience, health and wellness systems usually involve the same core fundamentals of training; strength, conditioning, explosiveness, agility, and recovery. Some people view those concepts in opposition to each other, a lot of running coaches refuse to have their athletes lift and lot of weightlifting coaches may see cardio as a waste of time, but Buckminster Fuller's concept of mutual accommodation states that when these fundamentals are organized correctly, they can support one another (Starrett 2015, 17). Starrett (2015, 24) states that there are two hallmarks of a good strength and conditioning program, "To consistently and routinely challenge both the strength and fitness components of your constitution" and "To express motor control under a wide variety of demands and situations, which have transferable application to both sport and life." Learning how to move your body in a low-risk environment, like a wellness center, can help you learn how to apply these skills to your daily life just as our ancestors did (Starrett 2015).

The University of Oklahoma's Strength and Conditioning system is flexible and scalable enough to cover a wide range of sports from Football to Softball, to Gymnastics, to Track and Field. OU's Strength and Conditioning staff carry out this system by focusing on the fundamentals of their program, "This program of activity includes strength, conditioning, flexibility, and nutrition" (Athletics Communications 2013). Then, in coordination with the OU Athletic Training staff, they manage the recovery of all their student athletes (Athletics Communications 2013). OU's Strength and Conditioning staff's goal is to provide their athletes with the "strength, conditioning, and durability to compete at the highest level of intercollegiate competition" (Athletics Communications 2013). Durability to a collegiate

strength and conditioning coach is the same quality as longevity and quality of life. Durability, longevity, a high quality of life all revolves around making sure we stay healthy, pain-free, and maintain our ability to take care of the ones we care about and ourselves.

Due to the nature of collegiate athletics, their staff usually divides their programming into “In-Season” and Off-Season” (Athletics Communications 2013). Off-Season training involves focusing on speed, strength, power, agility, sport specific technique, and nutrition (Athletics Communications 2013). While, In-Season training focuses on maintaining strength in the body to reduce the possibilities of injury (Athletics Communications 2013). OU’s strength and conditioning staff also recognize the daily demands of being a student-athlete, so they also stress the importance of their athletes finding a balance between their training, studying, sleeping, and eating habits (Athletics Communications 2013). This balancing act is also a part of good health and wellness programs because life requires us to be adaptable and creating a scalable system is an important aspect for people to achieve that balance.

Unfortunately, not all of us have access to a strength and conditioning staff so we struggle to learn how to start our own health and wellness journeys. While starting your health and wellness journey can be intimidating, it is important to remember that it is a journey and will require a lot of practice. This will allow you the time it takes to build your own health and wellness system. Creating a system does require a framework that is flexible and scalable to different levels of access, experience, and goals. Luger and Collins (2022, 12) built their system by using Indigenous knowledge writing, “Indigenous Knowledge is the opposite of trend. It is both futuristic and ancient, perfectly adaptable to the present.”

All Indigenous movement systems, such as what I am proposing or the Seven Circles created by Luger and Collins (2022), situate health and wellness within Indigenous knowledge systems while Western fitness systems usually only cater to young, White, affluent, and already healthy people (Luger and Collins 2022) and center themselves around beauty standards instead of health standards. Indigenous movement systems should remain scalable to any level of experience, age, health, or financial status.

Due to the barriers put in place by the structures of colonization, I believe systems that are scalable are the only way to create sustainable and systematic change for substantial portions of tribal communities. While I am using a teaching that is prevalent among Anishinaabe cultures and tribes to form my system, I do believe that it can be used by everybody and any tribe because it detaches itself from the mainstream health and wellness industry that can become toxic. At the very least, I hope to create an example of how to use cultural teachings to create health and wellness plans, so that other communities and people can draw on their own cultures and histories to build systems that are unique to themselves.

Wisdom (Mbwakawen): Variety/Learning New Skills

In the story of the Seven Grandfather Teachings, the first gift the Creator gave humans was Wisdom because it would “allow people to cherish the knowledge they attained” (Citizen Potawatomi Nation 2026). Chelsey Luger (Ojibwe) describes the gift of wisdom as being reflective, seeking knowledge and guidance from elders and teachers. “To appreciate the opportunity to learn. To be persistent in improving and learning” (Luger and Collins 2022, Pg. 107-108). The Nottawaseppi Huron Band of the Potawatomi (2026) writes that it is important to remember that wisdom comes in all shapes, sizes, forms, and ages. It is through these definitions that I have come to equate wisdom with variety in the exercises you pick for yourself and others, as well as continuously teaching and learning new skills.

Luger and Collins (2022) created a medicine wheel logic model that displays the “Seven Basic Movement Patterns,” (Figure 1). Luger and Collins’ (2022) movement wheel is a good framework for what fundamental movements you should master the technique of. Once you learn and get comfortable in your technique, you can start playing around in how you progress or regress those same movements (Patrick 2024). Progression of a movement is simply increasing the difficulty movement by adding weight, increasing volume of repetitions, or increasing the range of motion (Patrick 2021). Regressing movement is decreasing the difficulty of movement by reducing weight, reducing the volume of repetitions, or reducing the range of motion (Patrick 2021). To be clear, regression is not bad to do

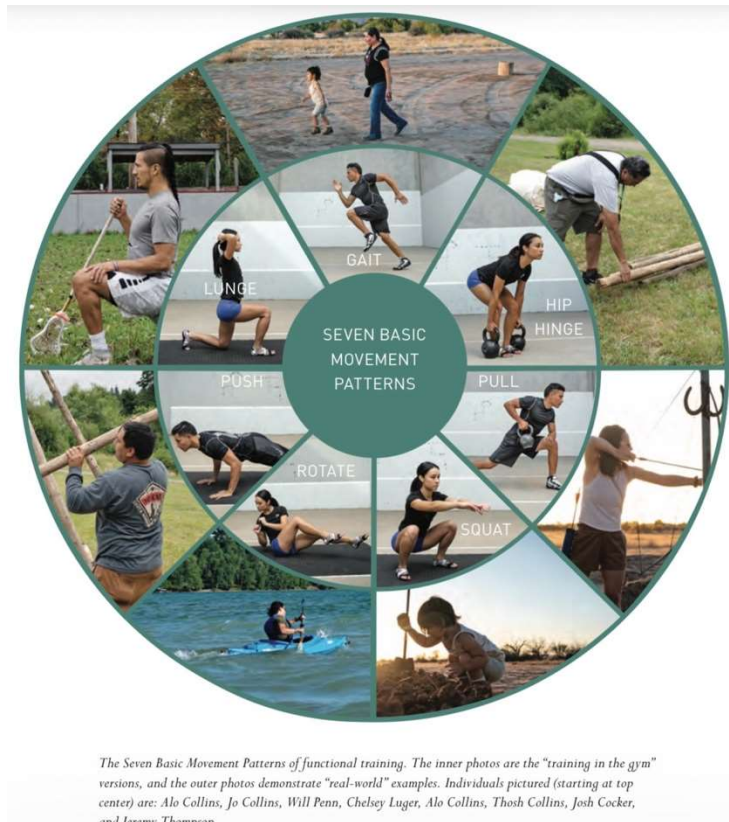


FIGURE 1: LUGER AND COLLINS' (2022) SEVEN BASIC MOVEMENT PATTERNS

because regressing a movement can help improve the quality of your movement and then will allow you to progress the movement further (Patrick 2021).

