



Good Medicine Bundle

DIGITAL LESSONS

OPERATION
PREVENTION

Being **Physically Fit** is a Native Tradition



Middle School Activity



Activity

Being Physically Fit is a Native Tradition



Focus Skill

Benefits of an Active Lifestyle



Time

45–60 minutes

OVERVIEW

In this activity, students explore the Crow traditional practice of maintaining physical fitness and aptitude which are also shared by other Native American tribes. Being physically fit was important to the tribes' way of life as they needed to be able to hunt, gather, and protect their resources. These physical activities also included games and ceremonial dances that also used physical fitness to stay spiritually and mentally strong. During this lesson, students will also read an article about a young man from the Crow tribe who uses the modern game of basketball to stay physically and mentally healthy as a role model to his community, which suffers from the opioid crisis and substance misuse.

OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- ◆ Identify traditional games and physical activities that Native Americans use to stay fit and healthy.
- ◆ Explore how tribes use traditional and modern games as a way to regain healthy lifestyles and avoid the harmful impacts of historical trauma on their communities.
- ◆ Discuss how one young Crow tribal member from Montana is using his basketball talent to be an example to other youth in his community.
- ◆ Analyze personal physical activity and set goals to be more active and hold others accountable for physical activity.

MATERIALS

- ◆ Student Handout 1: *“Being Physically Fit is a Way of Life”*
- ◆ Student Handout 2: (Article) *Hardin’s Famous Lefthand Walking Narrow Path Seeking Greatness*
- ◆ Student Handout 3: *Goal Setting for a Stronger Me*



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TEACHER RESOURCE

<https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/nc-oy1-opioid-fact-sheet-final-2017-12-6.pdf>

LESSON RESOURCES

[Hardin’s Famous Lefthand Walking Narrow Path Seeking Greatness](#)

(Extension Resources) <https://www.nlm.nih.gov/nativevoices/exhibition/healing-ways/healing-communities/native-games.html>

[Indian Lands \(doi.gov\)](#)

STANDARDS

National Health Education Standards

- ◆ Standard 5: Students will demonstrate the ability to use decision-making skills to enhance health.
- ◆ Standard 8: Students will demonstrate the ability to advocate for personal, family, and community health.

Next Generation Science Standards

- ◆ MS-LS1-8 From Molecules to Organisms
- ◆ Structures and Processes: LS1.D: Information Processing: Each sense receptor responds to different inputs (electromagnetic, mechanical, chemical), transmitting them as signals that travel along nerve cells to the brain. The signals are then processed in the brain, resulting in immediate behaviors or memories.



Procedure

1. Begin the activity by asking students to pair/share what their favorite physical activity is. Then, ask if they can estimate how much time they spend in a day being physically active versus being sedentary. Use this as an opportunity to teach the academic word sedentary (adj: having little movement or staying inactive).
2. Next, as a class read Student Handout 1: “Being Physically Fit is a Way of Life.”
3. Direct students to look at the map of the tribes in Montana. Ask:
 - ◇ How does this look different than a road map you may use if you travel?
 - ◇ According to this article, how has the emphasis and purpose of physical activity changed over time?
 - ◇ Do you think that physical activity is just as important today?

Notes for the Teacher:

To adapt this lesson for local use, consider this extension activity. While this article shares information about tribes in Montana, the teacher can also share a map of current and/or previous tribes in their region, which could foster additional research and knowledge about the tribal landscape. This is also an opportunity to show students that many tribes were forced to move westward due to removal and relocation by federal policies. This is why there are a greater number of tribes in the West. This map by the [Bureau of Indian Affairs](#) shows the current location of tribes in the continental U.S.

4. Restate that Native Americans were traditionally very athletic as they played games or held physical challenges to be sure they could stay fit for hunting or protecting their communities. Share with students that after European contact, the tribes experienced many historical traumas and they were forced by the U.S. government and settlers to leave their home lands. Sometimes this resulted in fighting to protect their homes or long journeys that cost many Native lives. Many Native people live on reservations and may not have access to the same opportunities as other young people.



Procedure (continued)

Alcohol and drug use such as opioids are higher among Native young people because they have so many more challenges to face and historical traumas that still hurt the community. Therefore, a lot of communities are trying to revitalize traditional games as well as popular modern sports to keep young people more active and healthier. Playing games on a team also helps young people feel more emotionally and socially supported.

