

BROWNING PUBLIC SCHOOLS
WELLNESS MODEL.

by
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DEDICATION

My dissertation is dedicated to my parents, Ronald and Rose Crawford; my husband, Alec Salway; my children, Jonathon Salway and Hailee Salway; and my grandson. Their support and encouragement helped me achieve my educational goal.

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ABSTRACT

The Blackfeet Community Needs Assessment reported that 6% of residents attempted suicide in the past year, 40% experienced anxiety severe enough to interfere with daily functioning—twice the national average—and 25% reported four or more adverse childhood experiences (Blackfeet Community Needs Assessment, 2017). In this broader community context, Browning Public Schools faces workforce challenges, with approximately 450 staff positions and 208 resignations or retirements between 2018 and 2022 (Browning Public Schools data specialist, 2025).

The purpose of this study was to develop and implement a wellness model for Browning Public Schools to promote staff well-being, reduce burnout, and support staff retention. For this study, a wellness model is a structured, culturally grounded framework that integrates physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual dimensions of well-being into school practices and organizational culture. The model was developed through a review of wellness literature, analysis of district employment data, and integration of Indigenous-informed frameworks reflective of the Blackfeet community.

Implementation included monthly staff wellness activities and a bi-weekly self-assessment to support staff reflection across multiple dimensions of health. Data collected during implementation focused on staff participation, self-reported indicators of wellness, and perceived impacts on morale, workplace relationships, and engagement. Findings suggest that the wellness model may contribute to reduced burnout, improved morale, stronger relationships between staff and administrators, and lower absenteeism.

The conceptual framework for the wellness model is grounded in the Sacred Circle Stones “AAUUKSTUKSIN,” which emphasizes interconnectivity, balance, and harmony across physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual domains. This culturally responsive approach provides a sustainable framework for promoting staff well-being in Indigenous and rural school contexts.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Study

The Browning Public School District is experiencing elevated levels of staff burnout, turnover, and low morale, closely linked to prolonged exposure to grief, trauma, and systemic stressors in the school and broader community. School staff routinely encounter student and family crises involving loss, mental health challenges, substance use, and socioeconomic hardship, while managing increased instructional demands, staffing shortages, and limited access to support services. Over time, these conditions contribute to emotional exhaustion, compassion fatigue, and reduced workplace engagement, increasing the likelihood of absenteeism and staff attrition. These trends underscore the need for intentional, system-level supports that treat staff well-being as a critical component of school sustainability. The Browning Public School Wellness Model was developed in response to these challenges to provide a comprehensive, culturally grounded framework for supporting staff well-being. Rather than relying on isolated or reactive interventions, the model integrates physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual dimensions of well-being into district practices, policies, and organizational culture. Grounded in the Sacred Circle Stones “AAUUKSTUKSIN,” the wellness model acknowledges the interconnections among grief, trauma, and workplace stress, and promotes balance, healing, and resilience. By embedding regular wellness activities, reflective self-assessment, and culturally responsive supports within the school system, the model directly addresses the root causes of burnout and low morale. The Sacred Circle Stones “AAUUKSTUKSIN” represent the indigenous lodge, the Pikuni Lodge, which was used not only for shelter but also for life, ceremony. The four

directions consist of prayer, healing, balance, and harmony. The Pikuni (Blackfeet) believe in including the four directions (North, East, South, and West) in all our ceremonies, our seasons (Winter, Spring, Fall, Summer), the beginning and ending of life, and all the teachings of our culture, language, and traditions, all of this is connected through the Sacred Circle Stones “AAUUKSTUKSIN”. This approach positions staff well-being not as an individual responsibility but as an institutional priority essential for improving retention, strengthening staff-administrator relationships, and fostering a healthier, more stable educational environment.

Browning Public Schools District #9 is on the Blackfeet Reservation in Browning, MT. The population comprises approximately 12,000 residents and 18,000 enrolled Blackfeet members, and the school district has approximately 2,700 students in grades Pre-K through 12. 98% of the students are Native American; 2% are of another ethnicity (Community Needs Assessment, 2017). The district also has an alternative school for students who prefer a hands-on learning experience or who may be dealing with grief, depression, and/or trauma; the teaching style incorporates traditional values and trauma-informed practices in its curriculum, aligned with the Office of Public Instruction (OPI) standards. The alternative school accepts students who may be in their 13th year, meaning that some credit recovery must meet the Montana Office of Public Instruction (OPI) graduation requirements.

Currently, the Browning Public School District has 450 positions, with 403 filled; all positions consist of certified staff (such as teachers, counselors), professional technical staff (such as administration, nurses, supportive staff), paraprofessional staff (such as teacher’s assistants), and classified staff (such as janitors, secretaries, and cooks). Several factors affect staff well-being and contribute to absenteeism, poor relationships among school personnel, and

burnout. For example, the Browning Public School District faces staff recruitment challenges, including the Human Resources Director position being re-advertised multiple times and employees leaving for higher wages at other agencies on the Blackfeet Reservation.

Finally, since COVID-19, staff turnover has been dramatic due to burnout from student behavior, pressure from the Office of Public Instruction (OPI) standards, and the Browning Public School administrator (Browning Public School data specialist, 2025). Students and staff are severely suffering from grief and loss of so many community members who have passed away from the COVID-19 virus and Fentanyl overdose (retrieved from Spookinaapi data, 2024). Browning Public School staff are experiencing burnout and low morale due to the student-to-teacher ratio; teachers also express in staff meetings that depression, grief, and pressure from administrators to meet the Office of Public Instruction (OPI) standards for curriculum and instruction hours are overwhelming (retrieved from Browning Public School staff survey, data specialist 2025).

In 2017, Browning Public Schools engaged Kaufmanns & Associates to develop a strategic plan to identify the strengths and weaknesses of its staff and students. Kaufmanns & Associates is a Tribal and Urban Indian consulting firm dedicated to developing local solutions for intergenerational healing and Indigenized strategies that honor tribal/urban values and plans. The key findings from the strategic plan study were that Kaufmanns & Associates and Browning Public School Administration identified that there is: 1) limited access to wellness opportunities, 2) a lack of communication between staff, 3) staff feeling unsupported; and 4) the students' social and emotional needs are so overbearing for the teachers that the availability of instructional time is limited. Teachers return home with a heavy burden and no way to relieve

stress. The findings of the Browning Public School strategic plan enabled further study of staff needs and the development of a culturally appropriate wellness model.

The research question in this study is: What outcomes are associated with the development and implementation of the Browning Public School Wellness Model with respect to staff burnout, morale, workplace relationships, absenteeism, and retention? In this study, a wellness model is defined as a structured, theory-informed, and culturally responsive framework designed to promote holistic well-being by addressing physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual dimensions of health. Unlike isolated wellness activities, a wellness model provides systematic guidance for assessment, implementation, and evaluation. According to ASCD & the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2014), evaluation is essential to ensure that wellness initiatives are integrated into organizational practices and sustained over time. Existing literature emphasizes that effective wellness models share several core components, including leadership engagement, regular wellness assessment, staff participation, culturally relevant practices, access to supportive resources, and mechanisms for ongoing evaluation and improvement. Research indicates that comprehensive, multidimensional wellness frameworks are more effective than fragmented or short-term interventions in reducing burnout, improving morale, and supporting workforce retention. Trauma-informed and ecological approaches underscore the importance of addressing both individual and systemic contributors to stress in school environments. According to Israel et al. (1998, 2010) & Minkler & Wallerstein (2008), wellness models are commonly constructed through participatory and collaborative processes that reflect the cultural, organizational, and community context in which they are implemented. Many models are developed through community-based participatory research, stakeholder input, and existing

theoretical frameworks to ensure relevance and sustainability. In Indigenous and rural contexts, wellness models often integrate traditional knowledge systems, values, and relational worldviews to promote balance, healing, and interconnectedness. The Browning Public School Wellness Model follows this approach by grounding its structure in the Sacred Circle Stones “AAUUKSTUKSIN” while aligning with evidence-based wellness practices identified in the literature. The goal of this study is to deepen understanding of the process of developing and implementing a culturally grounded wellness model within Browning Public Schools, using community-based participatory research (CBPR) and Indigenous research methods. Specifically, the study seeks to document how staff perspectives, Indigenous knowledge systems, and collaborative decision-making can inform the creation of a sustainable school-based wellness framework. While the long-term intended outcome of the Browning Public School Wellness Model is to promote staff health and wellness, improve classroom effectiveness, and foster positive, safe relationships among staff, administrators, and students, the primary focus of this research is to generate knowledge about the development and implementation process of such a model within an Indigenous-serving public school district.

As shown in Table 1, the study's objectives provide a structured framework for achieving the research goal by guiding the assessment, development, and implementation phases of the Browning Public School Wellness Model. These objectives are designed to support knowledge generation on the development of the participatory wellness model and to inform its practical application within the district.

Table # 1. Objectives for Developing and Implementing the Browning Public School Wellness Model

Objective #1: Assess	Assess the perspectives and knowledge of Browning Public School staff on physical, spiritual, mental, and emotional health by conducting five focus groups and fifteen interviews grounded within the Indigenous Sacred Circle Stone "AAUUKSTUKSIN" Framework.
Objective # 2: Develop	Based on the results of objective 1, developing a culturally appropriate wellness model for the Browning Public Schools will be achieved through a participatory analysis with a community advisory board, including representatives from the school staff, students, parents, and the local community. The culturally appropriate model will be based on the insights gathered from the talking circles and interviews conducted with the Wellness Day participants.
Objective #3: Implement	Implement the Wellness Model in the Browning Public School district by integrating it into school personnel policies (Standard of Operation), involving the Browning Public School stakeholders, and presenting it to the Browning Public School Administration and the Board of Trustees.

The Browning Public Schools Wellness Model is a comprehensive solution designed to address the study's goals and objectives and to provide a platform for employees to voice concerns about their work environment. The anticipated outcomes of the model include reduced burnout, strengthened relationships between staff and students, increased morale, identification of staff health strengths and weaknesses, improved staff retention and productivity, and reduced staff absenteeism. These outcomes were measured through participation in the wellness day, end-of-year evaluations, and the execution of several contracts for the next school year. By focusing on these outcomes, the Wellness Model aimed to foster a healthier work environment and improve outcomes for Browning Public School staff. Research conducted at Browning Public School develop three products that define the School's Wellness. 1) The Browning Public Schools Wellness Model will guide staff in streamlining intervention efforts and evaluating health. 2) A self-assessment tool for the school staff based on the Wellness Model. The self-assessment tool will help individuals identify their balance and harmony in the Physical, Mental,

Emotional, and Spiritual quadrants of the Sacred Circle Stones. 3) The researcher implemented a Browning Public Schools standard of operations to promote a Health and Wellness policy based on the Wellness Model. The long-term outcome of the Wellness Model is to provide a healthier approach to managing high stress and to promote positive outcomes for Browning Public School staff.

Data collection employed qualitative methods, including 15 interviews and 5 talking circles. The interviews and talking circles involved five Browning Public School members aged 25-65 years, including one administrator, principal, teacher, paraprofessional, and classified staff member. Each participant signed an informed consent before the interviews and talking circles begin, and they are reassured that all discussions are confidential and that no identifiable information will be shared. The interviews and talking circle took place in Browning Public School classrooms, teachers' lounges, and wellness rooms, thereby ensuring a collaborative and inclusive research process.

The Community Participatory Advisory Board (CAB) comprises the Superintendent of Browning Public Schools, the Assistant Superintendent, the Director of Student and Staff Support, and the Wellness Coordinator. These individuals volunteered for the Community Participatory Advisory Board (CAB) to ensure that the voices, needs, and concerns of Browning Public School staff are meaningfully incorporated into the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the Browning Public School Wellness Model. Each of these individuals ensured that the Browning Public School staff's decision-making was acknowledged in this study. According to Phillips (2018), this study is guided by the CBPR approach, which recognizes the community as a unified identity; in this case, the Kanien'kehá:ka of Kahnawà:ke.

It addresses health promotion from a positive perspective and disseminates findings and knowledge to community stakeholders. Indigenous research has historically been conducted on, rather than with, Indigenous peoples (Drawson, Toombs & Musquash, 2017). This approach is often called ‘helicopter research,’ where “Outside research teams swoop down from the skies, swarm into town, ask nosy questions that are none of their business and then disappear, never to be heard from again” (Montour et al., 1988, p. 201).

Until the late 1980s and early 1990s, research methods did not incorporate Indigenous knowledge or community cultural values. Portrayals of Indigenous communities have been problem-focused and deficit-based. Indigenous peoples have been treated as research subjects rather than consenting participants, and data have often been unusable by communities (Drawson, Toombs & Musquash, 2017). While there is a positive shift occurring in Indigenous communities, many Indigenous community members are understandably still wary and mistrustful of research in general, whether insiders or outsiders collect data. In Canada, Indigenous communities have clearly articulated a desire for research led by Indigenous peoples, using a community-based participatory approach (Macaulay et al., 1999; Smylie et al., 2009). CBPR is now regarded as an acceptable approach to Indigenous research because it involves collaborative processes that prioritize community needs.

During these discussions, the Community Advisory Board formulated specific questions about the wellness, burnout, and low morale among Browning Public School staff. After the interviews and talking circles were conducted during the wellness day, all qualitative data were collected using Otter AI. Each question was asked and recorded. Once the interviews and talking circles were completed, Otter AI summarized and transcribed the participants' discussions. The

Community Advisory Board met two weeks after the wellness day to analyze data from the Otter AI transcripts.

- Process of Analyzing the Qualitative Data

The qualitative analysis followed a structured, participatory, and culturally responsive process grounded in Indigenous talking-circle practices and thematic analysis. The Community Advisory Board (CAB) played a central role throughout the analysis to ensure that the findings reflected the voices of staff, community values, and the experiences of Browning Public School employees.

Data Collection and Preparation

During the designated Wellness Day, the Community Advisory Board facilitated individual interviews and group talking circles focused on staff wellness, burnout, morale, and workplace climate. All sessions were audio-recorded with participant consent. Each interview and talking circle followed a semi-structured question guide, developed by the CAB to ensure consistency while allowing participants to speak freely and authentically.

Audio recordings were uploaded to the Otter AI transcription platform, which generated verbatim transcripts and preliminary summaries for each session. These transcripts served as the primary data source for analysis. Before analysis, CAB members reviewed the transcripts to ensure accuracy and completeness, correcting any transcription errors and removing identifying information to maintain confidentiality.

Initial Review and Familiarization Two weeks after the Wellness Day, the Community Advisory Board convened to begin the analysis. During this initial phase, CAB members individually reviewed the Otter AI transcripts to become familiar with the data. This step enabled board

members to gain a comprehensive understanding of participants' experiences, recurring concerns, emotional tone, and contextual factors influencing staff well-being. This phase emphasized listening for meaning rather than interpretation, aligning with Indigenous knowledge practices that prioritize respect, reflection, and collective understanding. *Coding and Theme Identification* After individual review, the CAB engaged in collaborative coding. Transcripts were examined question by question, and key phrases, repeated ideas, and emotionally salient statements were highlighted. These segments were assigned descriptive codes representing shared concepts, including leadership relationships, workload stress, emotional exhaustion, and cultural and spiritual needs. Codes were then grouped into broader thematic categories through consensus discussion. This collective approach ensured that themes were not imposed externally but emerged organically from participant narratives. Disagreements in interpretation were discussed until a shared understanding was reached, strengthening the credibility and trustworthiness of the analysis.

Through this process, the CAB identified several dominant themes for further analysis, including:

- Building positive relationships with administrators and students
- Leadership styles, communication, and consistency
- Experiences of stress, burnout, and feeling overwhelmed
- Gaps and opportunities in existing well-being supports
- Interest in physical, mental, social, and spiritual wellness activities

One significant cross-cutting finding was administrative hesitation to allocate time to wellness activities. Rather than treating this as an isolated issue, the CAB analyzed it within the

broader organizational and policy context of Browning Public Schools. The Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent, who participated in reflective dialogue with the CAB. Recognizing the need to align wellness initiatives with district priorities, district leadership proposed adjustments to embed wellness activities within the existing Browning Public Schools strategic plan. This ensured that wellness efforts were framed not as optional add-ons but as integral to staff effectiveness, retention, and school climate.

Validation and Trustworthiness: To enhance trustworthiness, the analysis process incorporated:

- Triangulation through multiple data sources (interviews and talking circles)
- Collective interpretation by the Community Advisory Board
- Cultural validation through Indigenous frameworks of dialogue and consensus
- Administrative feedback loops to confirm feasibility and alignment

This participatory analysis approach strengthened the legitimacy of the findings and ensured that the recommendations were culturally grounded, contextually relevant, and actionable within the Browning Public Schools system.

One clear finding throughout this process was that administrators were hesitant to allocate time to participation; this observation led the Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent to propose adjustments that more closely aligned with Browning Public Schools' strategic plan. Topics from the interviews and talking circles that the community advisory board will analyze include building positive relationships with leaders and students; understanding leadership styles and consistency; stress, burnout, and being overwhelmed; ideas for improving well-being support; and opportunities for physical, mental, social, and spiritual activities. In

addition to thematic coding, the CAB engaged in iterative reflection cycles, revisiting the transcripts multiple times to ensure that the themes remained grounded in participants' original words and intentions. This process incorporated elements of member checking through internal validation, in which CAB members compared interpretations with their knowledge of staff experiences and the school context to confirm accuracy and relevance. Furthermore, the use of talking circle principles such as respect, listening, and relational accountability guided the analysis, ensuring that meaning was not decontextualized but understood within the cultural and communal relationships in which it was shared.