Progressing and regressing movements are also ways of adding variety and learning new skills which can increase neuroplasticity and proprioception. Neuroplasticity is the brain's ability to change how it functions in response to a stimulus (Puderbaugh and Emmady 2026). Increasing neuroplasticity is how you can become more efficient moving in daily activities

because you can expose yourself to so many different movements that your body learns and adapts to whatever you need it to be able to do (Starrett 2015). In becoming more efficient at moving, you will also use less energy to perform bigger tasks since you know how to move your body in several ways (Starrett 2015). Proprioception is the awareness of how your body is moving through space (Valdes et al. 2023). Proprioception is how you can catch yourself whenever you trip without knowing exactly what you are around. Both qualities, neuroplasticity and proprioception, become increasingly important as you age because they prevent minor incidents from turning into major injuries.

Love (Dbandewen): Play, Games, and Dance

The second gift was Love because "to know it is to know peace" (Citizen Potawatomi Nation 2026). Love is a vital part of training. It is where we can express ourselves freely and in a peaceful way. Love is being playful in our training by including games and dances. Dance and games are how

communities have come together throughout history because they are celebrations of life (Luger and Collins 2022). Dance and games should also be ways of improving the quality of life and celebrating our ability to move (Luger and Collins 2022). Shalene Joseph (2023, 98-99) talked about how one of her mentors, Gene Tagabond (Tlingit, Cherokee, and Filipino) said, “It takes the playfulness of a child to bring the child out of others.”. Joseph (2023, 98-99) goes on to say that “stepping outside of the destructive ideas of adulthood and responsibility” is an important part of a healing journey. Escaping those same destructive ideas, though, is an important part of a movement plan (Joseph 2023). Similarly, Thosh Collins talked about how Charles Tailfeathers emphasized the importance of games and how they are a “test of agility, speed, strength, and endurance” (Luger and Collins 2022, 54).

Just as games can test athletic qualities, they are also great ways of improving those qualities. There is a natural human desire to have fun which can, if taken advantage of, increase consistency in health and wellness plans (Shephard 2018). Using traditional games and dance style can also aid in any Cultural Revitalization efforts because for some people playing a traditional game may be a more comfortable way to reconnect with their indigeneity than trying to sing, dance, or speak the language. Traditional games can be a door to other physical manifestations of culture such as dancing. Then by building this comfort people can eventually start dancing and taking part in powwows and other community events.

However, dances can be good to include in your health and wellness plan because there are so many styles that can target various aspects of training. As an example, the round dance is a fantastic dance to include a large group setting. It is also an effective way to set the intention behind each training session. The round dance can also be a wonderful way to warm your body and mind up because it gets you slowly moving, elevating your heart rate, and wakes up your mind as you stay in rhythm. While attending the Neustadt Festival Banquet, honoring Métis author Cherie Dimaline, there was an exhibition of different powwow dance styles. While there were several dance styles I had not seen before in person, the two that caught my eye were Southern Buckskin and Jingle. I believe Southern Buckskin can be another good dance to include in your health and wellness plan because it is calm and rhythmic but will

still challenge your stamina. As I watched the Southern Buckskin dancers, I saw that their regalia involves long fringe that runs from the upper body all the way down to the floor, and this makes the regalia heavy and increases the demand of your aerobic capacity. I noticed that the Southern Buckskin dancers wanted to get the fringe to swing in sequence with the drum beat and keeping the fringe as tight as possible. Then I got to watch a Jingle dancer who was seemed to be floating just above the ground which is why I believe the Jingle Dance is another excellent choice to include in your movement plan because it is so fast and explosive and requires you to be light on your feet.

I do not feel that it would be appropriate for me to give advice on how you can incorporate these dances or any other dances into your fitness plan for yourself or for a tribal wellness center because I do not know enough about the dances or your individual cultural practices. I do, however, strongly believe that dances or dance classes should be a part of health and wellness plans. Dance classes can be great and fun ways to work on moving well, and their inclusion can be a path for cultural revitalization efforts. Dance combines language, music, culture, stories, and movement into one unique package that is fun and easily accessible for individuals and large groups. The need for regalia can be a barrier of entry for people, however, just practicing the movements and footwork is enough. Even if you do not have access to regalia or have no interest in dancing at powwows, performing the dances is still an important part of training.

Respect (Mnadéndemwen): Warm-Up/Technique Work

The third gift was Respect so the people would honor all of creation (Citizen Potawatomi Nation 2026). “There should be no part of creation that should be excluded from the honor that we are to give” (Nottawaseppi Huron Band of the Potawatomi 2026). Practicing respect in our movement plan comes in the form of warming up, doing technique work, and resting. These all require you to slow down and be intentional about your preparation. In doing a proper warm-up you are showing respect to your body by reducing the risk of injury. The same goes for working on your technique, while working on your technique seems redundant after you have gained experience and confidence in how you move, you must

show respect to the movements because there is always an inherent risk of injury while moving and ignoring that risk can be detrimental to you. Technique is where you set the intention behind how you are moving and will allow you to have higher quality movement patterns and thus allow you to have a higher quality of training. Just as warming up and technique work allow you to reduce chances of injury and increase the quality of your training; resting and recovering from your training sessions not only helps reduce chances of injury and increase quality of training but, it also helps keep you mentally sharp when it comes to your training.

Warming up gets the blood to the muscles while elevating your body temperature (Schwarzenegger 1993). Schwarzenegger (1993) says that stretching is as important as lifting because stretching is what keeps your muscles limber and able to recover from any strenuous activity. Warming up does involve practicing your technique for each movement that you are preparing to perform. Technique quality can be one of the biggest determining factors in whether your body adapts and becomes stronger or fails and results in injury (Horschig and Sonthana 2021). Most injuries that occur while lifting weights and any other form of movement are a direct result of improper form (Horschig and Sonthana 2021). When warming up, you should try to make every repetition look the same no matter the weight or effort you are putting into the given movement. Respect is not solely about warming up and working on your technique; you must also show respect to your body by allowing your body and mind to recover from your workouts.

It is important to give your body plenty of rest so that you do not overtrain, (Schwarzenegger 1993, 192), "Training too much is as bad-if not worse-than not training enough." So, remember, you are trying to make systematic changes in your life, start small, and then add. Giving the body parts that you worked intensely at least forty-eight hours to recover is essential to seeing progress and increasing your muscle mass and strength (Schwarzenegger 1993). It is equally important that you allow your mind the time it takes to recover from your training sessions, consistency over perfection always (Schwarzenegger 1993). Increasing stamina, strength, or athletic ability, which is the goal of a health and wellness program

as those two factors allow us the personal freedom to move, is a process of tearing down and rebuilding (Schwarzenegger 1993). This process is not about tearing your body and mind apart to where you are not enjoying anything; it is a cyclical process of giving your body enough stimulus to create adaptations or grow back stronger (Schwarzenegger 1993). Rest days are not a day that you should think poorly about because these are the day you are showing your body Respect and allowing it the time to rebuild.