5. Then, introduce the article about a youth of the Crow tribe in Montana who focused on basketball as his way of staying physically and mentally healthy. Explain that the young man named Famous had already lost family members and other community members to opioid and alcohol misuse and he did not want to follow that same path. He wanted to set an example for other youth in his community.
6. Have students read the article [Hardin's Famous Lefthand Walking Narrow Path Seeking Greatness](#) together or independently per teacher preference. Students can answer the following questions independently or as a group:
 - ◇ How is being physically fit a way of life for Famous Lefthand?
 - ◇ How is Famous Lefthand's basketball and college opportunities important for his community in Montana?
 - ◇ How might Famous Lefthand's commitment to basketball help to keep him away from drugs and alcohol?
 - ◇ How does making a commitment to anything in our lives strengthen our ability to be resilient?
 - ◇ Look at the chart in the handout on how physical exercise supports our health. How does this information support the benefits of being physically fit?
7. To close out the lesson, ask students to reflect on the percentage of physical activity they do in a day. Direct students to the Goal Setting for a Stronger Me handout to set a small action goal and a larger action goal that could help them develop more of a tradition of physical activity.
8. (Extension) To build students' knowledge of Native games and their cultural use, visit the National Library of Medicine's *Native Voices* site: <https://www.nlm.nih.gov/nativevoices/exhibition/healing-ways/healing-communities/native-games.html>



Student Handout 1

Being Physically Fit is a Traditional Way of Life

By Dr. Shane Doyle, Apsáalooke Nation

Native American tribes like those in Montana have a strong tradition of being excellent athletes in great physical shape. Many tribes have traditional games and activities that were played to keep them in shape for hunting, fishing, building, gathering, and protecting their resources. Many tribes today continue to play those traditional games or have started teaching the young people the games of the past to encourage them to be more physically active since the lifestyle has changed and many tribes still suffer from the historical trauma of being forced off their lands by the US government. You may even recognize some of the traditional tribal activities such as surfboarding by Native Hawaiians, dog sled racing by Alaska Natives, or stickball (similar to lacrosse) played by many tribes across the nation.

To build stronger bodies and minds, many Native youth are still training to be excellent athletes especially at the high school level. Native American students frequently achieve state championships in sports like cross country long distance running, basketball, and track and field events. Here is a map that shows the reservations and Tribal Nations whose homeland is in Montana. This is my homeland too because I am from the Apsáalooke (Crow) Nation. There are 12 tribes represented in Montana but there are only 8 reservations. Some of these reservations are on very rural land which makes it harder for the people to have the same resources and services that other communities do. A reservation is a section of land managed by a tribe and designated by the federal government. Reservations were established when many tribes were forced to give up their lands and keep moving westward as settlers took over the US.



Figure 1: Tribal Territories in Montana
(<http://www.montana.edu/iefa/introductiontomtribalnations/tribalterritories.html>)

Dr. Shane Doyle is an educational consultant and member of the Apsaaloké (Crow) Nation. His Apsaaloké name means Old Buffalo Bull, and he lives in Bozeman with his wife, Megkian, and their five children.



Student Handout 2

Hardin's Famous Lefthand walking narrow path seeking greatness

By Lori Jo Berg, Feb. 10, 2020, MontanaSports.com

HARDIN — Not a day has gone by in the past 15 years that Famous Lefthand hasn't touched a basketball. In fact, he sleeps with a ball tucked under his arm every night.

It's more than just a round object to Famous — he treats the ball like it has a soul of its own.

"My dad told me that ball can take me places," said Famous, a senior on the Hardin boys basketball team. "I see what it has done for me already and I respect it greatly."

Famous first picked up a basketball at the age of 5. His first hoop was made from a clothes hanger and clung tightly to the back of his door. Even then, he was fascinated with the ball going through the hoop.

"I love the sound of the ball going through the net. It's a feeling I can't explain," he said.

When he was younger, Famous' mother, Carlotta Ware, encouraged him to play with the older kids. They didn't like it, admitted Famous, but he viewed it as a challenge. His mother, a former standout athlete herself, saw his talent early on.