As this study progressed, a brief overview of the subsequent chapters was provided. Chapter 2 presented a comprehensive literature review that served as the theoretical foundation and evidence base for developing the Browning Public School Wellness Model. Chapter 3 presented the Logic Model, which outlined processes and outcomes and illustrated how the research was streamlined and implemented to address both short-term objectives and long-term aspirations. Chapter 4 provided an in-depth examination of the Sacred Circle Stones framework, "AAUUKSTUKSIN." Chapter 5, Product One, introduced a bi-weekly self-assessment tool to support staff in maintaining balance and harmony in their well-being through ongoing self-monitoring. Chapter 6, Product Two, presented the Wellness Model, which served as a framework for Browning Public Schools to integrate wellness practices into daily operations. Chapter 7, Product Three, presented the Standard of Operations (SOP), a policy document intended to be amended by the Browning Public School Board of Trustees and for use by administrators, teachers, and staff in their daily practices. Chapter 8 is the lesson-learned chapter. Maintaining balance and harmony in their well-being through ongoing self-monitoring.

CHAPTER TWO

CONCEPTUALIZING WELLNESS IN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS: HOLISTIC, CULTURAL, AND ORGANIZATIONAL PERSPECTIVES

Conceptualizing Wellness

Wellness is widely defined in the literature as a holistic, dynamic process encompassing the physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual dimensions of health, rather than merely the absence of disease (Dunn, 1961; Myers, Sweeney, & Witmer, 2000). Contemporary wellness scholars emphasize that Wellness is widely defined in the literature as a holistic, dynamic process that encompasses the physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual dimensions of health, rather than merely the absence of disease (Dunn, 1961; Myers, Sweeney, & Witmer, 2000). Contemporary wellness scholars emphasize that wellness is an intentional, lifelong process shaped by individual behaviors, environmental conditions, cultural identity, and organizational structures (Hettler, 1980; Swarbrick, 2016). This multidimensional understanding is particularly relevant in educational systems, where workplace demands, emotional labor, and exposure to student trauma significantly affect staff well-being.

In school settings, wellness is not only a personal responsibility but also an organizational condition. Research demonstrates that educator wellness directly impacts instructional quality, classroom management, staff retention, and school climate (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Maslach & Leiter, 2016). When wellness supports are limited or absent,

educators are more likely to experience burnout, compassion fatigue, and emotional exhaustion, which can undermine both professional performance and personal health.

Dimensions of Wellness The literature consistently identifies wellness as comprising multiple, interconnected dimensions. Physical wellness encompasses sleep, physical activity, nutrition, and the ability to manage fatigue and stress-related physical symptoms (Hettler, 1980). Mental and emotional wellness involves emotional regulation, stress management, psychological safety, and resilience in the face of occupational challenges (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Social wellness refers to meaningful relationships, trust, communication, and a sense of belonging within the workplace (Keyes, 2002). Spiritual and cultural wellness emphasizes meaning, identity, values, purpose, and connection to cultural traditions and belief systems (Myers et al., 2000).

These dimensions are interdependent rather than isolated. For educators, emotional strain often manifests as physical symptoms, and a lack of social or administrative support intensifies stress and burnout. Holistic wellness frameworks emphasize that sustainable well-being requires integrated support across all domains rather than isolated interventions focused on a single aspect of health.

Defining a Wellness Model Wellness model is defined in the literature as a structured, systems-based framework that operationalizes wellness by embedding it into organizational practices, policies, and culture (Swarbrick, 2016; WHO, 2010). Unlike standalone wellness activities, wellness models provide a coordinated approach that aligns individual self-care with organizational responsibility, A leadership engagement, and accountability structures. In educational organizations, wellness models are most effective when they include transparent

processes for assessment, implementation, monitoring, and continuous improvement (Basch, 2011). Research suggests that models grounded in participatory approaches—where staff are actively involved in identifying needs and shaping solutions—are more sustainable and culturally responsive (Minkler & Wallerstein, 2008). This approach positions wellness not as an add-on but as an institutional priority directly linked to staff effectiveness and student outcomes.

Organizational Wellness in School Systems Educators routinely face high workloads, emotional demands, and role strain, particularly in districts serving communities with elevated social, emotional, and behavioral needs. Studies indicate that, in the absence of organizational wellness structures, teachers often internalize stress, experience diminished emotional capacity, and report lower job satisfaction and higher turnover intention (Maslach & Leiter, 2016; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017).

Organizational wellness literature emphasizes the role of leadership, time allocation, and policy alignment in sustaining wellness initiatives. Wellness efforts that are not integrated into strategic plans or daily operations are less likely to endure. In contrast, wellness models aligned with district strategic goals signal institutional commitment and normalize wellness as a shared responsibility rather than an individual burden (Fullan, 2016).

Alignment with Browning Public Schools' Strategic Plan

The Browning Public School Wellness Model aligns with the 2018 Browning Public Schools Strategic Plan, which identifies the need to develop a district-wide cultural healing and wellness program. The strategic plan emphasizes increasing access to opportunities that support balance, health, and overall well-being for both staff and students. Key goals include improving

staff retention and productivity, decreasing burnout, and strengthening relationships between staff, students, and administrators.

Despite these priorities, Browning Public Schools does not currently have a formalized staff wellness program. While students have access to wellness and cultural activities, staff reported limited opportunities for structured wellness support. During the strategic planning process facilitated by Kaufmanns & Associates, staff voiced concerns about limited communication with the administration, insufficient support, and the emotional toll of extensive meetings on students' social and emotional needs, where teachers described feeling overwhelmed and emotionally burdened, with no structured opportunities to process stress or restore balance.

Integration of the Sacred Circle Stones Framework (AAUUKSTUKSIN)

The Browning Public School Wellness Model is uniquely grounded in the Indigenous Sacred Circle Stones framework, “AAUUKSTUKSIN,” which reflects a holistic worldview emphasizing balance, interconnectedness, and harmony among the physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, and social dimensions of well-being. Indigenous wellness frameworks align closely with contemporary holistic wellness theories but center cultural identity, collective responsibility, and relational balance as foundational principles (Gone, 2013). Within this framework, wellness is understood as relational rather than individualistic, recognizing that leadership practices, community relationships, cultural safety, and organizational structures influence staff well-being. The Sacred Circle Stones framework provides both a conceptual foundation and an analytical lens for the wellness self-assessment and the broader wellness model, ensuring that interventions honor cultural values while addressing systemic workplace factors.

Connection to Chapter Three: Logic Model. Literature review provides the theoretical and empirical foundation for the Logic Model presented in Chapter Three. The definitions of wellness and wellness models inform the identification of inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes within the logic model, a multidimensional understanding of wellness supports, including physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual activities as core components of the intervention. Furthermore, the emphasis on organizational responsibility and participatory engagement directly informs the design of the wellness self-assessment, the implementation strategies, and the evaluation mechanisms outlined in the logic model. By grounding the logic model in both scholarly literature and Indigenous frameworks, the Browning Public School Wellness Model is positioned as a culturally responsive, systems-based approach to staff wellness.

Literature Review This chapter presents a comprehensive review of the literature that establishes the theoretical, cultural, and empirical foundation for the Browning Public School Wellness Model. The chapter begins by examining Indigenous health disparities within the context of historical and intergenerational trauma, colonization, and the social determinants of health. It then explores Indigenous perspectives on wellness, healing, and cultural continuity, emphasizing holistic, strengths-based, and community-driven approaches to health and well-being. The review further examines culturally grounded mental health promotion and prevention strategies, highlighting the importance of integrating traditional knowledge, land-based practices, and Indigenous-led programs. Finally, the chapter reviews literature on educator stress, burnout, and organizational wellness within school systems, situating teacher well-being as a critical factor in school climate, staff retention, and student outcomes. Together, these sections provide

the evidence base and conceptual grounding needed to develop a culturally responsive wellness model tailored to Browning Public Schools.

Historical and Intergenerational Trauma and Indigenous Health Disparities

The Indigenous population has a traumatic history, such as colonization, forced assimilation, residential/boarding schools, cultural genocide, and intergenerational trauma, which is believed to be one of the contributing factors for Indigenous health disparities. Loss of culture and identity among Indigenous peoples is a direct result of colonization and forced assimilation, which disrupted the transmission of language, traditions, and ways of knowing across generations. This cultural disconnection has been associated with increased mental distress, substance use, and diminished well-being, underscoring cultural identity as a critical protective factor in Indigenous health and wellness. Cultural disconnection among Indigenous populations has been associated with increased mental distress, substance use, and diminished well-being. Conversely, cultural identity and connectedness have been identified as critical protective factors in Indigenous health and wellness. Research indicates that stronger cultural connectedness is associated with lower levels of depression, reduced substance use, and improved overall well-being (Allen et al., 2014; Snowshoe et al., 2017; Whitbeck et al., 2004). Furthermore, cultural identity promotes resilience by strengthening self-esteem, fostering a sense of belonging, and buffering against the impacts of historical trauma and ongoing stressors (Kirmayer et al., 2011).

The understanding of social determinants of health, including access to education, stable employment, adequate housing, and culturally safe health and social services, significantly influences Indigenous health and wellness. Social determinants of health including education, employment, housing, and access to culturally safe services—significantly influence Indigenous

health outcomes and contribute to persistent health inequities (Reading & Wien, 2009; Greenwood et al., 2012). Structural inequities in these determinants, shaped by colonization and ongoing systemic marginalization, have contributed to persistent health disparities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations. Addressing these determinants is essential for promoting holistic wellness and reducing intergenerational health inequities. According to Yu et al. (2019), a key factor in the health status gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples is, examples of these determinants of health include lack of education, high unemployment, poverty, overcrowding, and poor housing quality. In addition, the impact of colonization, marginalization, exclusion, the effects of residential schools, forced assimilation, ongoing experiences of racism and discrimination, and the negative portrayal of Indigenous people in mainstream society, perhaps more discrete, are examples that contribute to patterns of persistent inequality.

Many Aboriginal peoples suffer from intergenerational trauma caused by more than 400 years of systematic marginalization. Intergenerational trauma is the transmission of historical oppression and its negative consequences across generations. This concept of intergenerational trauma is explored in the case of the Lakota people (Marsh et al., 2015). Indigenous populations in Canada, Australia, and Aotearoa/New Zealand experience significantly higher mortality rates, increased prevalence of infectious and chronic diseases, poorer overall health status, and life expectancies that are 8 to 20 years lower than their non-Indigenous counterparts (Daniel et al., 2009). With the high mortality rate, it is evident that the root of the Indigenous mortality is caused by colonization that appeared in 1492. Notions of tradition and healing are central to

contemporary efforts by Aboriginal peoples to confront the legacy of historical injustices and suffering brought on by the history of colonialism.

Experiences of stigma, hostile treatment, discrimination, disrespect, culturally inappropriate care, and lack of understanding in health care contexts continue to negatively impact Indigenous individuals' access to services and overall health outcomes.” (Kirmayer et al., 2003) Access to drugs and alcohol has increased over time among Indigenous youth (Oré et al., 2016). Native youth are at higher risk for depression, substance use, and suicide due to economic and social disadvantage, acculturation stress, historical relocation, discrimination, and intergenerational trauma (Asher BlackDeer & Patterson Silver Wolf, 2020; Daniel et al., 2009; Kirmayer et al., 2003; Marsh et al., 2015). Mental and behavioral health challenges, exposure to stressful life events, and substance use have been consistently associated with increased suicide risk among Indigenous youth (García-Carmona et al., 2018; Macniven et al., 2019; Morton Ninomiya et al., 2022). American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) youth often experience profound loss due to cultural and community disconnection (Asher BlackDeer & Patterson Silver Wolf, 2020; Morton Ninomiya et al., 2022).

It is therefore essential that prevention and intervention measures integrate traditional and cultural practices to reconnect youth with their communities (Marsh et al., 2015). There needs to be a strong foundation for wellness to address health disparities and strengthen Indigenous families. Indigenous healing can be understood as the transition that restores the person, community, and nation to wholeness, connectedness, and balance, and supports the notion that active engagement in socio-cultural performing arts practices represents an important social

determinant of health. (Fijal & Beagan, 2019; Marsh et al., 2015; Ritland et al., 2020; Yu et al., 2019).

Culturally Grounded Wellness Programs, Mental Health Promotion, and Educator Burnout

The meaning of a Health and Wellbeing program among adult participants has been associated with prolonging life and improving social and emotional well-being (Kirmayer et al., 2003; Sheppard & Broughton, 2020). Knowledge Translation (KT) efforts that are grounded in community context have demonstrated positive health and wellness outcomes for the Indigenous Peoples the studies were intended to benefit (Lomas et al., 2017). The range of reported health and wellness outcomes has been as broad as the studies themselves and has been thematically organized to include: (1) increased knowledge and awareness among community members (Morton Ninomiya et al., 2022); (2) changes in behaviors or actions (Ritland et al., 2020); (3) changes in health care practices (Morton Ninomiya et al., 2022); (4) the development of sustainable new programs (Ritland et al., 2020); and (5) increased self-determination and self-governance (Morton Ninomiya et al., 2022).

Indigenous frameworks of mental health and wellness are grounded in holistic worldviews that differ from Western biomedical models by emphasizing relational balance, cultural continuity, and collective well-being (Marsh et al., 2015). Rather than focusing solely on individual symptoms or pathology, the literature highlights the integration of mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual dimensions of health shaped by relationships with family, community, culture, and the natural environment (Fijal & Beagan, 2019). Within this framework, components of mental health and wellness include making “good choices,” regularly and safely accessing and connecting with the land, fostering self-sufficiency, and nurturing spiritual health (Marsh et al.,

2015). As articulated by Indigenous scholars, “In the Native world, everything comes from the heart” (Fijal & Beagan, 2019, p. XX).

Promoting wellness and culture is central to Indigenous conceptions of community health. However, social determinants of health research have identified persistent inequities for Indigenous peoples in Canada, including the inadequate distribution of educational resources and the continued lack of culturally competent content and learning styles within school curricula (Phillips, 2019). When school health promotion is examined through a social determinant of health lens, research and practice indicate that many school-based health programs are not culturally relevant or appropriate for Indigenous school systems (Kirmayer et al., 2003). For example, health curricula often focus on illness and deficit-based models rather than strengths-based or culturally grounded approaches, a limitation that scholars suggest could be addressed through decolonizing frameworks in health promotion (Marsh et al., 2015; Phillips, 2019).

Evidence further demonstrates that markers of cultural continuity—defined as community-driven efforts to preserve, revitalize, and practice Indigenous cultures—are associated with improved health and social outcomes (Daniel et al., 2009; Marsh et al., 2015). Indigenous peoples should therefore be supported in developing services that provide culturally appropriate and adequate supports, which may also serve as models for other Indigenous communities (Morton Ninomiya et al., 2022; Ritland et al., 2020). Indigenous perspectives on health and mental health emphasize wholeness, balance, and reciprocal relationships with family, community, ancestors, and the natural environment (Peake et al., 2019; Yu et al., 2019). Knowledge of traditional languages and cultural practices is central to identity and serves as a

vital link to spirituality, a core component of Indigenous health and well-being (Daniel et al., 2009; Fijal & Beagan, 2019; Marsh et al., 2015).

Indigenous ways of knowing have historically been transmitted orally from generation to generation through direct and balanced relationships with Mother Earth and all plant and animal life (Kirmayer et al., 2003). Learning has occurred through ceremony, art, song, and holistic philosophies of healing, with illness understood to arise from imbalances in relationships with the natural world, the spirit world, community, and/or one's own spirit and soul (Kirmayer et al., 2003). To implement practical health information tools in contemporary contexts, local knowledge systems and community-specific contexts must be meaningfully explored and integrated (Morton Ninomiya et al., 2022). Given the historical and intergenerational trauma resulting from settler colonialism, mental health programs and services that are designed and led by Indigenous peoples and communities show greater promise for improving mental health and well-being than Western-based approaches (Kirmayer et al., 2003; Sahota, 2019). The need to address growing mental health disparities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada has been explicitly emphasized by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015), whose Calls to Action outline pathways toward achieving health equity through the transformation of mental health services.

Mental health promotion involves actions that create living conditions and environments that support mental wellness across the lifespan and enable individuals to adopt and maintain healthy lifestyles (World Health Organization, 2004). Achieving these outcomes requires cross-sectoral action across home, school, health services, and community environments through culturally safe, strengths-based, family- and community-oriented mental health promotion

programs, services, and policies that support emotional, spiritual, and social development throughout the life course.

Within educational settings, these principles underscore the importance of supporting not only students but also educators, whose mental health and well-being are essential to creating and sustaining healthy learning environments (Kangas-Dick & O'Shaughnessy, 2020). Building on this mental health promotion framework, the wellness model examines teacher burnout. Teacher stress has increased internationally, leading to burnout and attrition, particularly among early-career teachers and those working in urban and high-poverty schools (García-Carmona et al., 2018). The effects of teacher stress and burnout pose serious consequences for educational quality, including reduced instructional effectiveness and increased turnover (Ascorra et al., 2019; Luken & Sammons, 2016; Oliveira et al., 2021). Burnout may manifest as depression, emotional exhaustion, aggression, decreased commitment to students, psychosomatic symptoms, and reduced cognitive performance, motivation, and judgment (Lomas et al., 2017).

Work-related stress is a major contributor to low job performance, absenteeism, and attrition, with key risk factors including excessive workload, administrative burden, overcrowded classrooms, role conflict, classroom management challenges, strained relationships with parents and administrators, ongoing education reforms, limited professional development opportunities, inadequate facilities, and time pressures (Oliveira et al., 2021).

