



RUNNINGMEDICINE



Native Health Initiative
www.loving-service.us

2024 ANNUAL REPORT



Prepared by
**Jessica
Begay**

Table of Contents

| | | |
|---|----|---|
| → | 01 | Letter from the Program Manager |
| → | 02 | Running Medicine Overview |
| → | 03 | RM Demographics |
| → | 05 | RM Youth Summary |
| → | 06 | 2024 Survey Results |
| → | 07 | Volunteering Highlights |
| → | 08 | Community Events |
| → | 10 | RM Future Outlook |
| → | 11 | Partnerships Praises and Acknowledgements |
| → | 13 | Conclusion |

Letter from the Program Manager



Jessica Begay

NHI RM Program Manager

Greetings, Family!

2024 felt like a marathon, metaphorically speaking (and for some, quite literally!). Fred Lebow, the founder of the New York Marathon, once said, "The marathon can humble you." While this quote speaks to the personal journey of running, it also reflects the shared experience of being part of a community where every runner faces similar challenges and celebrates triumphs together. This captures the essence of the power of running and the bonds it creates along the way.

That's what NHI's Running Medicine was all about in 2024 – community, connection, personal growth, and achievement. The program emphasized heritage, culture, and moving with purpose. Every participant, from youth to elders, brought their unique stories and energy to the RM celebrations, weaving a stronger sense of community while uplifting one another. It was a beautiful year, and I feel so fortunate to have been part of it!

In addition to all this, we've seen our youth thrive at USATF events, added more All-Americans to our list, hosted our third cross-country meet, represented at numerous local community events, moved with special guests of honor, and shared many moments of laughter and joy. This report provides all the details! Enjoy!

Jessica Begay, MS
NHI Running Medicine
Program Manager

Running Medicine Overview



Vision

For over 9 years now, Running Medicine (referred to as RM, a program of Native Health Initiative) has focused on movement as medicine and has brought our unique program to communities around New Mexico. Our mission is empowering families and communities to greater mind, body, and spirit through movement. We accomplish this by instilling our core values in each of our programs and communities. Through them, we've seen individuals and families come together in love, support, and health.

Mission

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

Complete RM Demographics

Based on registrant information, we had over **1,030 registered participants in 2024!** This does not include special guests and visitors.

NHI Running Medicine is comprised of core programs (RM locations that are organized and funded under NHI), and partnership programs (RM locations that are organized through an external organization, but have access to RM resources and support for events). Current RM sites are listed below. For the sake of our program, we are only interested in collecting Ethnicity, Tribal Affiliation, and Age. Visual Representation may be found on the following page.



Core Programs

Albuquerque surrounding areas

Pueblos of Acoma & Laguna



Partnership Programs

**Algodones Elementary School
(Bernallillo Public Schools)**

**Pueblo of Zuni (Zuni Youth
Enrichment Project)**

RM Communities Represented

Summary

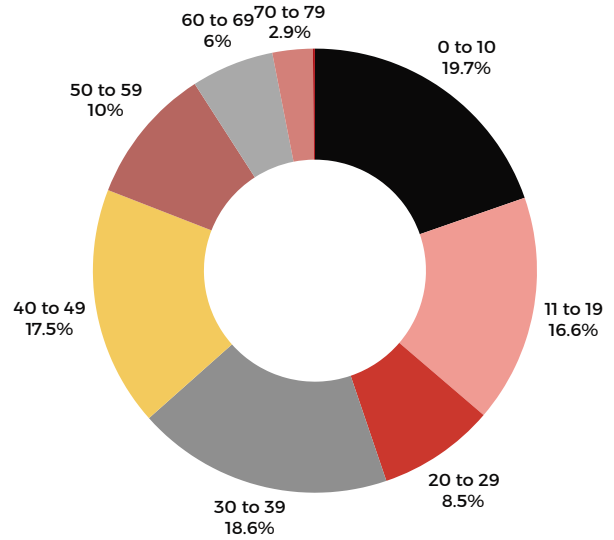
RM proudly serves community members who represent **39 Federally-recognized US Indigenous tribes, 15 of which are New Mexico pueblo communities; and, 1 Canada First Nations.**