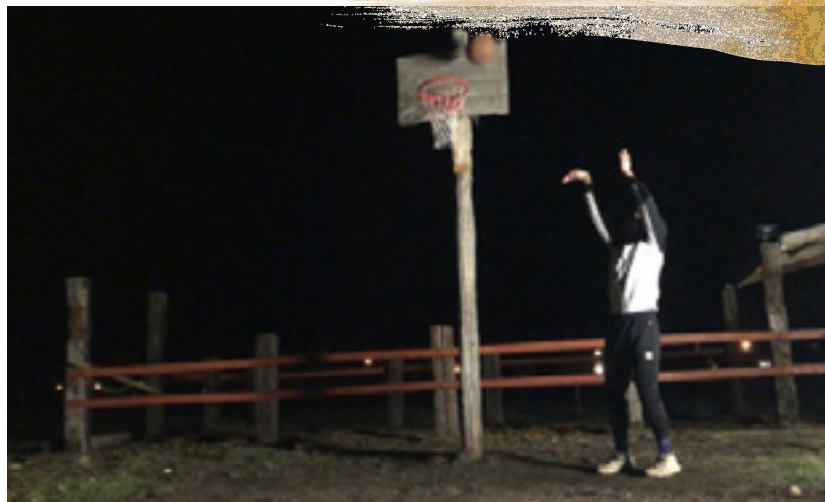


Photo courtesy Famous Lefthand

Many of today's youth are traveling across the country to elite basketball camps and tournaments. Sure, that's one way to improve, but Famous learned to play basketball the old-school way: on the black top, often under the headlights of a parked car. For cold Montana nights, the gym was always open.

He frequented local tournaments with a group of kids he now refers to as his brothers, and many are the same guys he plays with today. Famous got a taste of what it was like to have success early, and it hasn't stopped there.

Winning basketball games, whether you're 5 or 18, is so much more than just a tally in the win column or a number on the scoreboard to the Crow Reservation, where Famous is an enrolled tribal member. Basketball symbolizes hope and unity.



“It means a lot to everyone,” Famous said. “Some people don’t get out often and the games are their entertainment. Everyone wants to see all the kids succeed, so the Crow people support each other, and we run in packs. Once I get a schedule, I hand it out to everyone I see so they can come to the games.”

There’s no doubt Famous is a local celebrity and role model, and it’s a position he doesn’t take lightly.

“I like the role because I just want to inspire people and the younger generation. I want to stay on the right path and show people what it’s like to work hard and have success,” he said. “I recruit people to work out with me in the park day and night.”

Famous knows the impact he’s had on the younger generations in part because his work ethic is visible for everyone to see. Before the bus leaves for away games, Famous is in the gym at 5 a.m. By 8 a.m., he has an audience of young kids watching intently as he works on his craft.

Followers have come to know Famous can be found in the gym before every home game, too. He’s not to leave until he makes 150 jump shots, 150 3-pointers and 100 free throws. It’s a routine he’s set for himself. And that’s before the game even starts.

Famous credits his mother and his will to simply want to be the best for his second-to-none work ethic.

“The drive really comes from the fact that I just want to get better,” Famous said. “My mom is the one who has kept me on the straight and narrow and taught me wrong from right. She was strict and works hard. I look up to her, and she is my role model.”

The four-to-six hours of practice he puts in a day give Famous the confidence to stay cool, calm and collected on and off the court.

When asked if feels pressure to bring home a state championship, his response might seem unexpected: “No, I don’t feel anything like that at all. I believe in myself and my teammates. My community believes in me and I don’t get nervous. I will still be supported no matter what happens and, at the very least, I’ve inspired kids.”

Make no mistake, Famous wants to bring that state championship trophy back to the Crow people, and he likes his chances. His team is quick and has the size to go along with it. Famous is averaging 24 points, four rebounds, three assists and two steals per game while shooting 43 percent from the field.

Despite all the accomplishments, trophies, and attention, Famous is slow to talk about himself. It’s about the team, the community and the younger generation. In true Famous fashion, he has some words of wisdom for those around him.

“Don’t be satisfied with your success — there is always someone better than you. Look for something to improve on,” he said. “Partying and drinking are not an escape — you’ll be stuck in your ways.”

As much as he has enjoyed every minute of his career at Hardin and has used his popularity wisely, Famous can’t help but think about college. Yet he doesn’t feel any pressure around going to college or playing basketball for Rocky Mountain College on a scholarship, either.

“I don’t want to be like any other star,” he said. “I just want to make a name for myself like I did in high school.”

With a name like Famous, how could he not?



Benefits of Exercise



Healthy heart muscle



Perfect brain function



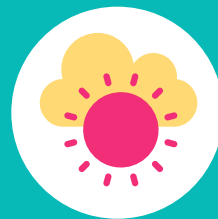
Clean respiratory system



Excellent bone structure



Wonderful eyesight



Outdoor and fresh air



Strong immunity system



Calm and happy



Elimination of toxins



Body weight reduction



Healthy nutrition



Swifter and faster!



Student Handout 3

Goal Setting for a Stronger Me

Directions: Reflect on what you learned about traditional ways and purposes for being physically fit. Answer the following questions and then set a small and large goal for improving or maintaining your physical fitness.

How can being physically active benefit our lives beyond just physical health?

How can you use what you learned about the American Indian perspective on fitness to benefit your own life?

Goal 1: Set a small goal that could become a habit to improve your physical fitness. This can be something you do for even one minute a day that helps you be more active.

Goal 2: Set a larger goal that can help you increase your physical fitness over time.