Research consistently demonstrates the need for interventions that reduce teacher burnout and promote positive school climates. Such interventions have been shown to increase perceptions of safety, reduce violence and bullying, promote wellness and healthy lifestyles, strengthen participation and citizenship skills, support respect for diversity, and reduce the risk

of mental disorders and substance use (Ascorra et al., 2019; Daniel et al., 2009; García-Carmona et al., 2018; Morton Ninomiya et al., 2022; Phillips, 2019). At the interpersonal level, leadership practices that foster positive relationships among administrators, teachers, and educational stakeholders play a critical role in mitigating burnout and improving well-being (Luken & Sammons, 2016; Oliveira et al., 2021). Drawing on this evidence, the wellness model provides a framework for identifying gaps in communication, mental distress, and motivation affecting employees of Browning Public Schools.

CHAPTER THREE

LOGIC MODEL AND METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

FOR THE BROWNING PUBLIC SCHOOLS WELLNESS

MODEL

Logic Model

Based on the literature review identifying stakeholders, activities, and evaluation strategies relevant to the Browning Public Schools Wellness Model, prior research found that criteria, guidelines, or standardized tools for Indigenous communities to evaluate and select health indicators were lacking (Daniel et al., 2009; Montesanti et al., 2022). In response, this project developed selection criteria and a rating tool for Indigenous community stakeholders, policymakers, health professionals, and researchers to assess the utility and appropriateness of existing health and social indicators for Indigenous community-based health research and for planning and evaluating prevention programs.

The tool was unique in providing a guided process that balanced scientific and cultural considerations, enabling health researchers, community members, and public health funding agencies to identify the most relevant indicators for evaluating the effectiveness of Indigenous community-based prevention efforts. Extensive consultation and field testing supported the tool's applicability to health research in Indigenous communities. Collaboration and teamwork were also identified in the literature as effective strategies for improving mental health services for Indigenous peoples. Although the Truth and Reconciliation Commission recommended integrating Indigenous Elders into mental health services, few health systems had implemented this approach; however, some research initiatives reported preliminary success.

The Browning Public Schools Wellness Model was developed on the assumption that funding had been secured through grants, district allocations, and stakeholder contributions to support wellness activities and education and to implement an Indigenous framework across the school district. The Wellness Model guided the Browning Public School District in promoting healthier lifestyles among staff members through wellness activities. Model development aligned with the Browning Public Schools Strategic Plan, which identified strengthening staff and student well-being as a priority. The district's cultural healing and wellness program was the primary focus to increase staff access to opportunities that support balance in well-being. Schools provided an employee wellness program that included healthy eating initiatives and mental, emotional, physical, and cultural/spiritual wellness services and activities. The Browning Public School District implemented the Wellness Model to encourage staff participation. The overarching goals were to improve staff retention and productivity, reduce burnout, strengthen relationships among staff, students, and administrators, and enhance student outcomes.

Wellness coaches and members of the wellness committee motivated employees at Browning Public Schools to participate in Wellness Day activities. Staff members completed the Browning Public Schools self-assessment, and standards of operation were implemented following approval by the superintendent and the school board of trustees. Contextual factors influencing the logic model included resource competition among stakeholders, particularly the Indian Health Service and Blackfeet Community College, both of which implemented wellness initiatives.

Evolution of the wellness program utilized qualitative and Indigenous research methods. Data collection included individual interviews and storytelling through talking circles guided by

the AAUUKSTUKSIN Sacred Circle Stones framework. Data were collected from 15 personal interviews and five talking circles (focus groups). Four performance indicators guided evaluation: (1) Browning Public Schools' bi-weekly wellness self-assessment, (2) employee retention, (3) employee engagement, and (4) employee productivity.

The first performance indicator involved collecting biweekly wellness self-assessments completed by employees after participating in Wellness Days. The second indicator, employee retention, was measured using employment contract data documenting employee return for the subsequent school year. The Browning Public Schools Human Resources Department recorded resignations, retirements, transfers, and terminations.

These data enabled the identification of buildings with higher staff turnover, and the researcher informed the Human Resources Department and the superintendent, encouraging them to consider potential interventions. Employee retention data were obtained through the Human Resources Department, and no personally identifiable information was disclosed.

The third performance indicator, employee engagement, was measured using sign-in sheets from Wellness Days and monthly Staff Wellness Wednesdays. Attendance records documented participation levels, while the frontline timekeeping system identified employees who elected to take leave rather than participate in wellness activities. The fourth performance indicator, employee productivity, was assessed using annual employee evaluations conducted by administrators. The Evaluation is a pre-existing tool for administrators and staff to rate their performance, this evaluation is a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (low productivity) to 5 (high productivity) across performance areas, including extracurricular participation, communication

with students and staff, encouragement of parent involvement, curriculum implementation, and fulfillment of professional responsibilities.

Employees scoring below a 3 over all were placed on performance improvement plans and re-evaluated after six months. Employees who did not demonstrate improvement were recommended for non-renewal or transfer. All four performance indicators served as markers for wellness coaches, the wellness committee, and the researcher to identify unhealthy patterns and intervene when issues involving students, staff, or administrators were identified.

Based on these performance indicators, the researcher and the community advisory board played a pivotal role in developing qualitative interview and talking-circle questions. Before participation, individuals completed informed consent forms and were informed of their right to withdraw at any time if they perceived the questions as too sensitive, forty Participants received a small gift and a complimentary meal in recognition of their participation.

As illustrated in Figure 1, the logic model clarified the development of the Wellness Model, the identification of funding sources, and the outlining of activities for Browning Public Schools staff. Inputs included funding sources and stakeholder partnerships that supported the delivery of medical and health services. Employee participation was central to the Wellness Model, promoting awareness, encouraging healthier lifestyles, and supporting positive behavior change. Activities included identifying wellness coaches and committee members and developing a culturally grounded self-assessment aligned with the four quadrants of the Sacred Circle Stones framework.

Consistent with prior literature, logic model development enhanced understanding of activities and both short- and long-term goals (Ascorra et al., 2019). Research demonstrated that

district-level support and leadership engagement were fundamental to successful program deployment, and that evidence-based programs improved school climate and mental health outcomes. Studies further indicated that the use of e-leadership technologies and data-driven decision-making was associated with improvements in school climate, particularly when leadership practices are culturally responsive and grounded in community contexts (Khalifa, Gooden, & Davis, 2016; Toulouse, 2016; Leithwood et al., 2020)

Logic model outputs reflected outcomes of Wellness Model activities, including completion of bi-weekly self-assessments and increased employee knowledge of wellness principles and the Sacred Circle Stones framework. Short-term goals included the development and implementation of three products: (1) the Wellness Model, (2) the wellness self-assessment, and (3) a standard of operation incorporated into the Browning Public Schools policy and procedures handbook. These products were presented to the Browning Public Schools Administration and Board of Trustees.

Intermediate goals included reassessing and refining the Wellness Model, conducting self-assessments, and establishing standards of operation, with recognition that some short-term strategies would require adjustments based on employee feedback. Long-term goals included the formal adoption of the Wellness Model as a district standard of operation, confirmation of Wellness Days on the school calendar, and allocation of ongoing funding to sustain the Wellness Model.

Figure 1. Browning Public Schools Wellness Logic Model

This logic model outlines the foundational inputs, planned activities, expected outputs, and both short-term and long-term outcomes for implementing a comprehensive staff wellness initiative in the Browning Public School District. The model is informed by community partnerships, culturally grounded wellness practices, and sustainability strategies



Program Activities The program activities will include: 1)

Identify and secure funding for the Browning Public Schools Wellness Model through grants, stakeholder collaboration, and district funds, including Impact Aid. The Browning Public Schools Wellness Model will provide incentives for participants, supplies for wellness activities, and contracted services for cultural experts, physical trainers, and specialized trauma-informed consultants. 2)

Establish a wellness committee that will include the Browning Public Schools Administrators and wellness coaches; the coaches will be school employees, one from each building (K-12 grades).

The Wellness Coaches are responsible for planning and implementing the activities. Each coach will have wellness duties in addition to preparing for the Wellness Days. Activities will be developed from the Wellness Model objectives and planned around the Sacred Circle Stones framework, “AAUUKSTUKSIN.” The Wellness Coaches and the researcher will administer a survey to Browning Public School employees that includes general questions about wellness and their preferred activities for the upcoming Wellness Days.

Developing the Wellness Model will enable Browning Public School employees to take ownership of their health and establish wellness protocols for the school. The Browning Public School Wellness Model is important for several reasons. Employees at Browning Public Schools are overworked, underpaid, and unappreciated.

The Wellness Model will help reduce employee burnout by enabling employees to participate in the biweekly self-assessment and set healthy goals for their physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being. In recent years, staff turnover has been high. Reasons for the high staff turnover include concerns not being addressed, new leadership, oversized classrooms, overwork, underpayment, and a lack of appreciation. Employees who participate in activities will build relationships with other staff especially administrators; communication and team-building skills will foster understanding and appreciation of their staff.

The Wellness Model will help improve employee retention; once employees feel appreciated and valued, they are less likely to leave their jobs. The Wellness Model will also serve as a tool for employee recruitment; once implemented as a Standard of Operation, the Browning Public School District will use it to recruit staff. In the Browning Public Schools district, employees are experiencing significant tension and low morale; this is due to the overwhelming grief in the community and student behavioral issues that are being addressed every day; the staff deal with students coming from homes that create emotional distress and substance use; most of the employees are from the Blackfeet community or have moved and lived within the reservation boundaries for a long time; so when a traumatic event happens in the community, the employees feel the heaviness from the students and experience their loss of a loved one; educators and staff members are showing signs of caregiver burnout from their students.

With education, support, and encouragement from the Wellness coaches, employees will learn healthy ways to cope with traumatic community events and address caregiver burnout. The staff will also be better able to identify students' needs by assessing their well-being, and their

relationships with administrators and students will be more productive. The population participating in the Wellness Model comprises Browning Public Schools staff aged 25-65. The population will be reached through email, social media, reminders in employee meetings, and the use of Google Calendar, wellness coaches, and the building administrator. The individuals identified to participate in the Sacred Circle Stones talking circles and interviews will be the same population. Browning Public School staff members will participate in the focus group or interview; the individuals identified are one administrator, one principal, one teacher, one paraprofessional, and one classified staff member for each of the five talking circles, a total of 25 individuals who will be sharing their opinions from the prompt questions in the focus group. The individual interviews will comprise fifteen Browning Public School employees, using the same criteria as the focus group. The staff received various incentives for participation, such as native-print blankets, mugs, water bottles, and travel bags. Lunches are provided to participate in the talking circles and interviews.

Participants received prompt questions for the interviews and the talking circles. Each participant shared their responses in the talking circles by telling their own stories of wellness and personal and professional barriers. For the individual interviews, participants were given prompts focused on their well-being and knowledge of the sacred circle stone's four quadrants (mental, emotional, spiritual, and social). Each participant shared stories about the barriers they faced in pursuing their well-being.

Methodologies: Community and District Context in the Browning Public Schools district, employees experienced high levels of tension and low morale. This is due to overwhelming community grief and ongoing student behavioral challenges. Staff regularly worked with

students from homes affected by emotional distress and substance use. Most employees were members of the Blackfeet community or had lived within the reservation boundaries for an extended period. As a result, when traumatic events occurred within the community, employees experienced the emotional weight carried by students and often shared in the loss of loved ones. Educators and staff members showed signs of caregiver burnout related to their work with students.

School District Characteristics The study was conducted at Browning Public School District #9, located on the Blackfeet Reservation in Browning. Browning Public Schools is a public school district serving students from pre-kindergarten through 12th grade, including alternative high school and immersion classrooms throughout the district. The district served approximately 2,700 students and employed 403 staff members.

Participant Population and Recruitment

The population participating in the Wellness Model consisted of Browning Public Schools staff members aged 25 to 65 years. Participants were contacted through email, social media, and reminders during employee meetings, Google Calendar notifications, wellness coaches, and building administrators. Individuals identified for participation in the Sacred Circle Stones talking circles and interviews were drawn from the same population.

Talking Circles

Browning Public School staff members participated in talking circles or individual interviews. Across the five talking circles, participants included one administrator, one principal, one

teacher, one paraprofessional, and one classified staff member, for a total of 25 participants who shared their perspectives in response to the talking circles questions.

Individual Interviews. Individual interviews were conducted with 15 Browning Public School employees who met the same eligibility criteria as focus group participants. Staff members received incentives for participation, including Native-printed blankets, mugs, water bottles, and travel bags. Lunches were provided during the talking circles and interviews.

Data Collection Method's Qualitative research methods were used for this project. Data collection consisted of 15 individual interviews and five talking-circle sessions. The talking circles and interviews took place in classrooms, teachers' lounges, and wellness rooms. Before participating, all individuals reviewed and signed informed consent forms and were assured that their discussions would be confidential and that no identifying information would be disclosed. Participants responded to general questions from the researcher about health and wellness, balance, and harmony within the Sacred Circle Stones (AAUUKSTUKSIN) framework.

Community-Based Participatory Research Approach

Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) served as the guiding methodological approach. According to Morgan, Kahenttoni, and Phillips (2018), CBPR is a preferred approach for Indigenous communities because it enables local researchers to develop interventions that are adequate, acceptable, culturally competent, and relevant (Horn et al., 2008). Participatory analysis was conducted in collaboration with the Community Advisory Board (CAB), placing decision-making authority in the community's hands and supporting a balance between academic rigor and local knowledge.

Community Advisory Board (CAB)

The Community Advisory Board comprised the Browning Public Schools Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, Director of Student and Staff Support, and the Wellness Coordinator. The CAB developed a series of questions based on the Wellness Model, tailored for staff participating in talking circles and individual interviews: the Assistant Superintendent, the Director of Student and Staff Support, and the Wellness Coordinator. The CAB developed a series of questions based on the Wellness Model, tailored for staff participating in the talking circles and individual interviews.

Results Data Analysis and Theme Identification: A qualitative, participatory analysis approach, the CAB reviewed transcripts of interviews and talking circles recorded with Owl AI. Data collection took place during the Fall Wellness Day. Throughout the talking circles and interviews, the Community Advisory Board (CAB) played a central role in collaboratively identifying and interpreting key themes expressed by participants. Using a community-based participatory research (CBPR) approach, CAB members engaged in reflective dialogue and collective analysis to ensure that the findings accurately represented the lived experiences, cultural perspectives, and priorities of staff. Themes emerged through an iterative process of storytelling, discussion, and consensus-building, allowing patterns related to wellness, stress, support systems, and cultural identity to surface organically. This process not only strengthened the validity of the findings but also ensured that the interpretation remained culturally grounded and community-informed. The CAB's involvement helped bridge individual narratives and broader systemic insights, highlighting both challenges and opportunities to improve staff wellness within Browning Public Schools. The CAB identified key themes expressed by participants. Common themes from participant statements are presented in Table 2.

Table # 2: Examples from Staff Interviews on Communication, Leadership, and Wellness in the Browning Public Schools

Talking Circle discussion	That communication is key; let everybody know where we're at that everybody matters. You know, everybody you know, did somebody with just them having common sense and talking with people you know, going asking their opinion, or, you know, hey, come on over. You know, you did a good job being happy, smiling, and not." Interviewee expressed the need for communication
Talking Circle discussion	We need a leader that's going to take not one person, but take everybody with that, and a good leader will not say, well, these guys are talking. No, we're not going to go there. I'm going to go to my own. And it has, should be, if anything, if anybody's in trouble or something, is it? No, this is where we go. We're going to talk. Let's all talk, not just one person or that person, a leader is going to bring everybody in and say, how can we do this? How can we fix that? What's your opinion? What is your concern? It's bringing everybody together and making this one, one district
Individual Interviewees	When I was a classroom teacher, every day, every day, because there was so much put on you, so much expectation. I mean, it just seemed like you never were doing enough, and yet you were doing, you know, everything. And it just like, every day. And like, even here, I'm around the building a lot, and I do here. And, like, just this morning, I heard someone say, oh my gosh, I just feel like I never caught up. And that's how I felt. Never caught up. Take stuff home and you try to get it done, you know, so you can be caught up. So, with the holidays of coaching, you want to be caught up so you can enjoy your vacation, and yet you're still linger like, oh gosh, I have to still do this and do this, so as a classroom teacher, I know it's a lot every day.
Individual Interviewee	When feeling overwhelmed. stated wellness days is one thing, but it's kind of something that it maybe needs to be integrated into the whole day, right? Like an overall whole, like in the, you know, one of my supervisors used to be so picky. You know, they would be. They would come in and they would just, you know, I don't even remember what they said. I knew that I did something wrong, and I would try to fix it, and it was more stressful. And now that supervisor has changed to where they're like, they tell me in a calm voice, and then they tell me what I'm doing good. And so, then I remember, and I'm like, Oh, okay. And I feel like we're more of a team. I feel like I can talk to that person. And so, my stress level has gone down because of that, you know, and that's, that's not me, that's the staff's response. But if everyone knew how to, how to treat each other that way, you know, if everyone was aware of that, that would, that would help, you know, and have you known, I don't know what, you know, a prayer area, or something like, you know, things that you could use every day.
Individual interviewees	Integrating wellness throughout the whole day with staff and students would be a positive impact on the students and staff.

The Community Advisory Board (CAB), comprising four members, played a vital role in shaping the Browning Public School Wellness Model by identifying core themes and objectives through a talking circle. Ultimately, the model seeks to foster a healthier, more balanced, and culturally affirming environment for all school staff. As shown in Table #3, these themes included: (1) Positive Relationships, emphasizing trust and collaboration among leaders, staff, and students; (2) Physical and Mental Wellness, focusing on reducing stress and promoting well-being; (3) Staff Retention and Recognition, aimed at fostering a supportive environment that values staff contributions; and (4) Problem-Solving for Chronic Issues, calling for strategic interventions for persistent challenges. For each theme, the CAB developed actionable A–D strategies.