Respect is one of the most important concepts in movement practices because as soon as you stop showing respect, whatever movement you are doing can injure you and leave you in pain. Our goal with movement should be to do everything pain-free, but this requires us to be patient and respectful of ourselves and others who may be on a different part of their journey. It also requires us to properly warm-up, do technique work, and rest.

Bravery (Wédaséwen): Plyometrics

“Bravery in the face of the foe was next” (Citizen Potawatomi Nation 2026). Luger and Collins (2022) describe Bravery/Courage as acknowledging and accepting one’s own weaknesses and taking the steps to address those weaknesses. Practicing bravery is by implementing plyometrics into your health and wellness plan. Plyometrics are any intense or explosive movement. Any jumping, slamming, throwing, sprinting, or hitting variation can be a version of a plyometric movement. The reason to include plyometrics in your movement plan is to increase your ability to produce force rapidly, this is an essential function of our body and allows us to catch ourselves (Tøien et al. 2025). Vetrosky and colleagues (2019) found that training plyometrics positively affects strength, agility, and neuromuscular performance and in a supervised setting, plyometrics can be a safe training alternative for older adults.

Plyometrics can also be an effective tool for building confidence in yourself and your abilities. Plyometrics challenge our bravery while also allowing us to challenge ourselves in a controlled setting. Joseph (2023) talks about how important taking healthy risks are because healthy risks allow you to step out of your comfort zone and try things you never have done before as a step towards personal growth. A plyometric exercise that I have used with my athletes to build confidence in themselves is a depth drop. A

depth drop is a plyometric movement that can build confidence in your ability to jump by building the trust between your body and mind by practicing landing safely. You perform depth drops by getting top of a cinder block, milk crate, chair, or tailgate of a pickup (this would be for the maximum height that you should jump from) (Simmons 2017). Then with straight legs you take a step with one leg off the platform and allow your body to drop straight down (Simmons 2017). When you land, land on the balls of your feet and then your heels, trying to land as flexible as possible to cushion the fall (Simmons 2017).

Depth drops can be a dangerous exercise if you rush your progression (Simmons 2017). Start with a low box about twelve to sixteen inches and work up over time until you can comfortably drop off a thirty-six-to-thirty-nine-inch box (Simmons 2017). Try to avoid jumping when fatigued (Simmons 2017), you can avoid this by placing your plyometrics either at the start of a workout if you are performing more than one Teaching in a session or by performing a plyometric day after a low fatigue day such as a Humility day. Luger and Collins (2022, 38) write, “A challenging movement practices is not just for a star athlete or bodybuilder.” In fact, jumping and plyometrics are also traditional movement practices among Indigenous communities. The Inuit single and double leg high kick is a competition that is rooted in a tradition involving the harvesting whales and other animals (Fries-Gaither 2009). The Alaskan High Kick, Stick Jump, Siturtaq, and Kneeling Jump are also traditional Inuit games and competitions that are all forms of plyometrics (Contreras 2019). The fact that plyometrics are traditional movement practices again feeds into how movement builds a connection between our bodies and minds and helps us to reclaim our cultures.

Honesty (Gwékwadzewen): Heavy Lifting

Honesty (Gwékwadzewen) is the fifth gift (Citizen Potawatomi Nation 2026). In the Nottawaseppi Huron Band of the Potawatomi (2026) teachings they say, “Facing a situation is to be brave, but having the courage to not only do the right thing, but also saying it, is honesty.” Honesty is lifting heavy weights to push our limits but not allowing our ego to make us go past our limitations. “We must allow truth to be our guide” (Nottawaseppi Huron Band of the Potawatomi 2026). The balance between pushing yourself in a safe manner and going to a point of no return is a fine line. It is such a fine

line that most people fear this line because they might injure themselves. If you allow honesty to be your guide, you can walk that line safely.

I would define heavy lifting as about anything that is a seven out of a ten-effort; this is an extremely important part of training for everyone. No matter what sport you practice or what you do in your everyday life, getting stronger will improve your performance or quality of life. Increased strength will increase stability, longevity, and your ability to get in and out of positions that life requires (Ikezoe 2020). Strength training also increases your muscle mass and reinforces your joints, which allows your body to keep up with the physical requirements of life (Ikezoe 2020). As we age, we must continue strength training or else we will risk losing muscle mass, strength, and the ability to produce force rapidly. In fact, low muscle strength leads to future mobility limitations and higher risks of falls that cause broken bones (Tøien et al. 2025). Whereas high muscle strength is linked with a reduction of “all-cause mortality” and cancer deaths (Tøien et al. 2025). It is recommended that older adults should lift weights that target the major muscle groups at least two days a week (Seguin et al. 2010). It is even better to use body composition, the relationship between body fat percentage and muscle mass, as an indicator of health rather than just weight (Zeng et al. 2012).

Since having access to weightlifting equipment is a luxury, I would propose that isometrics are a cost-effective alternative way to increase general strength. Isometrics have also been a form of traditional strength training and competition, Inuit traditional games such as Airplane, Knuckle Hop, Leg Wrestling, Arm Pull, Neck Pull, Back Push, and Musk-Ox Push are rooted in the strength requirements needed for daily life in the Arctic (Contreras 2019). Another example of how cost-effective isometrics are is a towel deadlift. If you lay a bath towel on the ground, step on top of it in the middle, grab each free end, and then perform a deadlift you will be performing an isometric deadlift. This is because when you pull on the towel while stepping on it you can pull as hard as you can because your body weight is stopping the towel from coming off the ground.

Isometrics “work to build voluntary strength maximally at the joint angle where the exertion takes place” (Simmons 2017, 92). Isometrics involve pulling and pushing against a static object as hard as you can for two to six seconds (Simmons 2017). The primary purpose of isometrics as well as heavy barbell lifting is to build as much strength as possible (Simmons 2017). Both isometrics and lifting heavy weights are good options to develop strength; however, one disadvantage of doing a lot of isometrics is that they can reduce your overall coordination (Simmons 2017). When performing isometrics, build into your max effort; do not yank or push at once as this can allow your form to break down and cause injuries (Simmons 2017). The downside to isometrics is that they are not easily measurable without any special equipment which makes it difficult to track your progress.