List of Federally-recognized US-Indigenous tribes: Arikara, Apache, Chahta, Cherokee Nation, Cheyenne (River Sioux Tribe), Chickasaw, Chiricahua Apache, Crow, Hidatsa, Hopi, Kawaika, Navajo Nation (Diné), Oglala Lakota, Pueblo of Ohkay Owingeh, Oklahoma Choctaw, Omaha, Pikani, Pima, Pueblo of Acoma, Pueblo of Chochiti, Pueblo of Isleta, Pueblo of Jemez, Pueblo of Kewa (Santo Domingo), Pueblo of Laguna (includes K'awaika and Village of Paguat), Pueblo of Pecos, Pueblo of San Felipe, Pueblo of Sandia, Pueblo of Santa Ana, Pueblo of Santa Clara, Pueblo of Taos, Pueblo of Tesuque, Pueblo of Zia, Pueblo of Zuni (Ashiwi), Salish, Seneca, Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate, Tsalagi, Unk, Winnebago

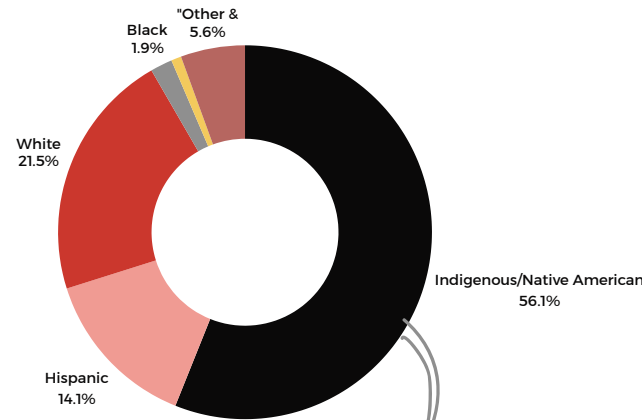
Canada First Nations: Wiikwemkoong

Non-US Indigenous tribes and other ethnicities included: Celtic, Mexican, Guatemala, Hausa, Huichol, Raramuri, South American, Pipil, Quechua, Arab, Dutch, European, Mediterranean, Kurdish, unknown/mixed and undisclosed.