Table # 3 “Community Advisory Board (CAB) Identified Wellness Themes and Strategies for Browning Public School

A. Positive Relationships	Under Positive Relationships, strategies included leadership training, open-door policies for students, structured mentorships, and routine staff-leadership check-ins
B. Wellness Day Initiatives	In the area of Physical and Mental Wellness, wellness days, daily practices like breathing exercises and walks, and winter wellness initiatives such as light therapy were recommended
C. Staff Retention and Recognition	For Staff Retention and Recognition, monthly staff awards, conflict mediation protocols, and engaged leadership practices like hands-on participation and feedback sessions were proposed.
D. Human Resource intervention	Problem-Solving for Chronic Issues involved partnering with external HR consultants, anonymous reporting mechanisms, staff listening circles, and systematic reviews of current policies.

The CAB also developed a step-by-step guide to help wellness coaches, coordinators, and the wellness committee implement these themes. During the planning phase, task forces will align with the Sacred Circle Stones Model, and a detailed timeline for wellness activities and coach responsibilities will be developed. The rollout phase includes gathering participant feedback through district-wide surveys, piloting strategies, and providing culturally grounded incentives across the four wellness quadrants—physical, mental, emotional, and social. Clear, transparent communication will be maintained through social media, newsletters, and regular updates to stakeholders. At the same time, evaluations will rely on surveys, talking circles, interviews, and metrics such as turnover rates and participation levels. Staff engagement will be assessed through self-assessments, contract renewals, and year-end evaluations.

Furthermore, the CAB recommended an annual wellness plan with monthly themes and activities: January focuses on fresh starts and goal setting; February emphasizes building connections; March addresses stress management; April promotes professional growth; May raises mental health awareness; June celebrates staff contributions; July offers summer recharge opportunities; August prepares staff for back-to-school resilience; September stresses consistency and respect; October celebrates hard work; November centers on gratitude and giving; and December encourages reflection and support. Finally, to ensure continuous improvement, Browning Public Schools will conduct biannual reviews of the wellness methodology, adapting strategies based on data and staff feedback to keep the model culturally relevant and effective in supporting the overall well-being of staff and the broader school community.

Discussion

This study investigated the implementation of a culturally grounded, school-based wellness initiative in an Indigenous and rural educational context. Specifically, it examined the development and implementation of the Browning Public School Wellness Model, focusing on barriers and facilitators that affected staff participation, program continuity, and sustainability. The following section synthesizes and interprets the study's findings and evaluates the methods used to collect and analyze qualitative and quantitative data. Finally, it discusses the study's contributions to the existing literature and implications for educational leadership and professional practice, and identifies potential directions for future research on school-based wellness initiatives in Indigenous communities. The implementation of the Browning Public Schools Wellness Model is expected to yield several key results. In the short term, the development and presentation of the Wellness Model, including its culturally grounded self-assessment, and the introduction of a Standard of Operation will increase staff awareness of the importance of wellness within the Sacred Circle Stones framework. Initial participation in biweekly self-assessments and Wellness Days will be encouraged to promote a healthier work culture.

A wellness committee and building-based wellness coaches have been established to guide activities, and staff feedback from interviews and talking circles will inform the model's ongoing refinement. Intermediate outcomes include improved staff morale, stronger relationships between employees and administrators, increased staff retention, and greater engagement in wellness activities. Communication within the district is expected to strengthen, fostering a more inclusive and supportive leadership culture.

In the long term, the Wellness Model aims to be institutionalized in district policy, with Wellness Days embedded in the school calendar and funding allocated to sustain the program. Systemic cultural change will continue as the district partners with local Indigenous institutions and expands its wellness offerings. Staff productivity and performance will improve, as measured by annual evaluations, and the model will serve as a valuable tool for recruitment and retention. Qualitative data from interviews and talking circles also reveal staff's desire for more decisive leadership, improved communication, better stress management, and daily integration of wellness practices. Ultimately, the model seeks to foster a healthier, more balanced, and culturally affirming environment for all school staff.

Barriers to Implementation of the Browning Public School Wellness Model

Implementing school-based wellness initiatives in Indigenous and rural education systems often requires navigating a complex landscape of organizational, logistical, and contextual challenges. The Browning Public School Wellness Model was implemented in a dynamic environment characterized by community needs, leadership transitions, and limited resources, which influenced program continuity and staff participation. Examining both the barriers encountered and the facilitators that supported implementation provides critical insight into the realities of sustaining culturally grounded wellness models in school settings. The following section outlines the key challenges that emerged during implementation, along with the strategies and supports that helped maintain momentum and inform the Browning Public School Wellness Model's sustainability.

The Browning Public School Wellness Model encountered a range of complex, interrelated barriers that threatened its continuity and effectiveness. Logistically, many

participants faced challenges attending Wellness Days due to limited childcare availability, and several planned activities were canceled due to unforeseen circumstances and inclement weather. Scheduling conflicts among interviews, talking circles, and other School obligations disrupted activities and reduced staff engagement. A significant challenge was turnover in district-level leadership, which shifted priorities away from staff well-being toward academic and curriculum-focused goals. The retirement of the superintendent, the resignation of the assistant superintendent, and the departure of the Director of Staff and Student Support created a void in consistent leadership. Without strong administrative backing, staff were less encouraged or permitted to participate in wellness events such as talking circles and interviews, which are vital to the model's community-centered approach.

Additionally, high stakeholder turnover necessitated repeated partnership rebuilding, requiring the researcher and the wellness team to retrain new members and reestablish trust and commitment. Recruitment for the Community Advisory Board was also affected, with some stakeholders reluctant to collaborate. Financial limitations compounded these issues, as the expiration of the supporting grant and district-wide budget cuts left no funding available for participation incentives, supplies, or logistical support. Minimal participation by Browning Public School employees, a negative outlook toward the wellness model, rude comments, and failure to encourage employee participation will hinder the implementation of the Wellness Model. A leadership change will further impede implementation.

Adaptive Strategies for Overcoming Implementation Barriers: Despite these challenges, several key facilitators sustained momentum and guided the model's continued implementation. Early recruitment efforts were made to ensure that participants could arrange childcare and plan

for their involvement in advance. Wellness Days were formally added to the annual school calendar to provide stability and ensure the community was aware of these critical events. In response to leadership changes, the wellness committee and researcher proactively engaged new administrators, offering information sessions to explain the purpose and structure of the Wellness Model and address any questions or concerns. There was a concerted effort to educate the new superintendent and incoming school board members about the model's importance and its role in improving overall school climate and staff well-being. In addition, leadership was invited to serve on the Community Advisory Board to foster shared ownership and sustained investment.

The presence of a dedicated Wellness Coordinator helped maintain program continuity. At the same time, the Community Advisory Board and researcher remained available to support leadership transitions, provide institutional memory, and ensure open communication. Finally, advocacy for sustained funding at both the district and stakeholder levels was prioritized to ensure the resources needed for future wellness activities, including materials and incentives. Together, these efforts helped buffer the impact of implementation barriers and created a foundation for long-term sustainability and growth of the Browning Public School Wellness Model.

Conclusion

The conclusion of the Browning Public Schools Wellness Model logic model is that, despite significant implementation barriers, including leadership turnover, logistical challenges, and limited funding, the model represents a culturally responsive, community-informed, and sustainable approach to improving staff wellness and school climate. Rooted in Indigenous

values and guided by the Sacred Circle Stones framework, the model successfully integrates physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual wellness into the school setting.

Through qualitative and participatory research methods, including interviews, talking circles, and co-constructed performance indicators, the initiative has identified specific staff needs to improve communication, enhance decision-making, and sustain consistent wellness practices. Short-term successes include increased awareness and participation in wellness activities, the creation of a Wellness Committee and Wellness Days, and the development of culturally relevant self-assessments. Intermediate outcomes, such as stronger relationships, improved morale, and enhanced employee retention, are emerging as the model is refined in response to community feedback.

In the long term, the model aims to be institutionalized as a district Standard of Operation embedded in policy and sustained through committed leadership and dedicated funding. It holds promise not only as a tool for improving staff well-being and performance but also as a recruitment and retention strategy. Ultimately, the Browning Public Schools Wellness Model provides a replicable, culturally grounded framework to address staff burnout and foster a healthier, more balanced educational environment for Indigenous school communities. The Browning Public Schools Community Advisors will reach a conclusion based on the evidence in the questions and discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the Indigenous Framework AAUUKSTUKSIN.

CHAPTER 4

INTRODUCTION AAUUKSTUKSIN INDIGENOUS FRAMEWORK

The AAUUKSTUKSIN Indigenous framework provides a holistic lens through which to examine the research questions “How will the Browning Public School Wellness Model help the staff decrease burnout, build relationships between leadership and students, boost the district's morale, identify staff health strengths and weaknesses, improve staff retention, and decrease absenteeism?” In this study, the AAUUKSTUKSIN Indigenous framework shapes how participants are engaged, not as subjects but as relatives whose voices are honored and whose stories are treated with care and reciprocity. The Blackfeet Community provides culturally relevant resources for the sacred circle stones, encompassing the four quadrants. This framework also disrupts the binary between researcher and participant. As a Blackfeet researcher, I am not separate from the community and public school I study; I am embedded within it. The AAUUKSTUKSIN Indigenous framework demands accountability, humility, and respect at every stage of the research process, from data collection to dissemination. Utilizing an Indigenous framework ensures it remains rooted in community values and ways of knowing. It aligns with methodological choices such as storytelling and confidential interviews and supports an ethical commitment to relational accountability. By situating this study within the framework of AAUUKSTUKSIN, the research honors Indigenous philosophies and contributes to a growing body of work that resists colonial research paradigms.

It shifts the focus from individualism to relationality, emphasizing that knowledge is collectively generated and held. According to Morgan Kahentonni Phillips (2018), an Indigenous evaluation framework is one that synthesizes Indigenous ways of knowing and Western evaluation practice (Lafrance, 2010). The American Indian Higher Education Consortium, comprising 34 American Indian tribally controlled colleges and universities in the USA, undertook a comprehensive effort to develop an Indigenous evaluation framework. Grounded in Indigenous ways of knowing, such as tribal sovereignty and the centrality of community and family, Indigenous knowledge creation is critical. Evaluators, they argue, need to attend to the relationships between the program and the community. Research has shown positive impacts of assessing school-based health curricula in Indigenous communities (Khayyat-Kholgi et al., 2017).

To meaningfully develop and implement the AAUUKSTUKSIN (Sacred Circle Stones) Wellness Model within Browning Public Schools, it is critical first to understand the environment in which this work will take place. This includes examining four key dimensions—contextual, structural, political, and literature-based—that influence the model’s success and sustainability. The contextual lens examines the social, historical, and cultural realities of the Blackfeet community and their impact on well-being and education. The structural dimension focuses on institutional systems, such as school and Tribal policies, administrative roles, and resource distribution that shape implementation. The political lens addresses intergovernmental relationships, power dynamics, and policy alignment between Browning Public Schools, the Blackfeet Tribal Council, and the Office of Public Instruction. Finally, a review of the literature provides evidence and insight into Indigenous models of wellness, teacher burnout, and

culturally grounded healing practices. Together, these components provide a foundation for developing a responsive, effective, and community-centered wellness model that honors both Indigenous knowledge and systemic realities (Figure 2). The Conceptual AAUUKSTUKSIN (Sacred Circle Stones) Indigenous framework provides a visual representation.

Contextual Factors

When working with a community such as Browning Public Schools, researchers must identify a research team of local community members, encourage them to provide input on the Wellness Model, and remember that they are equal partners in driving change in the community. According to Colby (2020), Community-based participatory research is a research methodology designed to consider the complex economic, social, and structural factors that shape public health issues. It makes the academic research team and the equal community partners in the research process. This partnership enables a research agenda and process informed by the unique concerns of community members and the context in which the research will be conducted.

The wellness model examines the context of teacher burnout within Browning Public Schools. Teacher stress has increased internationally, leading to burnout and attrition, particularly among early-career teachers and those working in urban and high-poverty schools. About half of K-12 teachers in U.S. schools (46%) experience high levels of daily stress, and between 40%–50% will leave the profession within their first five years of teaching; the effects of teacher stress and burnout and the consequences for the overall quality of education, to contextualize the challenge of teacher resilience across various countries and communities (Ascorra et al., 2019; García-Carmona et al., 2018; Lomas et al., 2017; Luken & Sammons, 2016; Oliveira et al., 2021) (Kangas-Dick & O'Shaughnessy, 2020). Burnout may manifest as

depression, blunted affect, aggression, decreased commitment to patients or clients, psychosomatic manifestations, or decreased cognitive performance, motivation, and judgment. Burnout is associated with a higher risk of physical and mental ailments such as increased blood pressure, cardiovascular disease, anxiety, and depression.

Work-related stress is a significant contributor to low job performance, absenteeism, and employee turnover. Such risk factors include work overload, complementary administrative work, overcrowded classrooms, role stressors, class discipline problems, conflicts with superiors, co-workers, and parents, continual education reforms, deficits in training, promotion and professional development, low wages, disruptive attitudes and behavior by students, secondary school and classroom facilities, poor timetabling and time pressures (Oliveira et al., 2021).

To better understand the context of the conceptual AAUUKSTUKSIN (Sacred Circle Stones) Indigenous framework when establishing the Wellness Model in the Browning Public School District, it is necessary to analyze the social and structural aspects of the Blackfeet community and Browning Public Schools. The Wellness Model aims to replace old habits with new, healthy ones, identify weaknesses and gaps in well-being, and familiarize oneself with the concept of the Sacred Stones. This model will also build relationships with stakeholders in the Blackfeet Community. The structural factor for Browning Public Schools is the acknowledgment of the policies implemented by the Office of Public Instruction and the Blackfeet Tribe.

According to Wallerstein et al. (2019), social processes and institutions have evolved to maintain structural inequities (e.g., poverty, environmental hazards, and healthcare access) that make the injustices experienced by marginalized groups appear routine. Browning Public Schools and the

Blackfeet Tribe share common interests and goals for the Blackfeet Community. Both entities strive for education, safety, and access to physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual resources.

Structural Factors

A strong foundation for wellness within Indigenous communities is not solely an individual or programmatic responsibility but a structural condition shaped by policies, institutional practices, and resource allocation. Promoting wellness as a holistic approach to addressing substance use and strengthening parenting among Indigenous families requires the intentional integration of culturally grounded healing practices into formal systems of care, education, and governance. Indigenous healing, defined as the restoration of balance, connectedness, and wholeness at the individual, community, and nation levels, reflects a broader structural determinant of health when supported through sustained institutional investment and policy alignment (Fijal & Beagan, 2019; Marsh et al., 2015; Ritland et al., 2020; Yu et al., 2019). From a structural perspective, wellness is reinforced by the availability of culturally relevant programs, access to land-based practices, and opportunities to engage in sociocultural activities, all of which serve as protective factors embedded within community systems. Evidence demonstrates that health and wellness initiatives grounded in Indigenous knowledge systems contribute to improved social and emotional well-being, increased knowledge and awareness, behavioral change, enhanced health care practices, and the development of sustainable, community-driven programs that support self-determination and governance (Kirmayer et al., 2003; Lomas et al., 2017; Sheppard & Broughton, 2020; Morton Ninomiya et al., 2022; Ritland et al., 2020).

Within this study, the AAUUKSTUKSIN framework operationalizes these structural conditions by guiding the embedding of wellness across Browning Public Schools through

policy development, leadership engagement, and cross-sector partnerships. Structural supports include collaboration with Blackfeet Tribal Health programs, allocation of funding and resources, integration of wellness activities into school policy and standard operating procedures, and administrative oversight by the Superintendent and School Board. These systems-level components ensure that wellness is not implemented as isolated activities but institutionalized as a sustained, culturally responsive infrastructure aligned with community values and priorities.