When you start tracking your weights, your ego can come into play, and you might want to compare yourself to others. Comparison can lead you to ego lifting, which is when you knowingly start lifting more than you can, and this is an easy trap to fall into. The Nottawaseppi Huron Band of the Potawatomi’s (2026) Honesty teaching says, “We must give full value to both the efforts of our own and others.” Giving and acknowledging the strengths of others can only strengthen our connection to them and allow our community to grow stronger. It is important for us to accept where we are at physically on our health and wellness journey, but it is also important to push your limits, honestly. There is nothing inherently wrong with wanting to lift heavy weights, but you should always prioritize your technique so reduce the chances of injury (Horschig and Sonthana 2021). So . . . as important as it is to push yourself, it is just as important to allow yourself to wait until you feel confident in your technique. Do not push yourself into a hole where you are not able to train consistently.

Humility (Édbesendowen); Accessories

The sixth gift was Humility (Édbesendowen) “to know one’s place in the expanse of creation” (Citizen Potawatomi Nation 2026). Luger and Collins (2022, 107-108) write that humility means, “To recognize one’s own weaknesses, but also one’s capacity for growth.” One part of training that people can get bored of or overlook is accessories. These are the smaller supplemental exercises that allow you to continue training in a healthy and pain free way. You can also use accessories to improve the quality of

your main lifts, such as bench press, deadlift, squat, clean, or snatch. Accessories can often include core/ab work, bicep curls, Romanian deadlifts, and other variations of core movements.

While accessories can be enjoyable, I would also suggest exercising humility and picking movements that you are worst at or do not enjoy. For my own training I do not enjoy doing upper body and I am terrible at plyometrics, so I intentionally prioritize those in my short training sessions. I learned this from my dad who always said, “If you hate something, you need to do it until you love it.” While as annoying as this was to hear growing up, it has helped keep my training well rounded.

It can be easy to stay where we are comfortable or get as much progress as possible from what we are best at. However, as Starrett (2015, 23) states movement is a “lifelong process of identifying problems, fixing them, and then exposing more holes in your athletic profile with more challenging stimuli.” Schwarzenegger (1993) also discusses that as you train you will find your weakness and what you do not necessarily enjoy, you can keep track of them and see how you have progressed on your health and wellness journey. This gradual rotation of preferences can also help you evolve your training overtime. As you find movements you do not enjoy, you can work at them until they are enjoyable and the cycle will continue. This natural progression will build a training system that will allow you to be well-rounded and balanced.

Practicing Humility does not have to be a physical act either. Humility can also be going somewhere you are uncomfortable that will help you on your own journey. To make sustainable changes in one’s life, it takes changing your environment a little bit and building a support system (Seguin et al. 2010). Humility could be going to a wellness center where you know you will be uncomfortable but the people there will hold you accountable. Or going to the grocery store to buy fruit or vegetables even when you are tired and just want to order take out.

Truth (Debwéwen): Assessment (Physical and Mental)

The final gift was Truth (Debwéwen), which was “to know and understand all” of the earlier teachings (Citizen Potawatomi Nation 2026). “Truth should not lead us to deceptions,” and it should be how we check in with ourselves regularly, giving us “the ability to act without regret” (Nottawaseppi

Huron Band of the Potawatomi 2026). Truth is assessing yourself physically and mentally. Assessments allow us to know our strengths, weaknesses, and limits. (Joseph 2023). Physical assessments allow Indigenous peoples and communities to recognize their strengths; mental assessments allow those same Indigenous peoples and communities to recognize the importance of their own ancestral wisdom and the responsibility they have to each other and the rest of their community.

In terms of physical assessments, it is important to find ways to regularly test yourself. If you keep notes on your progress, you will be able to see your progress and use that as positive reinforcement that will make it easier for yourself to get through any rough patches or slumps. If you are by yourself, make sure you can perform your assessments safely. Physical assessments should be easy to scale depending on how you are feeling (Starrett 2015). You can scale physical assessments by adjusting the number of repetitions you are doing or by adjusting the type of assessment you are doing. All physical assessments require maximum effort so to scale your physical assessment you can change the number of repetitions you do. You can lift the heaviest weight possible for a single repetition, throw an object as far as possible, or jump as high or far as possible. Then to reduce the weight but not the effort you can perform a three-repetition max, then you can go up to a five-repetition max, and you can go up to as many repetitions as possible. The most important part of performing physical assessments is always safety and technique. If you have good technique for most movements, you can test safely. However, if you do not have a partner to make sure you do not hurt yourself, you can select movements that you can stop safely. Deadlifts, Olympic lifts, and most accessories can be performed safely because you can stop quickly and safely. Bench press and back squat can be more dangerous because you can get stuck underneath the weight and get seriously injured.

Physical assessments should also be fun. They are where we can cut loose and give it our all. If you are part of a group or coaching a group through testing, you can build community. You can have everyone cheering on each other and as people finish their testing, they can stay to support everyone else, and then the last person who is maxing will have this giant community backing them up (Joseph 2023). I

would suggest buying a notebook or journal to record all your workouts and maxes, but this can also help you assess yourself mentally as well. While it is important to test ourselves physically, we must keep checking in with ourselves mentally too.

Shailene Joseph (2023) cited Charlie Tailfeathers who said, “our people need to know how we feel because we need to know how to feel better. We are supposed to feel good. It does not mean you have to be a 10 each day, which is unrealistic” (Joseph 2023, 93-94). But if you feel like you are a one out of 10 you can then at least ask yourself, “How can I be a two?” (Joseph 2023, 93-94). You can keep asking yourself this question until you find yourself in a spot where you feel good (Joseph 2023). This practice can keep us honest with ourselves and if we keep this information in journals, we can use this information as a toolbox. Cherie Dimaline (2023, 29) talks about how writing your thoughts and feelings down can help you organize them and “record the truth before your anxiety twists everything like a funhouse mirror.” Then your thoughts are written down as a reference, and you do not have to keep everything in your head (Dimaline 2023).

Going through a process of assessing yourself can help you discover what you genuinely want, and you can then start visualizing the version of yourself that you want to be. Once you start to do this, you can start setting goals for yourself and use them as extra motivation to set assessment dates to perform well. This allows you to build more disciplined routines. Accomplishing these goals just keeps the proverbial slinky moving down the stairs. Each goal met is another step added, and more momentum can be carried into the next goal. It is also important to set small and big goals or short term or long-term goals. Visualization practices do not have to be written down; they can be pictures. Luger and Collins (2022) describe a mind mapping exercise using their seven circles of wellness. You start with a blank sheet of paper, and you draw circles representing each of their seven circles of wellness but at a size that matches your vision of a balanced life (Luger and Collins 2022). You can write down or draw what you are already doing for that vision, what you could do more of, and what habits you would like to change (Luger and Collins 2022).

I understand journaling can be intimidating to start so start simple. I use my journal to write down my workouts and if anything is bothering me physically or mentally, I write that down as well. Then when I want to implement change to my everyday life, I write a list and make sure I can check off each habit that I want to do every day. For example, I wanted to make sure I ate more fruit every day, so I wrote down in my list, “Eat one apple.” It is an easy and achievable goal for me to check off every day. Then once I get consistent with that habit I expanded to, “Eat fruit with each meal.” This is how I get past the pressure I feel to make my journal a well written novel. The goal of assessments is to stay in tune with yourself so you can adjust your movement plan. Sakiestewa Gilbert (2018) talked about how Hopi Runner Harry McLean’s success revolved around his ability to read and connect with his body and how it feels. McLean’s uncles and elders taught him this skill, which highlights how the connection between Indigenous people and their bodies is taught and passed down between generations (Sakiestewa Gilbert 2018).