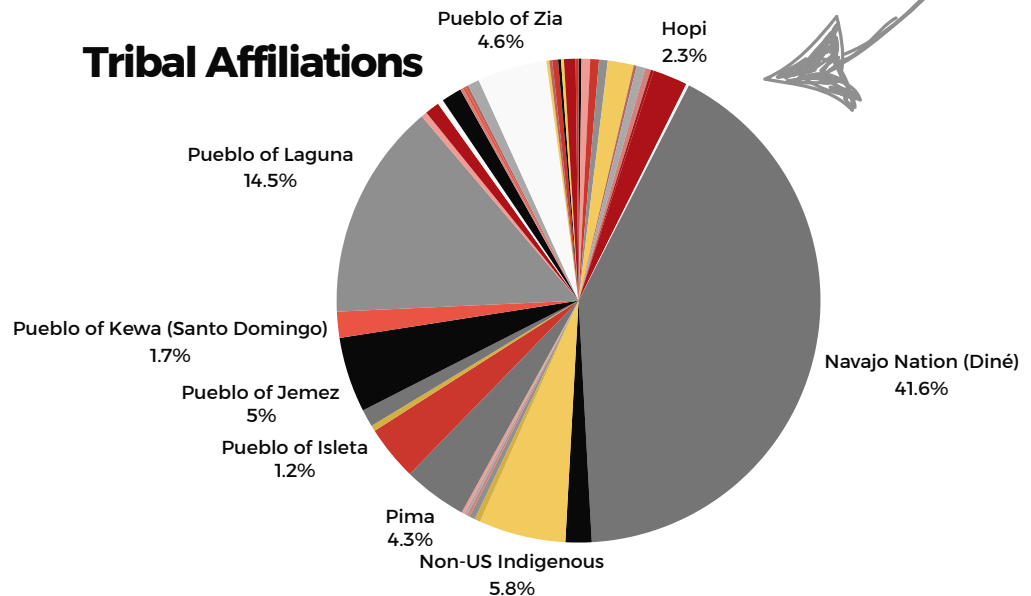
Ages of Participants



Reported Ethnicities



Tribal Affiliations



RM Youth keep rocking it!



Youth Summary

- 22 youth competed at State, 5 youth competed at Regionals, and no youth chose to compete in Nationals.
- 63 youth competed at State, and 27 traveled to Shelbyville, IN to compete in the 2024 USATF National Junior Olympic Cross Country Championships
- 1 (Athena Martinez, 17-18yo, 20th place) was added to our RM All-American list, bringing us to a total of 11 in our 9-year history!!

Snapshot

Total number of youth: over 400

Participated in Spring USATF: over 50

Participated in Fall USATF: over 80



RM Survey Results

The WHY:



NOTE: data represented in percent. (%)

Biggest changes participants saw:

- more energy
- maintaining fitness and friendships, staying as healthy as possible with culture
- motivation
- community support
- community connection
- dedication to movement
- family moving together, building stronger mind body and spirit together
- connecting with other moms!

63%



Combo workouts (run, walk, strength/stretching)

56%



runners

63%



saw improvement in overall wellness

100%



laughs and smiles!!

Volunteering with RM

Staying with the “marathon” theme of 2024, the RM staff took the challenge of recruiting new volunteers to a whole new level. Compared to previous seasons, we saw an overwhelming increase in volunteer interest and participation. This is always an exciting sign of growth and development. Our volunteers love being part of the running community and truly embody the spirit of Lovingservice.

In 2024, NHI’s Running Medicine had 51 volunteers (42 in the spring and 33 in the fall), with 22 of them remaining dedicated throughout both seasons and likely to return for future seasons. Among these volunteers, we also welcomed several first-timers. We are deeply grateful for our amazing volunteers, without whom we couldn’t have a successful RM season.



Fun Facts about RM Volunteers

- most identify as Indigenous or Native American
- most are parents of RM-ers
- most said that volunteering with RM greatly improved their overall wellness, and especially loved being able to participate in NIH-sponsored races!
- Elements that were most helpful in supporting their wellness included: encouragement, motivation, positive attitudes, and the community-minded movement

Volunteer suggestions

- Fun day adjustments
- More communication/organization in sign-ups and events
- More social/mingle opportunities during celebrations
- Off-season workouts/challenges

Community Event Highlights

RM continues to capture the eyes of the local community, and this year was a marathon of events for RM!

A memorable moment for this year was helping facilitate movement sessions for the 2024 CDC Conference: Tribal Practices for Wellness in Indian Country, held here in Albuquerque, NM. We were contacted by a previous RM-er and helped facilitate movement sessions over the course of their conference for their attendees. We provided: morning walk/runs, stretch breaks, sunrise yoga, morning Zumba, and HIIT sessions. Additionally, NHI RM was given a generous donation for services. This was added to the RM fund, as well as used to pay volunteers to lead these sessions.



Memorable moments were shared between attendees and RM volunteers, and we were given outstanding feedback on the program. One attendee was impressed with “what we could,” in terms of not needing a gym or exercise equipment – which is what RM is about, movement for the sake of movement and being creative in doing so!