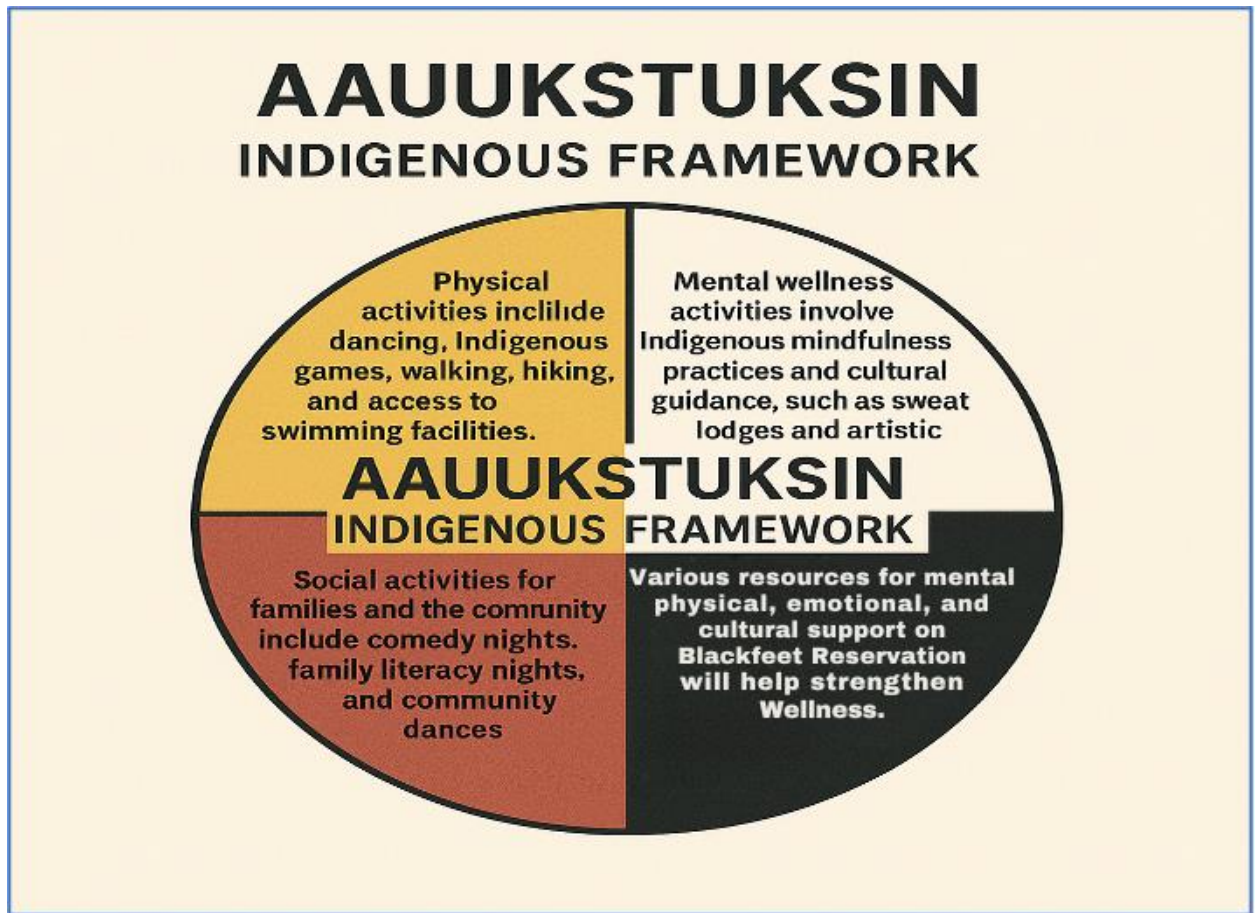
Furthermore, this structural approach emphasizes relational accountability and Indigenous governance, positioning the Blackfeet Tribe, Tribal Health entities, and school leadership as key actors in shaping, sustaining, and evaluating wellness initiatives. By embedding Indigenous frameworks into decision-making processes and organizational systems, the model advances self-determination and creates the conditions necessary for long-term improvements in health, well-being, and educational outcomes.

Political Factors. The Political factor in developing and implementing the Browning Public Schools Wellness Model is to clarify the roles of politics, policy, and procedures among Browning Public Schools, the Blackfeet Tribal Business Council, and the Office of Public Instruction. Browning Public Schools is considered a community within a community. The school must consider the policies and procedures of the Office of Public Instruction and the Blackfeet Tribal Business Council. According to Peterson (2010), assumptions that presume the "self-evidence" of "community" lead to the use of convenient definitions that do not enhance the extension of democratic decision-making processes for marginalized peoples but instead exacerbate inequalities between and within these communities. The Browning Public Schools

and the Blackfeet Business Council sometimes need to see eye to eye; this primarily concerns historical personal issues, a lack of accountability, and communication. The Office of Public Instruction has policies that all schools in the State of Montana must follow, but some only apply to public schools on reservations.

The Office of Public Instruction must have a thorough understanding of Tribal policies, and connect with the Indian Education Division to consider the implementation of the Wellness model and how public schools on reservation can relate to staff burnout. In other words, the Wellness model process will identify the strategic plan. An individual is selected to develop and implement activities, education, and training. If this process is successful, the Wellness Model will be presented to the Superintendent for approval and inclusion on the Browning Public School Board of Trustees agenda. The board must decide if the Wellness Model will be a Standard of Operation or a Policy.

Figure 2. Conceptual AAUUKSTUKSIN (Sacred Circle Stones) Indigenous framework.



Browning Public Schools Wellness Project

The Application in Browning Public Schools implementing the AAUUKSTUKSIN framework in Browning Public Schools follows a three-step process:

1. **Assessment** – Conduct five focus groups and fifteen interviews with administrators, teachers, paraprofessionals, and classified staff, guided by the Sacred Circle Stones, to explore perceptions of wellness.

2. **Design** – Collaborate with a Community Advisory Board to analyze findings and identify culturally relevant wellness priorities.
3. **Implementation** – Integrate the Wellness Model into school policies and Standards of Operation (SOP), securing approval from the Browning Public School Board of Trustees and the Blackfeet Tribal Business Council.

The plan includes physical wellness activities (walking, traditional games, hiking, dancing), mental health supports (mindfulness, sweat lodges, artistic expression), and community events (family nights, cultural gatherings). Partnerships with Tribal Health, IHS, and local prevention programs will support sustainability while addressing challenges such as staff turnover, funding constraints, and policy alignment.

The Browning Public School Wellness Model will include collaboration among Blackfeet Tribal Health Fitness, Tribal Behavioral Health, various prevention programs, the Indian Health Service Behavioral Health Department, and Blackfeet elders. The anticipated barriers to collaboration with tribal programs include high turnover, duplication of services, grant-funded programs that will not continue due to insufficient funding, interference from the Blackfeet Tribal Business Council, poor communication, and individuals who are territorial about specific projects.

The Indian Health Service provides a range of services to the community. A key barrier is the shortage of primary care and mental health providers to meet the healthcare needs of the Blackfeet Reservation, with contract providers rotating on short-term engagements. Currently, there are only two mental health providers for the community, leaving few opportunities for appointments and follow-up. Our Indian Health Service unit relies on contract services from

another hospital, and because those services depend on government funding, many are limited by budget constraints.

When working on collaborative projects, opportunities for open discussion, trust, and buy-in from the programs are essential; however, these can sometimes pose challenges. For instance, program directors hold differing views on which wellness pathways to pursue, leading to conflict and preventing them from serving as stakeholders in the Browning Public Schools Wellness Model. Buy-in is a significant component of the Wellness Model; engaging stakeholders to develop services and activities for staff is the most important opportunity. Without buy-in from participants and stakeholders, the Browning Public Schools Wellness Model would not be sustainable or prosperous.

Other resources include Blackfeet Community College and Fast Blackfeet. Blackfeet Community College has implemented a wellness program for staff and students. Their wellness program does not include culture and does not follow a wellness model. Their wellness projects emphasize self-care without a self-assessment. Blackfeet Community College has funding available for collaborative projects.

Discussion: The findings and implementation of the AAUUKSTUKSIN Indigenous Framework within the Browning Public Schools Wellness Model significantly contribute to the broader discourse on culturally grounded wellness interventions in Indigenous communities. This discussion underscores the importance of re-centering Indigenous knowledge systems in health and education policy while navigating the challenges of institutional collaboration, sustainability, and stakeholder engagement.

The AAUUKSTUKSIN Framework not only provided a culturally appropriate methodological foundation for engaging participants but also emphasized relational accountability, sovereignty, and community voice in shaping wellness strategies. By engaging participants through talking circles, storytelling, and self-assessment tools rooted in the four quadrants of the Sacred Circle Stones—physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional—this project demonstrated how Indigenous frameworks can generate meaningful, ethical, and responsive health promotion interventions within systems historically shaped by colonial structures.

One key finding from this study is that 65% of staff expressed cultural inclusion and spiritual reconnection support staff well-being and reduce burnout (Kauffman & associates, 2018). Unlike conventional wellness programs, this model prioritizes Indigenous practices, including beading, singing, language use, and spiritual guidance, thereby reinforcing cultural identity and fostering emotional and spiritual healing. This decolonial approach to wellness aligns with community values. It addresses the unique sociocultural needs of Indigenous educators and staff, many of whom experience systemic marginalization, historical trauma, and institutional fatigue. Significantly, the AAUUKSTUKSIN Framework disrupts the traditional researcher-participant binary by positioning the researcher as a relative embedded within the community rather than a detached observer. This relational approach fosters trust, reciprocity, and co-creation of knowledge, which are critical for authentic and sustained engagement. Despite promising outcomes, the project also encountered several structural and operational barriers that underscore the complexity of implementing Indigenous-centered wellness initiatives. These challenges included frequent turnover among partner organizations, program duplication, insufficient mental health providers, funding instability, and a lack of cohesive

communication among agencies. Moreover, resistance or lack of buy-in from confident program leaders highlights the ongoing tension between traditional governance systems and collaborative, community-driven models. These barriers underscore the need for stronger accountability, trust-building, and long-term commitment from all stakeholders, including tribal governance, healthcare entities, and school administrators.

The integration of the Wellness Model into Browning Public Schools' Standard of Operation represents a significant step toward institutionalizing Indigenous wellness practices. The model's flexibility allows it to evolve in response to community input, ensuring its relevance and sustainability over time. Furthermore, the implications extend beyond the school district. The model sets a precedent for other tribal organizations, demonstrating that cultural revitalization, health equity, and workforce well-being can be achieved simultaneously through culturally competent planning and management. The discussion also acknowledges that while short-term impacts, such as increased morale and self-awareness, are essential, the long-term vision lies in systemic transformation. By embedding the framework in policy and practice, Browning Public Schools are contributing to a broader movement that centers Indigenous wellness philosophies in education and health systems.

Strengths and Limitations

The AAUUKSTUKSIN Wellness Model's strengths include its cultural grounding, community-driven design, and adaptability across diverse Indigenous contexts. By embedding traditional practices—language revitalization, beading, dancing, and spiritual guidance—into school life, it supports cultural identity, staff morale, and holistic well-being. Formal adoption in the SOP ensures longevity and flexibility.

Limitations include shortages of mental health providers, partner turnover, service duplication, and the complexity of aligning tribal and state policies. Overcoming these barriers will require sustainable funding, strengthened accountability, and ongoing community engagement.

Future Recommendations

Moving forward, it is recommended that the Browning Public School District continue to integrate the AAUUKSTUKSIN framework as a guiding framework for all wellness initiatives. This approach ensures that physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional health are addressed in a balanced, culturally grounded way. Continued engagement with the Community Advisory Board and other local stakeholders will be essential to maintain authenticity, promote shared ownership, and ensure the model reflects the evolving needs of students, staff, and the wider Blackfeet community.

To strengthen the model's long-term impact, future efforts should include systematic staff training on the principles and applications of the AAUUKSTUKSIN framework. Professional development sessions can incorporate experiential learning, storytelling, and culturally relevant practices that align with Blackfeet values. These sessions should also equip staff with strategies to identify early signs of student distress, respond appropriately, and foster supportive learning environments.

Sustainability will depend on securing ongoing funding and resources for wellness programming. This includes pursuing grants, building partnerships with tribal health agencies, and collaborating with community organizations that can provide expertise, facilities, or direct services. Embedding the wellness model in school policy and curriculum will also help ensure

that the approach is not dependent solely on specific individuals or short-term funding cycles, but rather becomes part of the district's institutional identity.

Finally, establishing a robust evaluation plan will be critical for measuring the model's effectiveness and guiding continuous improvement. This process should incorporate both qualitative and quantitative measures, combining community narratives, student and staff feedback, and wellness-related data such as attendance, behavioral incidents, and academic performance. Regular reflection on evaluation findings, alongside community input, will help refine the approach over time and reinforce the district's commitment to holistic, culturally responsive wellness. In conclusion, this project shows that when Indigenous frameworks, such as AAUUKSTUKSIN, are applied with respect, collaboration, and humility, they can produce transformative outcomes. The model does more than improve staff health—it builds a relational infrastructure rooted in Indigenous thought, empowering communities to reclaim their knowledge, define their wellness, and reimagine institutions that truly serve them. Although securing broader support and overcoming institutional constraints remains work in progress, the Wellness Model and the AAUUKSTUKSIN Framework offer a powerful blueprint for advancing Indigenous wellness, resilience, and self-determination across educational and community settings.

CHAPTER 5

PRODUCT 1

BI-WEEKLY SELF ASSESSMENT

Introduction

The Bi-Weekly Self-Assessment is a guided reflection tool that supports the ongoing growth and well-being of Browning Public School staff. It serves as both a personal check-in and a structured way to tracking progress toward individual wellness goals across four interconnected areas: physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional health. These areas are core to the holistic wellness approach embraced by the Browning Public School Wellness Committee, which recognizes that true well-being comes from nurturing the whole person.

By completing this assessment every two weeks, participants are encouraged to pause and evaluate their current habits, achievements, and challenges.

The process promotes intentional goal-setting, self-awareness, and personal accountability. Each section of the form invites individuals to clearly define a goal, outline the practical steps they will take to achieve it, and identify the support or resources needed from the Browning Public School Wellness Committee. This partnership ensures that individuals are not working toward their wellness goals in isolation but are connected to a network of encouragement, tools, and community support.

In addition to tracking progress, the Bi-Weekly Self-Assessment helps identify patterns over time—whether those patterns reveal strengths to celebrate or challenges that require new strategies. It is a proactive approach to staying on course, adjusting approaches when necessary,

and maintaining a balanced focus across all dimensions of health. Through consistent reflection and goal-setting, the assessment empowers each participant to create sustainable habits that contribute to both personal growth and the overall wellness of the school community. The Bi-Weekly Self-Assessment is more than a progress check—it is a reflective process rooted in the values, teachings, and balance embodied in the AAUUKSTUKSIN (Sacred Circle Stones) framework. Within Blackfeet tradition, wellness is seen as the harmony of four interconnected elements: physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional health. Each component is equally important, and balance among them is essential for living well.

This assessment honors teaching by guiding participants to set goals in each area, reflect on their journey, and seek support when needed. Every two weeks, this tool encourages staff and students to pause and look inward—just as the circle reminds us to revisit our intentions and realign with balance. Participants are invited to identify specific goals, outline the steps to achieve them, and specify the resources, encouragement, or guidance they may need from the Browning Public School Wellness Committee. In this way, the process reflects the Blackfeet value of OKSISTAPII (helping one another) by bridging personal responsibility and community support. Completing the assessment regularly helps individuals recognize their strengths, acknowledge challenges, and make intentional adjustments. Over time, this practice strengthens resilience, builds healthier habits, and deepens the connection to cultural teachings. By walking this path together, we honor both individual growth and collective well-being, ensuring that the circle of wellness remains strong for the Browning Public School community.

Background

The Browning Public School District recognizes that staff well-being is essential to fostering a healthy, thriving learning environment. In recent years, the district has committed to building a culturally responsive wellness model grounded in the AAUUKSTUKSIN (Sacred Circle Stones) framework. This traditional Blackfeet teaching emphasizes balance among the four essential aspects of health: physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional. This holistic approach recognizes that each element is interconnected and that an imbalance in one area can affect the others.

The Bi-Weekly Self-Assessment is a direct response to the need for a consistent, reflective tool that honors these cultural teachings and meets the district's wellness objectives. Research and community feedback show that intentional self-reflection, goal setting, and regular check-ins help individuals build sustainable habits, address challenges before they escalate, and maintain long-term well-being. For Indigenous communities, these practices align with traditional values of mindfulness, interconnectedness, and collective care.

Through this assessment, participants are encouraged to engage actively in their personal wellness journeys while fostering a sense of responsibility to the larger school community. The process builds a partnership between individuals and the Browning Public School Wellness Committee, ensuring culturally grounded support systems. By blending traditional Blackfeet teachings with modern wellness strategies, the Bi-Weekly Self-Assessment serves as both a personal growth tool and a step toward sustaining a healthier, more balanced community for current and future generations.

Historically, the AAUUKSTUKSIN (Sacred Circle Stones) served as a visual and spiritual teaching tool for the Blackfeet people. The stones—arranged in a circular formation—symbolized the interconnectedness of life, the cyclical nature of seasons, and the balance necessary to live in harmony with oneself, the community, and the natural world. Each quadrant of the circle represented a core aspect of wellness: the physical body, the mind, the spirit, and the emotions. The teachings reminded individuals to reflect regularly, nurture each part of themselves, and seek balance in their daily lives. By integrating this ancient framework into a modern wellness assessment, Browning Public Schools is honoring ancestral wisdom while addressing the school community's current needs. Through this assessment, participants are encouraged to actively engage in their personal wellness journeys while fostering a sense of responsibility to the larger school community. The process builds a partnership between individuals and the Browning Public School Wellness Committee, ensuring culturally grounded support systems. By blending traditional Blackfeet teachings with modern wellness strategies, the Bi-Weekly Self-Assessment serves as both a personal growth tool and a step toward sustaining a healthier, more balanced community for current and future generations.

Methodology The Bi-Weekly Self-Assessment uses a reflective, participatory approach rooted in the AAUUKSTUKSIN (Sacred Circle Stones) framework and holistic wellness principles. Designed to be simple, consistent, and culturally meaningful, the process enables participants to engage regularly without feeling overwhelmed or burdened. This approach supports sustained personal growth while honoring Blackfeet traditions of balance and reflection. The assessment is completed every two weeks by staff and students participating in the Browning Public School Wellness Model.

This timing allows individuals to reflect on short-term progress while providing sufficient time to make meaningful adjustments before the next cycle. Guided by the Sacred Circle Stones teaching, the assessment is organized into four key sections: Physical Health, Mental Health, Spiritual Health, and Emotional Health. Each section prompts participants to set a clear, achievable goal within a specific wellness dimension and identify the actionable steps they will take to achieve it. Participants also outline the support they may need from the Browning Public School Wellness Committee, underscoring the collaborative nature of the wellness journey. Participants are encouraged to respond to each section thoughtfully and honestly, treating the assessment as a personal conversation rather than a test or evaluation. This process promotes self-awareness and growth, reflecting the traditional Blackfeet practice of Spookinappi (Good Health), which involves seeking guidance and thoughtfully considering one's path to maintain balance in life.