The Connecting Thread

Through all the traditional games, ceremonies, and activities that Indigenous communities have always taken part in there is one connecting thread: stamina. Stamina or aerobic capacity is an important part of a well-rounded health and wellness plan. However, jogging has been typing cast as the only way to work on your stamina. While running is a prevalent practice in Indigenous communities, it is not the speed that matters. I have avoided talking about cardio because whenever I talk to people about adding cardio into their plans, they usually grimace. Which is understandable if your only experience is jogging on hard pavement, feeling the pounding of each step.

Where do you start if you want to increase your stamina? Today there is so many opinions on what the best way to get increase stamina (Hinshaw 2025). To increase your stamina, you can do sets of fifteen or twenty on a lift, swim, rock climb, bike, row, or jump rope. However, I would always recommend starting with walking or rucking. Rucking is walking with a weighted vest or backpack. The addition of weight to your walks can allow you to elevate your heart rate to increase your aerobic capacity (Hinshaw 2025). The weight also can help to strengthen your tendons, ligaments, core and increase your

bone density, all of which helps to keep you healthy and able as you age (Hinshaw 2025). Walking and rucking can also be good for community events because the weight can vary depending on the individual but if you all are able to keep a conversational pace you are achieving the same stimulus (Hinshaw 2025). For example, if there are three people who are walking together one person may not need any additional weight, another person may need an additional ten pounds, and the third person may need twenty pounds added on, but if they all three are able to keep a conversation going, they are working in the same heart rate zone (Hinshaw 2025).

The one thing I have found from my experience is that you can increase the quality of your weightlifting by increasing your aerobic capacity. However, as I said running was and still is an important part of most Indigenous traditions. If you are so inclined, I would suggest that you do not jog. Run with big, long strides for as far as you can until you start to slow down and then walk until you fully recover and then repeat the process. On his run with Masayesva, Sakiestewa Gilbert (2018) tried to learn as much as he could from his running partner for the day. Sakiestewa Gilbert (2018,3) was watching Masayesva's stride compared to his own when Masayesva asked "Has anyone ever told you how Hopis once mimicked the movements of animals to make them better runners?" Sakiestewa Gilbert (2018, 3) replied, "No." If you have ever watched a dog, horse, cat, or deer run, you will notice how they take big, long strides and just tap the ground. Being light on your feet and running naturally is better than hunching over and jogging for whatever length of time you heard on social media that you must look like a celebrity. Instead, allow your body to move freely, feel the earth beneath you, feel your heart and lungs working, and find the connection between it all. Again, all you have to do is run to the fence and back.

What Could an Indigenous Fitness Space Look Like?

Creating a scalable system is only one part of reclaiming our connection to movement practices. We also need to reclaim our connection to space by creating a scalable system that allows individuals, small groups, and entire tribal communities to reclaim spaces that they can move in. Healing our connection to spaces like gyms first must come in how we perceive or create those spaces. Gyms have become sterile and overly commercialized places that intimidate and shame people out of starting their wellness journeys. These places being sterile, cold, and distant do not attract beginners, nor do they teach people how to lift. While gyms can be a good option to go exercise at, they still separate physical activity from the celebration of life and any spirituality associated with movements. These places lack holistic philosophies that should be present in wellness journeys.

Gyms instead should be wellness centers. Wellness centers are places that offer holistic approaches to wellness. Wellness centers do not simply include weights, weight machines, and aerobic machines. A wellness center should also have places to move, learn, and conduct ceremonies. Wellness Centers should “highlight the intersectionality of multiple spaces, including health, fitness, and cultural revitalization” (Metekingi 2025, 50). The founder of the Turners built a gym, called a Turnplatz, to be a playground for adults, a place to teach culture, kept German songs alive, and host contests during German holidays (Johnston 2025). The Turnplatz was meant to to protect and strengthen German culture (Johnston 2025). Tribal wellness centers should be a place where people can move, learn, practice ceremonies, and join in community. Wellness centers should be open to change based on what the individual or community needs (Harjo 2019).

To be in opposition to the colonial gym wellness centers must be a space that is sacred and uplifting, not a space that is cold and oppressive (Luger and Collins 2022). It is also important to remember that “no one should be told to leave a space because of the way they feel” (Joseph 2023, 96). This intention of love and responsibility does not require extensive financial resources, nor is it restrained to a certain space, but this intention helps people feel comfortable enough to come in and ask for help on

their wellness journey (Harjo 2019). Wellness centers should be a space that holds our cultures, history, and traditional knowledge together just as “movement holds invaluable knowledge and history” (Luger and Collins 2022).

To achieve a wellness center that is sacred and uplifting, there are a few key elements that it should include (Luger and Collins 2022). First, the overall design of a wellness center should have seamless transitions between indoor and the outside world (Luger and Collins 2022). Wellness centers should feel like they are one with the land that surrounds it (Luger and Collins 2022). The design should also have as much open space, clean air, natural light, and plants as possible (Luger and Collins 2022). Keeping as much sunlight and fresh air circulating through the space as possible can improve people’s emotional health while keeping the space spiritually clean (Luger and Collins 2022). You can also approach the architecture of the wellness center in a culturally relevant way (Luger and Collins 2022). By positioning doorways in ceremonial directions and including eco-friendly designs like solar panels, natural materials, and plants, you can create a great environment for everyone (Luger and Collins 2022).

Within our wellness center space, inside or outside, we should include spaces where we can dance, whether that is a dance studio, a nice grass place outside, or a turf area inside or outside. Along with this, including places for ceremonies like sweat lodges that aid in our bodies’ recovery process in the same way a sauna can, can help make it easier for people to find where they can perform ceremonies in a comfortable space. My tribe’s wellness center also has a quiet room designed to be a private, safe space where moms can pump breast milk, take their kids, or if anyone just needs a break, they are able to go in there.

The design of wellness centers should facilitate an inclusive environment that combines movement, health care, child rearing, and total well-being (Luger and Collins 2022). There should also be a safe space for the kids of parents who are on their wellness journey who may have to bring their kids to the wellness center with them. Luger and Collins (2022), who do have children, talk about their intentions to make sure the kids are always welcome and are always able to move freely and have fun. Luger and Collins (2022) keep mats and open space in every room as well as having their own kid-friendly

weightlifting equipment in their garage gym. Their kids play, dance, and eat snacks as Luger and Collins (2022) exercise and move. Luger and Collins (2022) make sure to include their kids in their movement practices to build good habits and confidence in their kids. If you prioritize the Mothers, Children, and Elders of your community when it comes to the design of a wellness center, the rest of the community should have their needs met.