Another notable day was April 20, 2024. We called this our “Fun Day,” where RM was booked to help lead/participate in three events in one day! These events were the “Families Moving Together, 2K walk/run/jog” put on by Bernalillo High School, “Lung Association Stair Climb” by ALA, and a Diabetes Resource Fair by UNMHSC DEI. We led stretches, started races, participated in the stair climb with an RM team, created a walkathon, and set up a table, all in one day – and, again, with the amazing support of RM staff and volunteers!

→ **Movement event assistance**

5

→ **Event support**

34

Community Event List

| Event Name | Host Organization |
|---|----------------------------|
| Go Red for Native Women | American Heart Association |
| Indoor Track with Brooks Beasts | RM |
| Six Pack Run | Heart and Sole |
| RM Opening Ceremony | RM |
| RM Easter at Bike N Coffee | Bike N Coffee |
| Mike Daney Event | NHI |
| UNM Health Professions Symposium | UNM School of Medicine |
| Diabetes Resource Fair | UNMH DEI |
| Lung Association Stair Climb | American Lung Association |
| Families Moving Together, 2K walk/run/jog | Bernalillo High School |
| Family Fitness Night | Reginald Chavez Elementary |
| Joint youth practice with NB3 | RM + NB3 |
| RM Zuni Pride Day and 5K | RM Zuni, ZYEP |
| CDC Conference movement session | CDC |
| RM Spring Closing Day | RM |
| CBNHC's Diabetes Program, Health Fair Run | CBNHC (Tohajilee) |
| Morning Star Longest Day Carnival | Morning Star |
| Narbona Pass Classic | Dwayne |
| RM Fall Volunteer Retreat | RM |
| Isotopes Game Native American Heritage Night | Isotopes |
| Red Ribbon Relay | |
| Tamaya Health Fair | Pueblo of Santa Ana |
| NM United Game | NM United |
| Lung association walk/run | American Lung Association |
| Kiva Club Prayer Run | UNM Kiva Club |
| NHI's Jim Thorpe Run | NHI |
| Tiguex IDP Celebration | CABQ |
| NM Unites/ SOMOS Unidos Indigenous People's Day | RM / SOMOS Unidos |
| Big Brother Big Sisters Scare Event | Big Brother Big Sisters NM |
| RM Youth Flag Runners | NM United, SOMOS Unidos |
| 10 Mile Foothills run | CABQ |
| National Petroglyph's Indigenous Families Weekend | Nat. Petroglyph Monument |
| Gratitude Run | NHI |
| Barnes and Noble Book Fair | B&N |

Future Outlook

Although we strive to provide the best possible experience for our participants, especially those who dedicate their time and energy as volunteers, we acknowledge that there is always room for improvement. We are continuously working to improve the overall program and take all feedback seriously. This page outlines our collective responses to the critiques we've received and how we plan to address these issues in 2025.

According to surveys, 40% of our participants feel that little to no improvement is needed, which is a decrease from last year's report. However, this is a positive sign as the feedback we did receive highlights tangible improvements (for the most part)!

Communication

Many participants and volunteers suggested increasing communication, possibly through a text messaging system. After reviewing the request, we found that there's limited room in our annual budget to accommodate this cost. As a result, we've been using email, the GroupMe app, text messaging (within groups), and social media (Facebook and Instagram). In 2025, we will continue working to better utilize the GroupMe app to communicate information more efficiently. While everything is generally on schedule, there are times when things change, and we appreciate the community's patience as we fine-tune our communication tools.

Change of scenery

YES! We are actively working on improving our event locations and introducing more variety in scenery. Before the start of 2025, the RM staff met with some members who shared their thoughts on where to hold RM celebrations. Concerns about safety at certain locations were raised, and we took those seriously. As a result, we'll be using some new spaces, including more trail-type runs!

Integration

We've noticed a bit of disconnect within the community, and some participants have expressed similar concerns. To help encourage more comfortable interactions, we've been promoting the use of icebreakers and mingling games at our celebrations. In 2025, we'll continue to support our leaders in growing their leadership skills and fostering an inclusive environment for all movers and families.