The Browning Public School Wellness Committee plays a vital role by reviewing the needs and support requests identified by participants. The committee ensures timely follow-up by providing resources and connecting individuals to relevant programs or cultural supports. This collaborative approach highlights the community's shared responsibility for fostering wellness. Over time, responses to the Bi-Weekly Self-Assessment can be compared with previous submissions to track personal growth, identify recurring challenges, and recognize achievements.

While maintaining confidentiality, aggregated data inform broader district-wide wellness initiatives, ensuring alignment with the cultural foundations of the AAUUKSTUKSIN

framework. By combining regular reflection, intentional goal-setting, and culturally grounded principles, this methodology positions the Bi-Weekly Self-Assessment as both a personal wellness tool and a collective commitment to cultivating a balanced, healthy school community.

Results The implementation of the Bi-Weekly Self-Assessment has produced both individual and community-level benefits within the Browning Public School District. The 150 self-assessment results reflect not only personal progress toward wellness goals but also the strengthening of cultural connection and collective support. Overall, the Bi-Weekly Self-Assessment has proven to be a practical and culturally respectful tool for fostering long-term wellness. It not only supports personal growth but also reinforces the Browning Public School District’s commitment to culturally grounded, community-driven health initiatives. The table below identifies the key outcomes and benefits of the Bi-Weekly Self-Assessment for participants. From the collection of the Bi-weekly Self-Assessment, themes were identified by the use of Otter AI and shared with the Community Advisory Board for approval.

Table # 4 “Key Outcomes and Benefits of the Bi-Weekly Self-Assessment”

Increased Self-Awareness	Participants report a deeper understanding of their own physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional health. By reflecting every two weeks, individuals are more aware of how daily habits and life circumstances influence their overall well-being.
Improved Goal Setting and Follow-Through	Consistent use of the assessment has encouraged participants to set clear, achievable goals and monitor their progress. Over time, many participants show increased confidence in creating realistic action plans and adapting them when challenges arise.
Strengthened Cultural Connection	Integrating the AAUUKSTUKSIN (Sacred Circle Stones) framework has deepened participants’ cultural understanding, reminding them of the Blackfeet teachings on balance and interconnectedness. The

	cultural grounding makes the assessment more meaningful and engaging.
Increased Utilization of Support Systems	Table # 4 Continued The regular inclusion of the prompt, “What support can the Browning Public School Wellness Committee offer?”, has encouraged participants to actively seek out resources, guidance, and encouragement. This has strengthened relationships between individuals and the Wellness Committee.
Positive Shifts in Wellness Habits	Aggregated observations over multiple cycles show gradual improvements in participants’ physical activity levels, stress management strategies, spiritual practices, and emotional coping skills.
Data to Inform School-Wide Wellness Initiatives	The collected data kept strictly confidential has provided valuable insight into common challenges and strengths across the school community. These findings have guided the Wellness Committee in designing targeted workshops, cultural activities, and health initiatives.

Conclusion

The Bi-Weekly Self-Assessment is a culturally grounded, practical tool for promoting holistic wellness within the Browning Public School District. By blending the ancestral wisdom of the AAUUKSTUKSIN (Sacred Circle Stones) with structured, modern wellness practices, the assessment empowers participants to take ownership of their health while fostering a supportive, connected community. Its consistent use strengthens resilience, deepens cultural awareness, and creates a living bridge between tradition and present-day wellness needs. Over time, this process not only improves individual well-being but also sustains the collective balance of the school community—ensuring that the circle of wellness remains strong for generations to come.

CHAPTER 6
PRODUCT II
BROWNING PUBLIC SCHOOL WELLNESS MODEL

Introduction

The Browning Public School Wellness Model is a comprehensive, holistic approach designed to promote health and well-being among Browning Public Schools staff. It is grounded in the understanding that staff success is interconnected with the health and wellness of their school environment. Unlike fragmented health interventions that operate in isolation, this model integrates health & wellness into the structural, cultural, and policy foundations of the Browning Public School District, according to Basch, 2011; Murray, Low, Hollis, Cross, & Davis, 2007 aligns with the growing consensus in educational and health literature that school's function not only as spaces of academic instruction but also as crucial environments for shaping lifelong health behaviors and community resilience.

Within theoretical and conceptual frameworks, the Browning Public School Wellness Model examines its key pillars and outlines its application and implementation. The model draws on evidence-based theories, culturally responsive practices, and sustainable systems of care to promote wellness among staff, students, and Blackfeet Community members.

Theoretical Foundations

The development of the Browning Public School Wellness Model is guided by multiple theoretical frameworks that emphasize the interconnectedness of health, education, and community well-being. One of the most influential frameworks is the Whole School, Whole

Community, Whole Child (WSCC) Model, developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD).

The WSCC model provides an integrated framework that highlights how educational success is inseparable from health promotion. It emphasizes that wellness must be embedded across multiple dimensions—including physical, mental, social, and environmental—and aligned with the core mission of education. In the Browning Public School context, this model underscores the importance of integrating wellness practices into district policies, school culture, and teaching practices, thereby ensuring that staff health and student success are mutually reinforcing (Lewallen, Hunt, Potts-Datema, Zaza, & Giles, 2015). Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory (1979) conceptualizes human development as occurring within nested systems, ranging from immediate interpersonal relationships to broader societal structures. For Browning Public Schools, this theory illuminates how family dynamics, peer relationships, school climate, community resources, and cultural norms shape wellness. By acknowledging these multiple layers, the Browning model positions staff wellness not solely as an individual responsibility but as the outcome of interconnected systems that require collective support. This ecological perspective helps ensure that wellness interventions extend beyond isolated initiatives to address the broader cultural and community contexts in which educators and staff work.

The model is also informed by Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) Theory, as articulated by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL, 2020). SEL emphasizes the development of self-awareness, social awareness, relationship skills, self-management, and responsible decision-making. Incorporating SEL into the Browning framework

ensures that emotional health and relational skills are central to overall wellness. This focus is especially significant for educators, who often serve as emotional role models for students while also navigating stressors that affect their own well-being. Embedding SEL principles in staff wellness initiatives promotes emotional resilience and strengthens interpersonal dynamics within the school environment.

Browning Public School incorporates trauma-informed care models, which provide a framework for understanding how trauma shapes behavior, learning, and relationships. According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA, 2014), trauma-informed approaches prioritize safety, trustworthiness, peer support, collaboration, empowerment, and cultural responsiveness. This perspective is highly relevant in Browning, where educators often work with students and families affected by historical and intergenerational trauma. By training staff in trauma-informed practices and embedding these principles in school culture, the Browning Wellness Model not only addresses student needs but also supports the emotional and professional well-being of staff who engage with these concepts daily. Finally, the Browning model incorporates Indigenous wellness frameworks, such as the Sacred Circle (AAUUKSTUKSIN), which emphasize the interconnectedness of the physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual dimensions of health.

This approach highlights the importance of balance, harmony, and community responsibility in sustaining wellness. By integrating Indigenous frameworks alongside scientific theories, the Browning model ensures cultural responsiveness, strengthens community ownership, and affirms the values and traditions of the populations it serves. Taken together,

these theoretical foundations provide a strong academic and cultural basis for the Browning Public School Wellness Model. By blending evidence-based research with Indigenous knowledge systems, the model advances a holistic and sustainable vision of wellness that is both scientifically robust and culturally grounded.

Conceptual Framework: The Browning Public School Wellness Model is built on four interconnected pillars that collectively support staff's physical, mental, emotional, social, and cultural well-being. Rather than treating wellness as an individual responsibility, the model frames it as a systemic, shared commitment that requires collaboration among educators, administrators, families, and the Blackfeet community. These pillars operate in partnership, ensuring that wellness initiatives reinforce one another and create a sustainable culture of health within the district.

The first pillar, Physical Wellness, emphasizes health maintenance, prevention, and active living to sustain a healthy work environment. This includes regular health screenings, immunizations, and preventive care programs that enable early detection and management of health issues. Nutritious meals and hydration initiatives are integrated into school life, ensuring staff have access to healthy food choices. Staff fitness programs—such as step challenges, yoga classes, and walking clubs—provide opportunities for movement and stress relief during the workday.

The second pillar, Mental and Emotional Wellness, addresses staff psychological resilience and emotional health. Recognizing that Browning Public School staff often work under high levels of stress, the model prioritizes access to counseling services, employee

assistance programs, and peer support networks. Stress-reduction practices, such as mindfulness, meditation, and reflective professional circles, are integrated into the school culture to normalize self-care. Policies that allow staff to take designated mental health days reinforce the message that emotional wellness is valued and supported. Furthermore, professional development opportunities include workshops on emotional intelligence, burnout prevention, and work-life balance. These initiatives not only enhance individual coping skills but also foster an environment of compassion and empathy across the school community.

The third pillar, Social Wellness, focuses on the quality of relationships and the sense of belonging within the school environment. Team-building activities and cross-departmental events strengthen collaboration and reduce feelings of isolation among staff. Inclusive policies and practices ensure that every member of the school community—regardless of role, background, or identity—feels valued and supported. The model also encourages staff to engage with families and community members through cultural events, volunteer opportunities, and collaborative partnerships. By cultivating meaningful relationships and reinforcing social bonds, this pillar ensures that wellness is not only individual but also collective, rooted in shared responsibility and mutual support.

The fourth pillar, Spiritual and Cultural Wellness, underscores the importance of meaning, identity, and cultural grounding to overall well-being. For Browning Public Schools, this means integrating Indigenous knowledge systems and cultural practices into wellness programming. Ceremonies, traditional teachings, and the involvement of Elders offer opportunities for reflection, balance, and community connection. This pillar emphasizes that

wellness encompasses not only physical and mental health but also the maintenance of a sense of purpose, belonging, and cultural continuity.

Together, these four pillars form an interconnected framework that positions wellness as an essential driver of both staff success and student achievement. By addressing the physical, emotional, social, cultural, and organizational dimensions of health, the Browning Public School Wellness Model advances a holistic and sustainable vision of school wellness. The model ensures that wellness initiatives are not temporary programs but are embedded in the school system's structures and culture, making them adaptable, resilient, and responsive to the evolving needs of the community's unity.

Application The Browning Public School Wellness Model is applied through a range of initiatives and strategies. Monthly wellness challenges encourage healthy behaviors, and “Wellness Wednesdays” are implemented through a range of initiatives and strategies. The Browning Public School Wellness Model is implemented through a range of initiatives and strategies. Monthly wellness challenges promote healthy behaviors, while “Wellness Wednesdays” embed wellness in the school calendar. Professional development opportunities incorporate wellness-focused content, ensuring staff are equipped to model and promote health. Flexible scheduling supports work-life balance, and recognition programs strengthen morale. Evaluation mechanisms include annual surveys, participation, and analysis of health and workforce data (e.g., absenteeism, turnover). This continuous feedback loop allows the model to adapt and evolve in response to emerging needs (CDC, 2020). Embedded wellness into the school calendar.

Discussion

The Browning Public School Wellness Model emerges as a timely and necessary response to the complex challenges educators face in rural and Indigenous communities. By integrating physical, mental/emotional, social, and cultural components, the model moves beyond traditional school wellness programs that primarily focus on physical health or on isolated initiatives. Instead, it aligns with a systems-level approach in which wellness is embedded in policies, culture, staffing, and daily school life. This approach is particularly critical in Browning, where staff experience high levels of stress, secondary trauma, staff turnover, and limited access to local health and mental health services. Rather than viewing staff wellness as an individual responsibility, the model recognizes it as an institutional obligation that directly affects teacher retention, student success, community trust, and overall school climate.

A key strength of the model is its grounding in both Western evidence-based frameworks and Indigenous knowledge systems. While models such as the WSCC (Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child) and trauma-informed care provide the structural and theoretical backbone, integrating Blackfeet culture and the Sacred Circle (AAUUKSTUKSIN) ensures relevance and cultural alignment. This dual foundation allows the model to address not only physical and psychological health but also identity, spirituality, and intergenerational healing. It disrupts colonial approaches to education by reintroducing cultural teachings, storytelling, language, and ceremony as legitimate wellness practices within school systems. This is particularly important in communities where historical trauma, loss of language, and disconnection from culture have contributed to cycles of grief, substance abuse, and mental health disparities.

Another critical contribution of this model is its focus on sustainability and shared leadership. The inclusion of a Wellness Committee, district-level Wellness Coordinator, and campus Wellness Coaches ensures that wellness is coordinated rather than fragmented. This structure promotes accountability, shared ownership, and continual program development rather than short-lived initiatives. Moreover, incorporating evaluation tools such as annual surveys, participation data, and staff absenteeism or turnover metrics enhances accountability and enables data-informed decision-making. This feedback loop is essential for refining initiatives, allocating funding, and demonstrating results to stakeholders, including school boards, tribal councils, and grant funders.

However, while this model offers a transformative vision, it also faces potential challenges. First, implementation depends heavily on administrative support, funding, and staff buy-in. Without leadership commitment, wellness initiatives can become symbolic rather than meaningful. Additionally, staff may experience initiative fatigue if new responsibilities are added without reducing existing workloads. Time constraints, lack of substitute teachers, or insufficient training may also limit staff participation. Furthermore, cultural and spiritual components must be implemented with respect and authenticity, ensuring that Elders are appropriately compensated, protocols are followed, and cultural practices are not tokenized.

Despite these challenges, the potential impact of the Browning Public School Wellness Model is significant. When educators feel valued, supported, and emotionally safe, they are more likely to remain in the profession, engage meaningfully with students, and contribute to a positive school culture. This, in turn, leads to improved student engagement, academic

achievement, attendance, and community trust. Additionally, by modeling wellness practices, educators teach students, both directly and indirectly, how to care for their physical, mental, and cultural well-being, thereby reinforcing intergenerational resilience.

Looking ahead, the model could be strengthened by expanding partnerships with the Blackfeet Tribal Health Department, the Indian Health Service (IHS), Tribal education programs, and Diabetes & Prevention fitness centers. Long-term sustainability may require embedding wellness into district budgets, teacher contracts, professional development plans, and school improvement strategies rather than relying solely on external funding. Future research could explore staff outcomes over time, the relationship between wellness programs and student success, and how Indigenous wellness frameworks can inform state and national school health policies. In summary, the Browning Public School Wellness Model represents more than a program; it is a shift in education. It reframes schools as places of healing, balance, and community, where staff wellness is seen not as optional, but as foundational to academic success and community resilience.

Conclusion and Future Recommendations

The Browning Public School Wellness Model represents a powerful, holistic, and culturally grounded blueprint for embedding wellness within the educational system. Unlike traditional wellness programs that operate in isolation or as temporary initiatives, this model situates wellness as a shared responsibility and an essential component of school success. It emphasizes that educators, who bear the emotional, academic, and cultural responsibilities of

teaching, cannot effectively support students unless their own physical, emotional, mental, social, and cultural needs are addressed.

The model's strength lies in its systemic, sustainable structure: wellness committees, dedicated coordinators, school-site wellness coaches, evaluation systems, and culturally relevant programming ensure that wellness becomes ingrained in district culture rather than existing as a short-term project. This creates a pathway for improved staff retention, stronger relationships, better academic outcomes, and enhanced school climate. Despite these strengths, successful implementation will require continued administrative support, long-term funding, consistent staff participation, and culturally respectful practices. The district must remain attentive to challenges such as initiative fatigue, limited resources, and the need for ongoing professional learning.

Several future directions can strengthen and expand this wellness framework. First, partnerships with community health providers, the Blackfeet Tribe, Indian Health Service (IHS), local clinics, and mental health practitioners should be deepened to increase access to specialized care and reduce service gaps. Second, student and family voices should be actively integrated into wellness planning and evaluation to ensure the model reflects the needs of the whole community, not just staff.

Third, culturally responsive wellness practices must continue to expand to incorporate Blackfeet language, ceremonies, land-based learning, storytelling, and intergenerational mentorship to uphold cultural identity and promote healing. Fourth, the district should invest in longitudinal research that tracks the long-term effects of wellness initiatives on teacher retention, academic performance, attendance, morale, mental health, and community resilience. This data

can support future funding proposals, policy decisions, and replication in other Indigenous and rural school districts. The Browning Public School Wellness Model demonstrates that when wellness is valued, institutionalized, and culturally rooted, schools become places of healing, growth, and resilience. With ongoing adaptation, reflection, and community partnership, this model has the potential not only to transform the educational environment in Browning but also to serve as a replicable framework for other school districts seeking to prioritize the well-being of their staff and communities.

Future directions should include:

- Strengthening partnerships with community health organizations to expand access to services.
- Integrating student and family voices in wellness planning and evaluation.
- Expanding culturally responsive practices to reflect the diversity of the Browning community.
- Developing longitudinal studies to track the long-term impact of wellness initiatives on academic achievement, health outcomes, and staff retention.

Through ongoing adaptation and evaluation, the Browning Public School Wellness Model can serve as both a local innovation and a replicable framework for other districts committed to building healthier school environments.

Vision: The wellness model is designed to align with the district's mission and values by recognizing that a healthy, supported, and balanced workforce is essential to achieving

educational success. At its core, the model is built on principles of equity and inclusion, ensuring that all staff—regardless of their role, school location, cultural background, or personal circumstances—have access to wellness opportunities and support. Rather than reacting to problems after they occur, the model emphasizes a prevention-oriented approach that prioritizes early intervention, healthy habits, stress reduction, and regular well-being practices to avoid burnout and long-term health issues. The framework also adopts a holistic perspective, addressing not only staff physical health but also their emotional, mental, social, cultural, and professional needs, recognizing that wellness is interconnected across all areas of life.