The successful application of the Seven Grandfather Teachings requires the correct space for people to apply them in. Creating space for cultural revitalization, language revitalization, and food sovereignty efforts not only reinforces wellness centers as places to wage political warfare but these spaces allow people to apply the Seven Grandfather Teachings. Even though gardening, art, cooking classes, and culture are not the typical way that people think about exercising or getting healthy, they can all be beneficial to the community (Luger and Collins 2022). These alternate forms of movement also serve as practical applications of Wisdom. Wellness centers should give community members to chart their own health and wellness journeys by creating the spaces necessary to provide the most amount of support as possible (Luger and Collins 2022). Wellness centers should be open to change based on what the individual or community needs (Harjo 2019). The creation of scalable wellness centers is also an act of political warfare because scalable wellness centers are in direct opposition to the barriers put up by the health and wellness industry. Barriers of entry, such as misinformation, lack of physical education, vicinity to wellness centers, or costs of equipment and memberships to wellness centers and gyms, are ways of separating people from their bodies. While gyms remain static and formulaic, wellness centers continue to adapt to the resources available (Harjo 2019). In remaining adaptable wellness centers allow for the reclamation of the connection between Indigenous bodies and their spirits, the land, and the community.

Understanding that the barriers of entry still exist and will continue to exist, I have listed my own personal recommendations for how to create your own wellness center. Due to the number of variables, I have divided my recommendations into three distinct levels. Level 1 is the individual, someone who may not have a lot of resources, time, or space. Level 2 is a small group or community who may live in the

same neighborhood and center their movement practice around the same garage gym. Level 3 is a Tribally run wellness center.

Level 1: (Backpack/Tote Bag)

Since the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic home gyms have become popular and with the rise of popularity, the number of options and the price has risen drastically. Part of the backpack/tote bag wellness center is learning how to take advantage of the *Earth Gym* (Luger and Collins 2022). Earth Gym is all about reconnecting with the land through movement (Luger and Collins 2022). Earth Gym can be as simple as going outside for a walk and as complex as using rocks, logs, or anything you find to perform a strenuous workout (Luger and Collins 2022).

If you cannot move outside freely and/or safely, you can also build a wellness center in a backpack. This can be a good option for someone who moves a lot, has little room, a small budget, wants to be able to grow their wellness center as they increase their budget, or has personal safety concerns while exercising outdoors. A backpack/tote bag wellness center can begin with little start-up funds, and over time you can upgrade this wellness center with higher quality pieces. The backpack is a good foundational choice since you have a place for storage and a piece of equipment. You can use backpacks for weightlifting movements and to increase the difficulty of any cardio you might do such as going for walks. You can start with a simple \$30 backpack, or cheaper if you thrift it, and eventually buy a backpack that might be more durable or able to hold more. Tote bags are also good alternatives and open unique styles of training. While you can use a backpack to make a simple walk more difficult, using a tote bag to weight one side of your body for walks can be an effective way to challenge your core and balance. Because you are only loading one side of your body, the opposite side of your body will have to compensate, therefore building strength on that side. I would recommend you make sure you are doing anything that is one side on both sides to prevent any imbalances.

Within a tote bag or backpack gym you include the following items:

- A smudging kit

- Journal or notebook and a pen
- Lacrosse balls
- Tennis balls
- Hacky sacks
- Bands
- A pair of 2.5lbs, 5lbs, and 10lbs plates
- A rope
- Handles to attach to bands or other objects
- Jump rope
- A towel

While this seems random, you can train any sort of movement and practice all the Seven Grandfather Teachings. Including a smudging kit is not random, as I said wellness centers should include places and opportunities to perform ceremonies. A smudging kit, which includes any culturally specific medicines, a lighter, and an abalone shell or any container that you can burn the medicines in, can be an easy and accessible way to start incorporating ceremony into your movement practices. My smudging kit includes sage, cedar, sweetgrass, and dried tobacco as those are the sacred medicines of my tribe

Though not having access to weights does not mean you are behind. Arnold Schwarzenegger (1993) stresses the importance of laying a foundation with body weight exercises such as Push-Ups, Dips between chairs, rowing between chairs using a broom stick, bent-leg sit-ups, bent leg raises, bent-over twists, squats, calf raises, close-grip bicep chins, and a form of cardio like walking or running.

Level 2: (Small Group/Garage Wellness Center)

The second type of wellness center can be a small group going for a walk or working out in the same garage in their neighborhood. If possible, try to develop a small group of people that you can rely on to workout with; training partners can help push you when you may be a little tired and help you progress much faster (Schwarzenegger 1993). While there are endless opportunities to pursue free or inexpensive

movement styles with a small group, I want to touch on building a home wellness center, specifically the weight equipment. Building a wellness center should include some form of weight training apparatus or free weights. This can snowball and become overwhelming because of how many options there are and how many styles of training there are. I am going to focus on what I believe could be the most versatile and well-rounded weight set up for people. I will suggest items that may be out of your price range. That is okay. You will be able to take these suggestions and scale up or down to your price bracket and build and develop this aspect of your wellness center.

This setup is something that I believe will help you physically train in the most well-rounded way:

- Trap Bar
- Bumper Plate Set
- Foam Balance Pad
- Pull-Up Bar
- Dumbbells (Adjustable/Fixed)
- Padded Flooring
- Adjustable Bench
- Cardio Equipment
- Foam Roller
- Speaker
- Everything in the backpack gym

Level 3: Tribal Wellness Center

The design of a Tribal Wellness Center can be as complex or minimal as any tribes' finances will allow. I will approach this as a blank slate without any financial or spatial restrictions and how I would design a tribal wellness center.

Along with this I picture my perfect wellness having a rock wall and other climbing areas with plenty of options for kids, adults, and elders to climb, play, and fall safely. Including a community garden or flower beds, art studios, and classrooms for cultural or cooking lessons could further cement this place as a space anyone can come too and have space for themselves.

When it comes to the equipment inside a tribally run wellness center, there needs to be balance on what you include. While reliance on machines and mainstream fitness trends may not be the solution everyone, we need to rely and focus on how we can make substantial systematic changes that tie our cultures to movement while removing ourselves from the compartmentalized fitness culture of today (Luger and Collins 2022). Each tribal community should decide what to include in their wellness center by considering the needs of their citizens. There is a place for all types of equipment and styles of movement, keeping that in mind I would persuade you to consider including equipment that allows the most variety.

- Functional Trainer/Weight Rack
- Belt Squats
- Commercial Gym Machines
- Functional Objects:
 - Med-Balls
 - Sandbags
 - Sleds
- Everything in the previous two levels

Guidelines and Templates

When starting your health and wellness journey, you should take some factors into account, first how much time do you have? How comfortable are you performing movements? Are you in a group setting? If so, are you instructing other people and are you comfortable teaching movements? What equipment do you have access to? Due to the number of variables that exist, I unfortunately cannot give you examples that will perfectly match your situation. I will then have to rely on providing you with guidelines.