Other Suggestions

- Off-season RM workouts and challenges to keep people moving (currently in progress).
- Mentoring by coaches and volunteers as a possible addition: older kids assigned younger kids to mentor for about 15 min./day. This can include running together, sharing strategies, and letting younger kids feel part of a team and learn that they CAN get to be as skilled as older kids.
- Augment the physical training with healthy eating, coaching and cooking classes.
- More icebreakers and social opportunities.

Partnership Praises



Earlier in 2024, we took time to review both our core and partnership programs, specifically focusing on inclusion within the RM communities and the benefits they offer. We noticed that participation in partnership program events and the associated incentives needed attention, and we made the necessary adjustments. This year, we received positive feedback for improving and adhering to MOUs for our partnership programs. These adjustments included: the option for partners to maintain their own volunteers or have NHI oversee them; adjusted fees based on participant numbers; inclusion in the \$20 shoe sale; eligibility for incentive race submissions; and an increase in in-person visits and support from RM. We've worked hard to make RM as accessible as possible to our partnership programs.

Looking ahead, we will continue striving to bring more RM Albuquerque-specific events—such as HIIT, Yoga, local incentive races, and social events—to other RM communities. Our goal for the coming year is to strengthen and build our RM communities through internal program collaboration.

Notable Partnership outcomes

- RM Algodones held community events that encouraged their entire communities to come join in movement and health!
- Native Health Initiative paid for 10 individuals to be in a competitive run: The Ho'n A:wan Cha:we A:deyah, which brings awareness of the need for increasing the number of Zuni foster families/relative placements within our community.
- Increased connections to RM celebrations and invitations.
- Included flag runners for the United, New Mexico games
- On-going support for RM-Zuni by offering shoe sales in the Spring 24.
- Increased connection and check-in with the new manager of RM coming on board.
- RM Zuni press release: click [here](#)

Acknowledgements and Partnerships

Many of our events would not have been possible without the love and support of our RM, NHI, and Albuquerque community. This page only names a few of those who have helped us with their time and energy (and sometimes monies) spent.

Indigenous Organizations

Native Strength Revolution
Wings of America
Native Women Running
Notah Begay III Foundation
Indian Pueblo Cultural Center
Zuni Youth Enrichment Project

Local Community and City Organizations

KidsCook!
Bernalillo Sheriff Department
ABQ Parks and Recreation
ONE Albuquerque, Mayor's Office
SOMOS Unidos Foundation, NM United
American Lung Association
American Diabetes Association
Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Mexico
Presbyterian Ear Institute
Coalition to Stop Violence Against Native Women

Businesses

Gatorade
Bike In Coffee
Michael Thomas Coffee
Southwest Healing Massage
Canteen Brewhouse
BeWell NM

Running Organizations

Heart & Sole
Dukes Running Club
Runners for Public Lands
Renew Earth Running
Brooks Beasts
Bosque Running Shop

Schools and Universities

Native American Community Academy
Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute
Central New Mexico Community College
University of New Mexico (UNM)
UNM Health Sciences Campus, and several other departments
UNM School of Medicine, Sports Medicine



Concluding Remarks

We experienced so many wonderful moments this past year! We witnessed tremendous growth - personally, professionally, and physically (for many of our RM-ers). We're excited to see what this year holds for the RM community. As always, it's an honor to hear how RM has played a part in that growth. It reminds us that we're not alone. Here at RM, we have a rooted, loving, and supportive family that will always help lift us up when we need it.

In conclusion, 2024 was a marathon of events that humbled us as an organization, reminding us to turn to our community for support and encouragement. This year wouldn't have been possible without the love and dedication of an incredible community of movers, a committed staff, and generous community partners.



Thank you!

For more information

Social Media

**Running Medicine (FB),
@runningmedicine (instagram)**



Email

runningmedicineabq@gmail.com



Website

runningmedicine.org



Address

1024 Eubank Blvd NE, Suite D