To ensure its effectiveness and longevity, the model is designed with sustainability in mind, including plans for ongoing evaluation, adaptation, and improvement informed by staff feedback, data collection, and evolving district needs. By following these core principles, the wellness model becomes more than a program—it becomes a long-term commitment to creating a school environment where staff feel valued, supported, and capable of thriving.

Core Principles: The wellness model is intentionally designed to reflect and support the district's mission and core values, recognizing that student success is directly linked to the health, stability, and well-being of the staff who serve them. It recognizes that a healthy, supported, and balanced workforce is not only beneficial but essential to fostering strong learning environments. Central to this model is a commitment to equity and inclusion, meaning that every staff member—whether a teacher, custodian, administrator, bus driver, or support personnel—has equal access to wellness resources, regardless of their school site, schedule, background, or personal circumstances. Rather than waiting for crises such as burnout, high

stress, or health issues to emerge, the model adopts a proactive, prevention-oriented approach. This includes implementing regular wellness practices, establishing early support systems, encouraging healthy routines, and reducing stigma associated with seeking help.

In addition, the model takes a holistic approach, understanding that wellness extends beyond physical health. It encompasses emotional resilience, mental health support, social connection, cultural identity, spiritual well-being, and opportunities for professional growth. By recognizing that these dimensions are interconnected, the model ensures that staff are supported as whole individuals rather than merely as employees. Sustainability is also a foundational principle; the model is not intended to be a temporary initiative but rather a long-term, evolving system. This includes ongoing assessment, data collection, staff surveys, feedback loops, and periodic adjustments to ensure that programs remain relevant, culturally responsive, and effective.

Ultimately, the wellness model becomes a cultural shift rather than a standalone program—embedding wellness into policies, daily routines, leadership decisions, and school climate. By committing to this approach, the district creates a work environment in which staff feel respected, cared for, and empowered to thrive, thereby strengthening student learning, employee retention, and overall school success.

- **Equity and Inclusion:** Accessible to all staff, regardless of role, location, or personal circumstances.
- **Prevention-Oriented:** Focus on proactive health and wellness measures.
- **Holistic Approach:** Address physical, mental, emotional, and professional needs

- **Sustainability:** Ensure long-term viability with regular updates and evaluation.

1. Implementation Structure for the Browning Public School Wellness Model

The implementation structure for the Browning Public School Wellness Model is designed to ensure organization, accountability, and consistent communication across all schools in the district. At the core of this structure is the Wellness Committee, comprising representatives from various departments, school sites, and staff roles. This committee is responsible for planning wellness initiatives, overseeing implementation, monitoring progress, and evaluating outcomes. Their work ensures that wellness efforts remain aligned with district goals and staff needs. Supporting the committee's work is a dedicated Wellness Coordinator at the district level, who oversees the entire wellness program, manages resources, coordinates communication among schools, and ensures strategies are implemented effectively and consistently.

At each school campus, Wellness Coaches serve as on-site leaders who encourage staff participation, organize wellness activities, and gather employee feedback to share with the district team. Together, the Wellness Committee, district Wellness Coordinator, and campus Wellness Coaches create a structured system that promotes collaboration, accountability, and continuous improvement, ensuring that the wellness model is successfully integrated into daily school operations and sustained over time.

- **Wellness Committee:**
 - Representatives from various departments and schools.
 - Responsible for planning, implementing, and evaluating wellness initiatives.
- **Dedicated Wellness Coordinator:**

- A district-level staff member will oversee the wellness program.
- **Campus Wellness Coaches:**
 - Designate staff members at each school to promote participation and provide feedback.

2. Example Initiatives

Example initiatives within the Browning Public School Wellness Model are designed to actively engage staff in meaningful, practical wellness practices throughout the school year. One approach includes monthly wellness challenges, such as step-count competitions, hydration goals, mindfulness practice tracking, or stress-reduction activities that promote healthy habits in a fun and motivating way.

To further support staff well-being, professional development days include sessions on wellness topics such as stress management, trauma-informed practices, self-care strategies, and work-life balance. Another important initiative is to implement flexible scheduling during stressful periods in the school year, thereby enabling staff to manage personal responsibilities better and reduce burnout.

Additionally, many schools implement “Wellness Wednesdays,” which may include early dismissal for staff, designated time for group fitness, yoga, talking circles, or wellness workshops that provide relief from weekly stress while fostering community and connection. Together, these initiatives not only promote healthy lifestyles but also demonstrate the district’s commitment to valuing and supporting its staff beyond academic responsibilities.

- **Monthly Wellness Challenges:**
 - Step challenges, hydration tracking, or mindfulness exercises.

- **Professional Development with Wellness Focus:**
 - Wellness topics are integrated into teacher in-service days.
- **Flexible Scheduling Options:**
 - Allow for a better work-life balance during peak-stress periods.
- **"Wellness Wednesdays":**
 - Early dismissal or scheduled staff wellness activities.

Table # 5 Browning Public School Wellness Model component and activities

#1 Physical Health	This component of the AAUUKSTUKSIN model emphasizes promoting healthy lifestyles by ensuring that schools create environments that support physical well-being on a daily basis. It begins with balanced nutrition, in which schools provide healthy meal options, limit access to highly processed foods, and encourage staff to stay adequately hydrated throughout the day. Physical activity is also a core element, including daily physical education classes, at least 30 minutes of walking or other activity, and frequent activity breaks to reduce prolonged sitting and increase circulation and energy. Preventive healthcare further strengthens this component through routine screenings, such as vision, hearing, and dental examinations, ensuring early identification and support for health concerns. Schools also support vaccination efforts and teach students proper hygiene practices, such as handwashing, oral care, and cleanliness, to prevent illness. In addition, health policies are established to protect and support student well-being, including clear procedures for managing food allergies and chronic diseases such as asthma and diabetes, and for ensuring access to clean, safe drinking water. Together, these practices build a strong foundation for physical health and contribute to the holistic wellness of students and staff. • Balanced Nutrition: Encourage healthy options for school lunches, educate students on calorie counts, and provide water bottles to staff for hydration. • Physical Activity: Daily physical education, 30 minutes of walking, and movement breaks throughout the day. • Preventive Healthcare: Schools conduct regular screenings (vision, hearing, dental), provide vaccinations, and promote good hygiene practices.
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- **Health Policies:** Guidelines on food allergies, chronic disease management (e.g., diabetes, asthma), and access to clean water.

Table #6 Continued

#2 Mental and Emotional Wellbeing

This component is dedicated to nurturing the mental and psychological well-being of students and staff by ensuring that schools are not merely academic environments but also emotionally supportive spaces where individuals feel seen, heard, and understood. Trained school counselors and psychologists play a vital role by offering individual and group counseling sessions that address a wide range of needs, including grief, trauma, behavioral challenges, and academic stress. These professionals also collaborate with teachers and families to create personalized support plans for students who may require additional care. Beyond direct counseling, schools incorporate stress-management programs into daily routines, teaching mindfulness exercises, deep breathing, stretching, and grounding techniques to reduce anxiety and improve focus. These practices not only help students manage school-related pressures but also provide staff with tools to cope with heavy workloads and burnout. Furthermore, mental health awareness is promoted through age-appropriate workshops, classroom lessons, and school-wide campaigns that educate the community about recognizing symptoms of anxiety, depression, and emotional dysregulation. These efforts help reduce stigma, encourage early help-seeking, and teach healthy emotional expression, self-regulation, and empathy for others. By combining professional mental health support, proactive stress-relief strategies, and continuing education, this component establishes a foundation of emotional safety, resilience, and psychological strength within the school environment.

- **School Counselors & Psychologists:** Providing individual and group counseling sessions.
- **Stress Management Programs:** Mindfulness sessions, breathing exercises, and coping strategies for academic pressure.
- **Mental Health Awareness:** Workshops and education on managing anxiety, depression, and emotional regulation.

Table #6 Continued

#3 Spiritual and Cultural

This component of the AAUUKSTUKSIN model nurtures spiritual identity and cultural belonging, recognizing that wellness extends beyond the physical and mental to include a deep sense of purpose, connection, and identity. In schools, this is supported by the incorporation of Blackfeet Elders and cultural mentors who serve as

	knowledge keepers and role models for students and staff. These Elders share traditional teachings, including the Blackfeet language, songs, dances, ceremonies, and oral histories, which preserve cultural heritage and instill values of respect, humility, bravery, and community responsibility. Through these teachings, students learn about their ancestral roots, sacred relationships to land and family, and the importance of balance among mind, body, spirit, and community. Cultural activities—such as beading, storytelling, sweat lodge ceremonies, and seasonal celebrations—offer opportunities for healing, identity formation, and intergenerational connections. At the same time, schools recognize that spirituality is personal and may take many forms. To honor this diversity, students and staff seeking faith-based or non-traditional support have access to clergy members, priests, pastors, or other spiritual leaders who can provide guidance, prayer, and support during times of grief, confusion, or personal struggle. This dual approach—upholding Indigenous cultural teachings while respecting individual beliefs—creates an inclusive environment in which spirituality is neither imposed nor suppressed but supported as a meaningful part of a person’s well-being. By integrating cultural education, spiritual guidance, and respect for personal beliefs, this component helps students and staff feel grounded in their identities, strengthens community connections, and supports emotional resilience and healing within the school system. • Cultural Mentors: Provide Blackfeet Elders to teach language, dance, ceremonies, and stories • Non-traditional mentors: Offer contact information for a Clergy, priest, or preacher for spiritual guidance
#4 Social Wellness	The social wellness component emphasizes the importance of building positive relationships, fostering connection, and creating a sense of community among staff. Recognizing that educators and school employees often experience stress, isolation, and burnout, this component focuses on providing opportunities for staff to engage in supportive and enjoyable ways. Wellness Coaches organize social tea or coffee sessions during lunch or at the end of the school day, providing staff with a relaxed space to unwind, talk, laugh, and form meaningful connections outside their professional responsibilities. To promote both social connection and physical health, Wellness Coaches also coordinate walking groups where staff can walk together, enjoy fresh air, and build healthy habits while strengthening workplace relationships. Additionally, social wellbeing is supported through group activities like movie nights or book clubs, where staff can come

	together such a share ideas, discuss meaningful topics, or enjoy time together in a stress-free setting. These activities help staff feel valued, supported, and connected, thereby improving morale, collaboration, communication, and overall workplace satisfaction. By prioritizing relationships and creating a culture of belonging, this component helps staff feel less isolated and more supported both personally and professionally. • Social Tea/coffee time: Wellness Coaches provide social time at the end of the day or lunch time • Walking groups: Wellness Coaches organize a walking group for the staff • Movie/Book time: Wellness Coaches provide a movie or book club
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4. Evaluation and Feedback Evaluation and feedback are crucial to ensuring that the Browning Public School Wellness Model remains effective, meaningful, and responsive to staff needs across all district schools. To measure its impact, annual surveys are distributed to all employees to assess satisfaction with the wellness program, identify areas of success, and highlight emerging concerns or unmet needs. These surveys give staff a voice in decision-making and help administrators understand the real outcomes of wellness initiatives from those directly affected. Alongside survey results, participation in wellness challenges, workshops, physical activities, and professional development sessions is carefully monitored to gauge staff engagement and identify which activities are most beneficial or popular. These data help identify trends—for example, which schools are highly involved, where participation may be low, and what barriers may prevent staff from participating.

In addition to staff feedback and participation tracking, the district reviews objective health-related data such as absenteeism, sick leave usage, and staff turnover rates. By examining these trends over time, the district can evaluate whether the wellness program is helping reduce burnout, increase staff retention, and improve overall health and morale. When patterns such as frequent absences during certain times of the year or high turnover in specific buildings are identified, the wellness team can develop targeted interventions to address these issues. The model also emphasizes continuous improvement, with the wellness committee and coordinators meeting regularly to review survey results, attendance records, and health data, and to make necessary adjustments to programming, scheduling, or resources. They may implement new initiatives based on staff suggestions, modify ineffective activities, or increase support in areas where staff continue to struggle. This ongoing cycle of evaluation, reflection, and refinement ensures that the wellness model does not remain static but instead grows and evolves in response to the needs of the staff and community. Through this process, the model remains sustainable, culturally responsive, and genuinely supportive of a healthy, balanced, and thriving school workforce.

- **Annual Surveys:** Gauge staff satisfaction and identify emerging needs.
- **Participation:** Track engagement in wellness activities.
- **Health Data Analysis:** Examine trends in absenteeism and turnover.
- **Continuous Improvement:** Adjust programs based on feedback and results.

5. *Visual Representation of a Wellness Model* The visual representation of the Browning Public School Wellness Model clearly and meaningfully illustrates how a holistic,

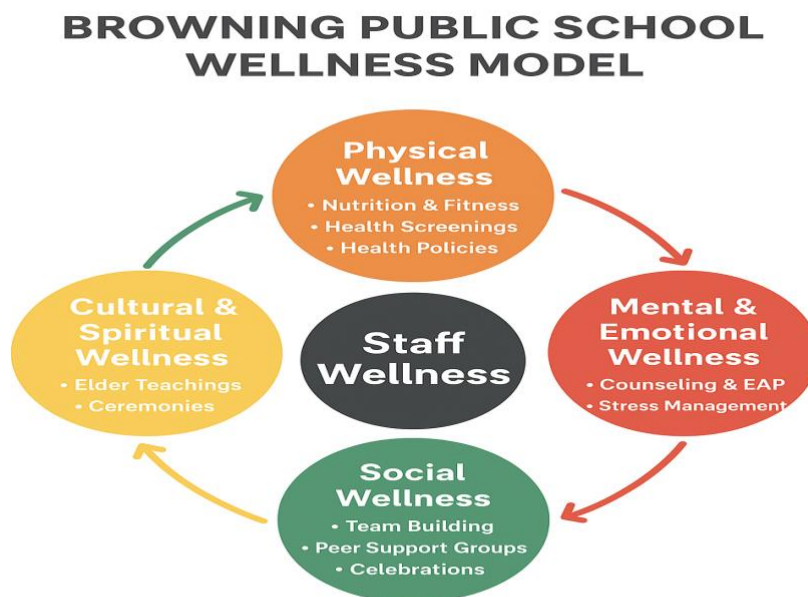
interconnected system supports staff well-being. At the heart of the diagram is “Staff Wellness,” underscoring that the health, happiness, and balance of school employees, teachers, administrators, custodians, bus drivers, support staff, and all personnel are central to the success of the educational environment as a whole. Placing staff wellness at the center reflects the idea that when educators are cared for physically, mentally, emotionally, socially, and spiritually, they are better able to support student learning, build positive relationships, and contribute to a healthy school culture.

Radiating around the center are four core pillars: Physical Wellness, Mental and Emotional Wellness, Social Wellness, and Cultural/Spiritual Wellness. These pillars are arranged in a circular configuration, connected by arrows, indicating that wellness is not a checklist but a continuous, interconnected cycle. Physical Wellness encompasses nutrition and hydration, opportunities for physical activity, preventive health screenings, and clear health policies that support safe learning and working environments. Mental and Emotional Wellness focuses on access to counselors and psychologists, Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs), stress-management strategies, mental health awareness, and the promotion of self-care practices.

Social Wellness emphasizes the importance of human connection and community by incorporating team-building activities, peer support groups, social gatherings (e.g., tea and coffee breaks), and celebrations that honor staff achievements, birthdays, and milestones. Cultural and Spiritual Wellness reflects the deep cultural roots of the Blackfeet community and other backgrounds within the district. It includes elders’ teachings, traditional stories, songs, ceremonies, sweat lodges, and Indigenous cooking, as well as recognition of diverse spiritual

beliefs through access to clergy, priests, or pastors for staff seeking faith-based guidance. This pillar reinforces identity, healing, belonging, and intergenerational respect. Arrows between the pillars indicate that none of these areas function independently; neglecting any one area can impact the others. For example, poor physical health can affect mental well-being, and a lack of social connection can weaken emotional resilience. Conversely, strengthening one pillar can uplift the others. Figure 2, titled “Browning Public School Wellness Model: A Holistic Approach to Staff Wellness,” visually communicates the district’s belief that wellness must be comprehensive, culturally grounded, and sustainable. It shifts wellness from being a single event or program to an ongoing commitment embedded in everyday school life.

Figure 3. Imagine a circular diagram with "Staff Wellness" at the center and five surrounding interconnected pillars: 1) Physical Wellness; 2) Mental and Emotional Wellness; 3) Social Wellness; 4) Cultural/Spiritual Wellness



CHAPTER SEVEN

PRODUCT III

BROWNING PUBLIC SCHOOL STANDARD OF
OPERATIONS

Introduction

Public schools serve as critical spaces that foster not only academic achievement but also physical, emotional, social, and spiritual/cultural well-being. Research shows that healthy, supported staff perform better for their students, engage more positively with administrators and their communities, and develop lifelong habits that contribute to personal and societal well-being. In this context, the Browning Public School Standard of Operations (SOP) for Wellness is a formalized framework for embedding health into the everyday structures of school life. The SOP is not just a set of procedural guidelines; it is a strategic framework that recognizes wellness as integral to the mission of education.