The main guideline that I want you to keep in mind when starting your health and wellness journey is movement should always be pain free (Patrick 2024). You should always try to move pain free. Remember “Pain=Destruction” and “Pain-Free Muscular Burn=Construction” (Patrick 2021, 45-46). Pain is your body trying to send a signal to your brain that something needs to change (Starrett 2015). What do you do when something is painful? Scale down or regress the movement (Patrick 2021). Once you appropriately scale a painful movement into a pain free movement, load that movement until you feel your muscles burn and work you will begin to strengthen the area that causes the pain. Regressing movements is not a sign of a weak mind; it is a signal to your body that you are listening. Patrick (2021, [VI](#)) states, “Regression is the secret to progression because it can find and fix our weakest links, taking us back to more youthful states.” Building this relationship with your body is an effective way to reclaim your self-determination, while strengthening your personal sovereignty. Again, we should not be in pain when we are moving. So, throughout your health and wellness journey, remember to always prioritize pain-free movement.

Another guideline to remember is when you start your health and wellness plan, less is more; build consistency first then increase overall volume. Be patient with yourself; it is always more important to be consistent than to be perfect. In a podcast interview CrossFit Games champion Mat Fraser (2021) shares a story about one of his friends who came to him for help starting his health and wellness journey. The first workout that Fraser (2021) had his friend do was twelve minutes. After seeing his friend’s disappointment in how short the workout was Fraser (2021) told his friend that until his workouts get to

around thirty or forty-five minutes and he is getting a full night's sleep do not change anything else. Starting small and adding is important to keep in mind because the start of your health and wellness journey can be intimidating and you can feel a lot of distance between you and your goals. Starting small and growing from there keeps you on the path and allows you to make sustainable changes.

A couple other guidelines to keep in mind try to select exercises that you are confident in your knowledge of how to perform the movement. Start with simple movements that are easily regressable (Patrick 2024) such as the movements in (Luger and Collins 2022) Seven Basic Movement Patterns (Figure 1). Also try to use movements that target each body part (arms, core, back, and legs) twice a week (Seguin et al. 2010), but you can practice teachings like Respect (Rest) and Truth (mental check in) every day. Now I will show you how to apply these guidelines to a weekly schedule or split. A split is how you split your workouts up throughout the week. Again, because of the number of variables, these examples will be vague but hopefully you will be able to find your way from here.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Wisdom -Use this day to try and learn a new skill or movement like juggling or a power clean.	Humility -Use this day to work on what you do not enjoy or any other accessories.	Bravery -This day is where you can do explosive movements like jumps, slams, throws, or sprints.	Respect -Use this day to refine your technique for a movement that you are not the most comfortable with.	Honesty -This is your heavy lifting day. Use low volume and remember no ego lifting.	Love -Use this day to dance, play, games, or something you enjoy.	Truth -Use this day to reflect on the past week and reset your intentions for the next week. You can also do a physical assessment this day as well.

FIGURE 2: SEVEN DAY SPLIT

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
-Truth (Mental) -Respect (Warm-Up) -Bravery (20 repetitions of plyometrics) -Honesty (3-5 sets of 3-5 repetitions)	-Truth (Mental) -Respect (Warm-Up) -Truth (Physical) -Wisdom -Humility -Love	-Truth (Mental) -Respect (Warm-Up) -Bravery (20 repetitions of plyometrics) -Honesty (3-5 sets of 3-5 repetitions)	-Respect (Rest and Recovery)	-Truth (Mental) -Respect (Warm-Up) -Bravery (20 repetitions of plyometrics) -Honesty (3-5 sets of 3-5 repetitions)	-Truth (Mental) -Respect (Warm-Up) -Truth (Physical) -Wisdom -Humility -Love	-Respect (Rest and Recovery)

FIGURE 3: FIVE DAY SPLIT

Using these descriptions, you can funnel these down into five- and three-day splits. A good rule of thumb for how to order multiple movement patterns into one session is start with a good warm-up, then move into explosive movements, then you can work on your technique as you build up to whatever lifting you may be doing, and then you can plan accessories to wrap up the training session.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
-Truth (Mental) -Love as a Warm-Up -Bravery (20 repetitions) -Honesty (3-5 sets of 3-5 repetitions) -Wisdom	-Respect (Rest and Recovery)	-Truth (Mental) -Respect (Warm-Up) -Bravery (20 repetitions) -Honesty (3-5 sets of 3-5 repetitions) -Humility	-Respect (Rest and Recovery)	-Truth (Mental) -Respect (Warm-Up) -Truth (Physical) -Humility -Love (Play or Dance)	-Respect (Rest and Recovery)	-Love (Do something you enjoy)

FIGURE 4: THREE DAY SPLIT

There are far too many variables for me to draw out a health and wellness program that will apply to everyone, everywhere, all at once but, here are my thoughts on what I would prioritize in a program for Elders, Lacrosse or Stick ball players, and for Powwow dancers. I also want to clarify that I am not a registered training or in the healthcare industry. My recommendations come from

First, in an Elders program, I would prioritize strength. Specifically, their leg and lower back strength. Lower body strength will help Elders move easier as well as save their backs if they bend over to pick something up. Then I would try and them throwing or slamming stuff to work on their ability to move fast. For accessories, I would recommend pulling strength, so seated rows, curls, and lat pull downs. To improve their stamina, if they are able, I would try to get them walking with some form of weight, whether that be a backpack, sled, or weight vest.

For a Lacrosse or Stick ball player, I would really recommend learning how to perform Cleans. Cleans are an Olympic lift that builds whole body strength and will allow you to withstand more impacts during games. I would also work on your mobility and pliability. There may be times when you must contort your body in weird ways to get your shot off, having access to as much range of motion as possible will help to prevent injuries. Then for conditioning work, I would take a page from the Tarahumara play book and run with your mouth full of water (Luger and Collins 2022). I would also recommend that you perform Broncos, a rugby fitness test and conditioning method where you run twenty yards down and back, forty yards down and back, then sixty yards down and back without stopping, then you repeat these five total times. Now elite rugby players can perform a Bronco in four and a half minutes, I would suggest starting with just one leg of a Bronco and then rest and do that five times while holding water in your mouth during each run. The key will be fully recovering between each rep, so rest twice as long as it takes for you to complete each repetition.

For a Powwow dancer, with the weight of the regalia and length of time you spend dancing I would prioritize posterior chain work, or your ability to hold your posture when you get tired. Running coach, Eric Orton, had McDougall (2009) do a half hour of lunges, push-ups, jumps, squats, and crunches to strengthen auxiliary muscles for health before his running workouts. Each one of these will help you strengthen your core, legs, and back which in turn will help you hold your posture as you get tired from the weight of your regalia. I would also spend time walking with either a weight vest or a heavy backpack. I would use this to get your shoulders and upper back conditioned to hold the weight of your regalia. For conditioning, if you have access to a fan bike, I recommend doing thirty seconds sprints on

the fan bike going as hard as you can. Fan bikes usually have places for your arms and legs to push and pull; this will help you condition your whole body. The reason I would not recommend running or jumping rope is that while you are dancing your body is already going to endure a lot of stress from the impact of each step. A cardio machine will allow you to sprint and elevate your heart rate quickly without the added stress of impact.

