

Walk This Way

Leader's Guide

First Nations Edition

A handbook for health professionals and physical activity leaders

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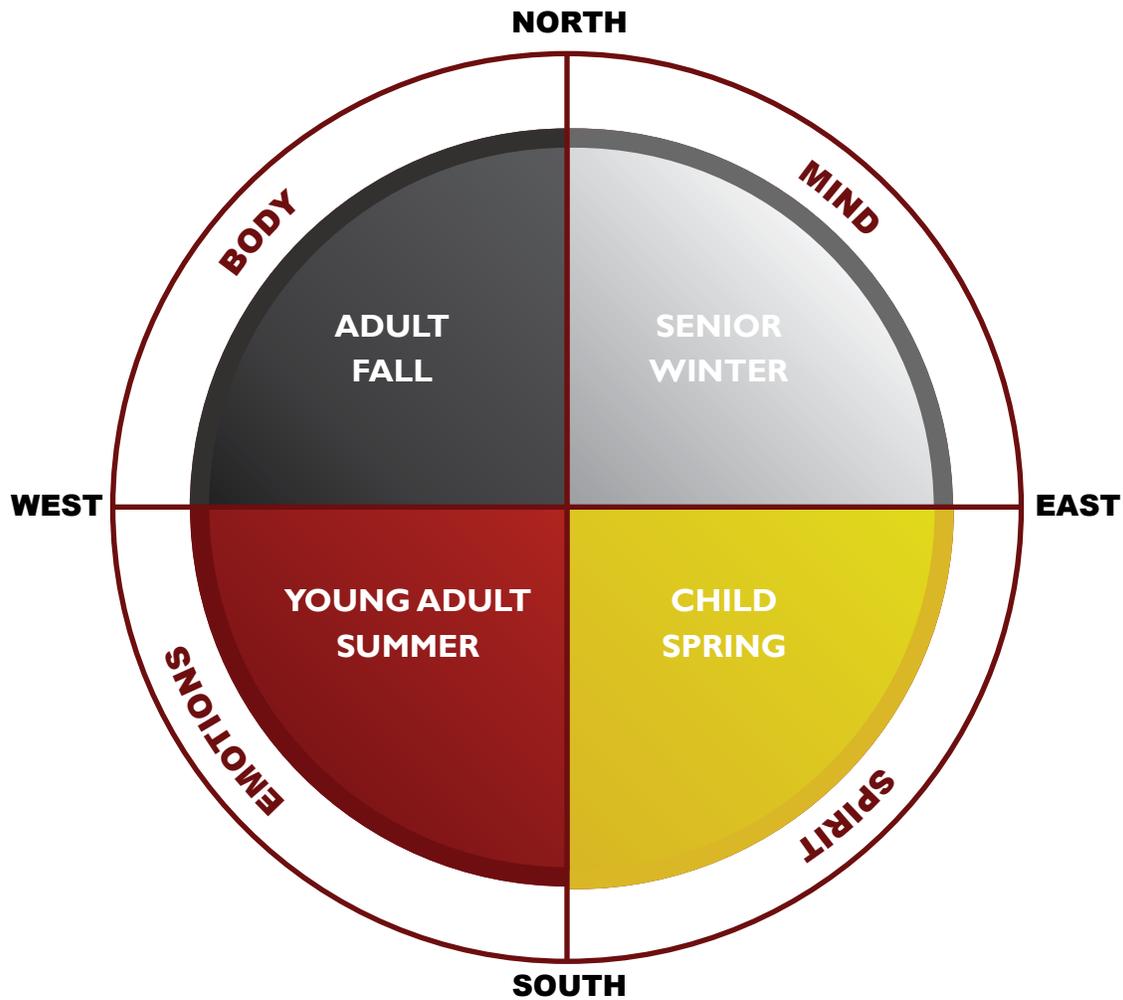
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INTRODUCTION

The Physical Activity Resource Centre has developed the *Walk This Way First Nations Kit* with the goal of supporting First Nations populations in making walking part of their lives. The resource strives to provide individuals with all the components they need to support them in creating healthy walking habits. The *Leader's Guide* is designed to support physical activity promoters in sparking healthy change in their communities. The *Leader's Guide* will support individuals working in public health, community health, education, and recreation by providing them with the information needed to start and maintain walking programs in their communities.

LIVE LIFE IN BALANCE

It is known that First Nations peoples have well-developed traditional concepts of health and medicine. Aboriginal peoples look at health in a holistic way. The Medicine Wheel is a fairly common concept and way of understanding this holistic view of life. It provides a way to see the cycle of life, the cycle of the seasons, and the four elements of our being.