I hope these thoughts help you start to picture how you can improve your health and wellness plan. Remember to start slow and build from there. Also, I do not know your health history, injury history, or what you are currently doing. Make sure you talk with a healthcare professional about any potential risks and pay attention to what your body is telling you.

Journal Template

Here are some questions you can ask yourself and answer in your journal everyday:

1. What teaching(s) did I physically practice today?
2. What teaching(s) did I practice mentally today?
3. What steps can I take today to walk a good path?
4. What steps can I take tomorrow to walk a better path?
5. On a scale of 1(Bad) to 10 (Good) how do I feel physically today?
6. On a scale of 1 (Bad) to 10 (Good) how do I feel mentally today?

I would also say that your journal does not have to be neat or organized, your journal is your mind, allow it to look like what you need it to look like? If answering standardized questions does not help you, try a mind mapping exercise. Take your notebook and draw a circle in the middle of the page and put one of the Seven Grandfather Teachings in the middle. Then draw lines to smaller circles and write down how you are going to practice that teaching today. You can write down different acts or movements you are going to take to practice it mentally and physically. Then once you have done each of those acts or movements, you can draw another circle to describe how that felt or simply cross out or check off each of those acts or movements. I personally find checking off a list of stuff I know I need to do the most satisfying way to keep myself on my own good path.

Conclusion

This has not been an expansive enough search into the fight against harmful systems set up to inherently undermine individual and tribal sovereignties. I offer this as another starting place built and developed from other people's work. I hope that this turns into a work that allows Indigenous peoples to find new and better ways to serve their communities. This thesis is adaptable and can serve a guide in forming prescriptive manuals for every Indigenous community. I have taken what little I know about my own culture and the culture of others to hopefully form a system that anyone can take and use to start their health and wellness journey. Systems are not supposed to be perfect; they are supposed to be ways to find consistency and adapt to your own situation. The reconnection of Indigenous peoples with their bodies is crucial in recentring Indigenous sovereignty among colonial conversations. But there is still much to do in this fight, and I hope that this thesis inspires others to use their own health and wellness as political warfare.

Further research should investigate more on Indigenous games, dances, and traditions as modern training methods. While I briefly touched on this subject, collecting oral histories and accounts of traditional games, dances, and ceremonies along with biomechanical studies could show the effectiveness of pre-colonial movement practices as training methods. Thosh Collins (2025) has even started reclaiming the traditional O'odham war club, *Şonckĩ*, as a functional fitness tool further reconnecting movement with culture (Collins 2025). Further research should investigate movement as a recovery method from eating disorders, addiction, and anger management method. Bongiorno and Heaner (2025) discussed the correlation between strength training as method of recovery from eating disorders however, to their knowledge their review was the first to assess the evidence of this correlation and called for more long-term studies. I would also like to see research in this area in the context of Indigenous communities.

I would like to see further investigation on growing tribal wellness centers as athletic development centers in the same way China and former Soviet Union countries did. The Chinese

weightlifting system breaks down their athletic development into four stages (Ma Weightlifting 2026). The first stage is for ages fifteen and under, this is to teach children how to move and increase their overall flexibility and coordination (Ma Weightlifting 2026). The second stage is for children between the ages of ten to fifteen and focuses on identifying talents while prioritizing strength development and plyometrics (Ma Weightlifting 2026). Stage three is for ages sixteen to twenty and this is for prioritizing max strength and power, refining techniques, and increasing overall volume and intensity (Ma Weightlifting 2026). Stage four is for twenty-one to twenty-seven years old where for Chinese athletes they are professional athletes and focused on competing at the highest level (Ma Weightlifting 2026).

While this breakdown of athletic development is intense it does offer an interesting insight into how Indigenous communities could form and create sustainable cycles of physical education for their tribal members. I believe if developed properly this style of system could increase overall tribal health and sovereignty while also offering future generations the ability to earn athletic scholarships to colleges. However, this would be a case-by-case basis as some tribal communities or tribal members may not be interested in implementing this system. Creating a physical education system within a tribal wellness center would be the highest application of what I have discussed in this thesis. While I have created a framework using the Seven Grandfather Teachings for anyone to create their own health and wellness plan, I would hope to eventually see tribal communities apply their own cultural teachings to a health and wellness system that is available to all tribal citizens.

I have tried to cover as many possibilities as possible, especially in my discussion of how to develop your own wellness center and how to split up your training days. There is always going to be holes due to the multiple different possibilities when it comes to training styles, equipment, accessibility levels, and levels of experience. However, I hope to have inspired readers to find a way they can start moving pain-free. I also want to offer you the same thing that (Luger and Collins 2022) offer their readers. While this system comes from my experiences as an athlete and coach and developed into this culturally specific model, there may be things you like and things you do not like. Take the parts that you enjoy and use them to create your own system (Luger and Collins 2022). Constantly learning and

researching several ways of moving allows your health and wellness journey to remain fresh, exciting, and most importantly, sustainable. Sustainable movement practices are one of the most important aspects of a successful health and wellness journey.

Appendix A: Definitions

- **Functional Trainer:** A functional trainer is a metal contraption that you can squat and bench press in, and it can hold weights in the uprights and them like a commercial cable machine.
- **Health and Wellness system/plan:** A health and wellness system or plan is a tool that allows you to organize your training in a holistic and balanced format
- **Split:** A split is how you divide your workouts up throughout the week
- **Accessory:** An accessory is a small supplementary exercise like a curl or leg extension that isolates the muscles used in compound movements like bench, squat, and deadlift
- **Rehabilitation Exercise:** A “rehab” exercise is a movement that helps you strengthen a body part that has been injured
- **Aerobic Capacity:** Aerobic capacity is your body’s ability to keep up with the demand you are putting on its lungs and heart
- **Set:** A set is a cluster of repetitions on an exercise. Example: There are eight repetitions in this set, and we still have three more sets to complete
- **Olympic Weightlifting:** This is a term for the sport of lifting the most weight in the Snatch and Clean & Jerk lifts
- **Commercial Gym Machines:** These are your standard machines in a YMCA or Planet Fitness
- **Belt Squat Machine:** A Belt Squat Machine is a machine that allows you to load your legs without compressing your spine by using a belt on your hips and a pulley to load weight on
- **Foam Roller:** A foam roller is cylinder made of foam that you can use to massage and loosen up your muscles
- **Cardio Equipment:** Cardio equipment is like a rower, stationary bike, or elliptical
- **Adjustable Bench:** An adjustable bench is a padded bench that you can use to perform bench press variations

- Bumper Plate Set: Bumper plates are rubber coated weights that will not damage most floors if you drop them
- Trap Bar: This is a bar that allows you to perform deadlifts directly in line with the weight instead of a traditional straight barbell deadlift that puts the weight in front of you

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