Good health means a balance of all parts of life. The Anishnaabe have the principle of MinoBiidaamosed "walk this way in a good way" which encompasses all aspects of an individual relating to good health and a balance of physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual development.

WHY IS PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IMPORTANT?

Physical activity supports positive mental health and improves physical health. Physical activity provides enormous benefits and is a vital component of a balanced lifestyle. Regular physical activity reduces stress, improves energy levels and self-confidence, decreases health risks, and contributes to a happy, healthy lifestyle.

WHY WALKING?

WALKING is the single most sustainable activity that can be done to maintain good health.

BENEFITS OF WALKING

- Just 30 minutes of walking a day reduces the risk of developing type 2 diabetes.
- Increases energy and stamina.
- Reduces stress and tension.
- Helps you sleep better.
- Helps you achieve and maintain a healthy weight.
- A way to enjoy all the seasons, appreciate the cycle of life.
- Exercise for people at every age and stage of life.
- A low-impact activity, easy on the joints.
- Strengthens bones and muscles.
- Helps reduce risk of heart disease, stroke, osteoporosis, high blood pressure, obesity and certain cancers.
- Associated with improved mental health (reduced anxiety, depression).
- No need for specialized equipment.
- Can be done in any season, any location.
- Low cost.
- A way for families to exercise together.
- A great way to get fresh air and get out of the house.

WHAT IS WALK THIS WAY?

Walk this Way is a resource developed specifically for First Nations individuals. It provides an opportunity to begin and maintain a walking program as a key form of exercise.

There are three components to this resource.

1. Calendar. On the front of the reusable laminated calendar are some tips, notes, and a six-week grid to record your walking goals and accomplishments (an erasable marker is included). The back of the calendar offer valuable information on stretching and safety tips.



2. Scroll Pen. This pen has a pullout scroll with text on both sides. One side lists the benefits of walking, and the other side offers tips on how to incorporate walking into daily routine.



3. Website. Information from this kit is also available in PDF format on the PARC website at: parc.ophea.net/walkthisway

USING THE STAGES OF CHANGE MODEL

The Stages of Change model, developed by Prochaska and DiClemente, can help us understand how people change their behaviours. The model suggests that there are five common stages that people cycle through on their journey to regular physical activity. It is important for physical activity promoters to know that tailoring messages, resources, and activities to the appropriate Stage of Change of the individual will make it more likely that they will adopt an active lifestyle.

1. Precontemplation—Not physically active and does not intend to be in the next six months.

2. Contemplation—Not physically active but is thinking about it in the next six months.

3. Preparation—Physically active sometimes - but not regularly.

4. Action—Physically active regularly - but has only been active in the last six months.

5. Maintenance—Physically active regularly and has been for six months or longer.

SUPPORTING WALKING

As a physical activity promoter, you may be encouraging your clients or patients to consider walking as a viable form of exercise. This *Leader's Guide* provides some suggestions on how to do this.

HOW TO START A WALKING GROUP

The following ideas can help you to start a walking group in your community or through your organization.

1. Identify a champion. You need one person or a small core group of people who are willing to participate. Encourage them and allow them to provide input into how the walking group is created.
2. Research and get input from your core group on the following: how often will the group walk? What time of day? For how long? What will be the route? Will it change every time? Does the group want to set a goal (walk so many kms, so many steps on a pedometer, etc.). How will you get the word out about the walking group?
3. Are there other partners that could support this walking group? Company to provide free T-shirts or pedometers, funds to have a lunch or event for walkers, etc.?
4. Promote the walking group throughout the community via posters, announcements, word of mouth, newsletters, and so on. Promote it to different age groups. (Moms can bring strollers, free pedometers will be provided, dogs allowed, etc.)
5. Highlight the benefits of walking in all promotional material, and let people know you are there to provide support.
6. At the first get-together of walkers, facilitate a discussion about goals and duration of the walking club. Ensure the group has a leader or champion. Put together and hand out a contacts list.
7. Start walking!

HOW TO KEEP PEOPLE MOTIVATED

The following ideas can help you to motivate your walking group members.

- Once a month or at other times, meet at a different location and walk a different route or trail.
- Organize opportunities to celebrate (potluck, breakfast, etc.).
- Invite a guest speaker, Elder, or historian to join the walking group to talk about the local environment, history, or health.
- Share success stories when people meet their health goals.
- Consider signing up the group for a challenging walking event (community fundraiser, or walk for a cause).
- If there is a wide variation in fitness levels among the walkers, consider dividing the group into two or more groups according to walking pace.
- Do a "walk across the country" by tracking your kilometres and colouring in trail segments on a large map.
- Get ideas from the group about other ways they are incorporating walking into their day.
- Provide incentives or rewards to walkers who meet their personal goals.