By prioritizing physical, mental, social, emotional, and spiritual/cultural wellness, the Browning Public School SOP establishes a holistic approach that extends beyond interventions. This chapter outlines the methodology, operational components, and evaluative structures of the Standard of Operations SOP. Implementation of the Browning Public School Standard of Operations (SOP) for Wellness will follow a systematic, research-informed approach that emphasizes collaboration, evidence-based practice, and continuous evaluation. The process will begin with a comprehensive situational analysis to assess the current state of wellness within the Browning Public School District. This analysis will review existing wellness initiatives, staff

surveys, interviews, and talking circles with key stakeholders (i.e., staff, administration, and the school board) to identify strengths, gaps, and areas for improvement.

The findings from this assessment will provide the foundational data necessary to guide the design of the SOP. Following this analysis, a participatory design process will be undertaken to ensure inclusivity and shared ownership. Administrators, educators, support staff, and community wellness partners will be engaged through talking circles and planning workshops to establish the SOP's structure and objectives collaboratively.

This staff engagement process ensures that the framework reflects the collective experiences and cultural context of the Blackfeet community, enhancing relevance and sustainability. Based on the collected data and feedback, the SOP will be developed to include clearly defined operational guidelines, roles, and accountability mechanisms. It will also integrate evidence-based wellness principles that address the five core dimensions of wellness—physical, mental, social, emotional, and spiritual/cultural—ensuring a holistic approach to staff well-being. Once developed, the SOP will be implemented in phases to allow for adaptation and refinement.

This phase will include professional development sessions, administrative briefings, and orientation activities to ensure that all staff members understand the framework's purpose, procedures, and expected outcomes. Iterative feedback loops will guide implementation to promote ongoing improvement and responsiveness to staff needs. To evaluate the effectiveness of the SOP, a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation system will be established. Both quantitative data, such as participation rates and wellness indicators, and qualitative data, such as staff reflections and focus group feedback, will be collected to assess progress and identify areas

for enhancement. Finally, sustainability will be achieved by embedding the SOP within the Browning Public School District's policies, annual evaluations, continuing professional development opportunities, and recognition of staff wellness leadership, thereby helping ensure long-term commitment and improvement.

Methodology

The primary purpose of the Browning Public School Standard of Operations (SOP) is to implement wellness as an institutional priority, ensuring that programs and policies are consistent, equitable, and sustainable. The SOP provides structured guidance for integrating wellness into the school's organizational culture, making it not an optional add-on but a foundational element of daily practice. The SOP applies universally across the Browning Public School District and extends to all staff and students. Its comprehensive scope reflects the belief that wellness must be inclusive, addressing the needs of diverse populations while promoting a safe and equitable environment for all.

The development and implementation of the Browning Public School Standard of Operations (SOP) for Wellness will follow a structured, evidence-based process that emphasizes collaboration, consistency, and accountability. This process will begin with a comprehensive review of existing wellness initiatives, policies, and staff feedback across the district to identify current practices, gaps, and opportunities for improvement. Data will be collected through staff surveys, informal interviews, and document analysis to ensure that the SOP reflects both the organizational needs and the cultural context of Browning Public Schools. Based on this analysis, a participatory design approach will be employed to engage administrators, educators,

support staff, and community partners in developing wellness procedures. This collaborative process ensures inclusivity and builds a sense of shared ownership, which is critical for long-term success.

Once developed, the SOP will be implemented across the district, beginning with professional development sessions and leadership briefings to ensure clarity of expectations and consistency in practice. Implementation will occur in stages to allow for reflection, adaptation, and refinement based on staff feedback and observed outcomes. To evaluate the effectiveness of the SOP, qualitative data will be gathered throughout the process. This will include participation rates, program utilization, staff wellness indicators, and feedback from talking circles and individual interviews. The collected data will be analyzed to assess progress, identify challenges, and guide continuous improvement.

Sustainability will be achieved by embedding the SOP within district policy and leadership practices, ensuring it becomes a permanent part of Browning Public Schools' Indigenous Sacred Circle Stone "AAUUKSTUKSIN framework. Regular review cycles, annual reports, and recognition of staff wellness initiatives will reinforce accountability and promote a culture of ongoing wellness engagement. Ultimately, this methodology ensures that wellness is not merely implemented as a program, but is institutionalized as a core value—integrated into the structure, culture, and daily functioning of the Browning Public School District.

Objectives The objectives of the SOP align with both theoretical and practical imperatives, meaning that the framework is informed by established theories of wellness and organization while also responding to the practical needs of staff and the educational environment. From a theoretical perspective, the SOP draws upon concepts from holistic wellness models, systems theory, and organizational change frameworks that emphasize the interconnection between individual well-being and institutional effectiveness. These theories support the idea that when staff are physically, emotionally, socially, and culturally healthy, they are better equipped to contribute positively to the school community.

From a practical perspective, the SOP addresses the day-to-day realities of implementing wellness initiatives in a public school setting. It provides clear, actionable procedures and policies that can be applied consistently across the district, ensuring that wellness is embedded into the school culture rather than existing as a separate or optional program. In this way, the SOP bridges theory and practice—it not only reflects research-based principles of well-being but also translates them into realistic, measurable actions that improve staff support systems, organizational climate, and overall educational outcomes.

Table # 6: The objectives of the Standard of Operations (SOP) align with both theoretical frameworks and practical applications, aiming to foster a holistic environment of wellness across Browning Public Schools:

Objective 1	Promote physical health by embedding regular, accessible opportunities for physical activity.
Objective 2	Foster mental and emotional well-being through proactive counseling, mindfulness, and crisis response systems.

Table #6 Continued

Objective 3	Create a positive school climate that values diversity, equity, and inclusion.
Objective 4	Encourage lifelong healthy habits, including balanced nutrition, adequate sleep, and self-care practices.

Wellness Model Components

The Browning SOP organizes wellness across four interconnected domains: physical, mental, emotional, and cultural/spiritual well-being. Each domain is operationalized through specific wellness days and protocols.

Physical Wellness

- Daily physical education classes, recess periods, extracurricular activities, and access to school facilities ensure that physical activity is accessible to all. Research indicates that physical activity is positively correlated with academic performance, concentration, and behavior regulation. The SOP, therefore, integrates movement into the structure of the school day rather than relegating it to optional activities.

Mental Health Wellness

- Recognizing the mental health challenges that affect both students and staff, the SOP integrates counseling services, mindfulness practices, peer networks, and crisis intervention strategies. Mental health is positioned not only as a matter of intervention

but also as a preventive framework, reducing stigma and normalizing conversations about well-being.

Social and Emotional Wellness

- The SOP foregrounds social and emotional learning (SEL) as critical to student success. Anti-bullying programs, restorative practices, and inclusive events foster belonging and empathy, consistent with SEL frameworks. The SOP builds competencies in self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making.

Spiritual/Cultural Wellness

- The primary goal of the spiritual and cultural wellness component is to affirm and strengthen staff members' sense of identity, belonging, and resilience by integrating cultural traditions, spiritual expression, and respect for diversity into the school environment. By embedding these dimensions into the daily life of the school, Browning Public Schools ensures that wellness extends beyond physical and emotional health to include human development and the Blackfeet community.

Procedures and Protocols

The implementation of the Browning Public School Standard of Operations (SOP) for Wellness is anchored in a series of structured procedures designed to ensure that wellness initiatives are both systematic and sustainable. Each procedure has an operational pathway that

defines how it will be executed, monitored, and refined to align with the district's wellness objectives.

The Wellness Committee serves as the central coordinating body responsible for oversight, program development, evaluation, and continuous improvement. This committee comprises representatives from the administration, teaching staff, support staff, and community partners to ensure diverse perspectives and shared accountability. The implementation process begins with the committee establishing clear roles and responsibilities, setting measurable wellness goals, and developing annual action plans. Regular meetings are scheduled throughout the academic year to review progress, evaluate outcomes using both qualitative and quantitative data, and make necessary adjustments to maintain program effectiveness.

Scheduling is implemented through the strategic integration of wellness activities within the existing school calendar. Rather than treating wellness as an extracurricular or optional activity, the SOP mandates that wellness practices—such as physical activity sessions, mindfulness breaks, or professional wellness workshops—are embedded into daily or weekly schedules. Administrators collaborate with teachers and staff to identify days and times for these activities that do not conflict with academic instruction, e.g., Wellness Fridays. This structured approach ensures that Wellness remains a consistent and protected component of the school day, reinforcing its importance within the educational environment.

Staff Involvement is operationalized through structured mechanisms that promote engagement and shared ownership. Staff participate through wellness coaches, who promote wellness initiatives that empower them to take active roles in advancing health within the school

and district. Staff involvement is also facilitated through professional development sessions, wellness challenges, and opportunities for co-designing wellness programming. The SOP ensures that feedback loops, such as biweekly assessments, employee surveys, talking circles, and individual discussions, are regularly implemented to gather input from both groups, thereby ensuring that wellness initiatives are responsive to the evolving needs of the school community.

Emergency Protocols are established to provide clear, coordinated responses to crises that may affect the physical, emotional, or psychological well-being of staff or students. These protocols are implemented through predefined response teams, ie, community stakeholders, school counselors, and referral systems to community resources. Training sessions are conducted annually to ensure that all staff understand their roles in crises, including mental health emergencies, safety incidents, and community crises. The protocol includes immediate response procedures, referral pathways to counseling or external services, and post-crisis debriefing sessions to promote recovery and resilience. Together, these procedures and protocols operationalize the SOP's commitment to embedding wellness into the daily functioning of Browning Public Schools. By combining structured oversight, intentional scheduling, active participation, and preparedness planning, the implementation process ensures that wellness is not only a guiding principle but also a lived, sustainable practice throughout the district.

Monitoring and Evaluation Monitoring and evaluation of the Browning Public School Standard of Operations (SOP) for Wellness is an ongoing, systematic process designed to assess the effectiveness, fidelity, and impact of the wellness framework over time. The purpose of monitoring and evaluation is not only to determine whether objectives are being met, but also to

identify areas for refinement, ensure accountability, and inform future planning. The evaluation process integrates both quantitative and qualitative methods to provide a comprehensive understanding of implementation progress and outcomes.

How Monitoring Will Take Place:

Monitoring will occur continuously throughout the academic year, guided by a monitoring and evaluation plan developed by the Wellness Committee in collaboration with school administrators. The committee will use structured tools such as attendance logs, participation trackers, wellness activity reports, and staff self-assessment surveys to collect data on engagement and program delivery. Observational checklists will also be used to assess the integration of wellness practices into daily routines and classrooms. Each school site will designate a Wellness Lead responsible for collecting data, documenting observations, and submitting monthly progress reports to the district Wellness Committee. These ongoing monitoring activities ensure that wellness efforts remain aligned with the SOP's goals and that implementation challenges are identified in real time.

Who Will Be Responsible:

The Browning Public School District Wellness Committee and Wellness Coordinator will have primary responsibility for coordinating and supervising the monitoring process. The Wellness/Prevention Director will manage data collection and documentation at each site. Administrators will oversee district policies and ensure all staff are aware of expectations. External partners, such as Tribal Health and the Indian Health Service, may also be invited to

participate in periodic evaluations to provide objective feedback and strengthen the reliability of the findings.

When Evaluation Will Occur:

Formal evaluations will take place at three key points during the academic year: a baseline evaluation at the start of the first Wellness Day's implementation, a mid-year review to assess progress and make necessary adjustments before the next Wellness Day, and an end-of-year evaluation at the end of the school year to measure overall outcomes and impact. The baseline evaluation will establish benchmarks for staff wellness indicators, participation levels, and organizational readiness. The mid-year review will focus on process indicators, such as staff engagement and program delivery. The end-of-year evaluation will measure outcomes, including improvements in wellness behaviors, staff satisfaction, and school climate.

How the Evaluation Will Be Conducted:

The evaluation process will employ indigenous methods, such as talking circles and individual interviews, to capture measurable outcomes and experiential insights. Qualitative data will be collected through talking circles, personal interviews, and biweekly staff assessments. The Wellness Committee and the Wellness/Prevention director will analyze the data collaboratively to identify trends, strengths, and areas for improvement. Findings will be compiled into comprehensive evaluation reports that include recommendations for policy adjustments and program enhancements, and will be submitted to the Browning Public School Superintendent and the School Board of Trustees. Results will be shared with district leadership and staff to ensure transparency and collective accountability.

Resources and Support

The SOP outlines the resources available to support the holistic well-being of staff in the Browning Public School District. Financial resources may include district budget allocations specifically earmarked for wellness programs, grant funding from federal, state, or private foundations, and community donations. Human resources include staff training and professional development, as well as engagement of external experts in areas such as mental health, emotional health, physical fitness, and cultural programming. Material resources include wellness facilities, physical activity equipment, educational materials, and digital platforms that support health tracking and virtual wellness programming. Informational resources include evidence-based guidelines, wellness curricula, and Biweekly assessment tools to monitor outcomes and identify the need for community resources.

Partnerships of the SOP link the school with Tribal systems, Tribal Behavioral Health, the Indian Health Service, mental health clinics, telehealth, and cultural mentors. These partnerships provide specialized expertise, programmatic support, and mentoring opportunities that enhance the scope and quality of school-based wellness initiatives. For example, collaborating with a local mental health clinic might provide on-site counseling services, while partnering with a community fitness center could facilitate structured physical activity programs.

External partners contribute both tangible resources, such as funding activities and supplies, and intangible support, including knowledge, training, and community engagement. In turn, the school provides access to its facilities, staff, and institutional infrastructure, thereby creating a mutually beneficial relationship. This collaborative framework ensures that wellness programs are not only well-resourced but also sustainable, equitable, and responsive to the evolving needs of the school community. By strategically aligning internal resources with

external partnerships, the SOP safeguards the continuity and effectiveness of wellness initiatives, even amid financial or operational challenges.

While the Browning Public School Standard of Operations (SOP) provides a comprehensive framework for embedding wellness into educational practice, several limitations must be acknowledged. First, the SOP is resource-dependent: implementation relies heavily on grant funding, impact aid, community partnerships, and staff development opportunities. Without sustained financial investment and organizational commitment, access across the Browning Public School District may be compromised. Second, the SOP is context-specific, tailored to the unique needs of Browning Public Schools. Third, implementation consistency is a concern. Although procedures are clearly outlined, the extent to which wellness practices are integrated into daily operations depends on staff buy-in, leadership commitment, and the balance between academic and wellness priorities. Fourth, the SOP's evaluation system, which emphasizes annual surveys and reports, may not fully capture nuanced or long-term impacts, such as cultural transformation or intergenerational benefits. Diverse staff populations may still face barriers related to socioeconomic status, cultural norms, or language. Finally, sustainability depends on leadership continuity and policy alignment. Shifting educational priorities or administrative turnover could deprioritize wellness initiatives.

Conclusion The Browning Public School Standard of Operations marks a significant step toward institutionalizing wellness as a core function of education. By structuring wellness across the physical, mental, nutritional, social, and spiritual/cultural quadrants and using evaluation methods, the SOP establishes a sustainable framework for advancing holistic wellness. The SOP

offers a replicable model for other districts seeking to operationalize wellness as both an educational priority and a community responsibility.

CHAPTER 8

TEACHINGS AND CONCLUSION

My dissertation research revealed several teachings from the design, implementation, and evaluation of the Browning Public Schools Wellness Model. These teachings are discussed below.

Teaching #1: The first and most pressing lesson is recognizing urgency. The research confirms a critical, locally specific need for a wellness model that addresses staff burnout, grief, and turnover in the Browning Public Schools district. These challenges, intensified by the Blackfeet community's collective trauma and compounded by the effects of COVID-19, call for an immediate, culturally grounded response. Unlike national data on teacher stress and burnout, the Browning case emphasizes the profound interconnections among community grief, historical trauma, and systemic inequities. It shows that traditional wellness initiatives—those disconnected from local culture and values—are insufficient. The wellness model, therefore, emerged not as a generic engagement intervention but as a holistic, community-anchored system of care that integrates Indigenous knowledge and healing traditions into school structures and daily practices.

Teaching #2: The key lesson centers on culture as a protective factor. Embedding the model within the Sacred Circle Stones (AAUUKSTUKSIN) framework, which encompasses the physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual quadrants of wellness, provided a platform for the program. The four quadrants of the Sacred Circle Stones provided a structure for understanding balance, harmony, and interconnectedness, reminding participants that wellness is relational

rather than individual. When staff participated in talking circles, self-assessments, and monthly wellness activities rooted in traditional practices, they engaged not only in health promotion but also in cultural reclamation. This insight reinforced the importance of cultural inclusion for program relevance, sustainability, and psychological safety. Indigenous knowledge traditions, long marginalized in institutional contexts, proved to be a source of resilience and healing when centered as the foundation rather than merely as decoration within the model.

Teaching #3: The importance of Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) as both an Indigenous methodology and a relationship-building process. Through the five talking circles, fifteen interviews, and the active participation of the Community Advisory Board (CAB), the project shifted decision-making from researchers to the community itself. This participatory approach enabled Browning Public School staff to define their own priorities, identify communication gaps, and co-create a model that reflected their lived realities. The CBPR approach also bridged academic rigor and Indigenous epistemology by grounding data collection in storytelling and collective reflection. It fostered trust and ownership among participants, transforming the research process into a form of community empowerment. One of the most meaningful lessons was that the process itself, listening, sharing, reflecting, and validating, was just as healing and impactful as the outcomes. The CBPR framework demonstrated that when community members lead, the resulting interventions are more culturally responsive, feasible, and sustainable.

Teaching #4 emphasizes the value of daily integration rather than quarterly integration. Although participants appreciated the Wellness Days, they consistently expressed a desire for

wellness practices to become embedded in everyday routines. Staff members envisioned short, accessible moments of wellness throughout the day, mindful breathing, stretching, positive affirmations, walking, and reflection. They emphasized that sustainable wellness requires structure and consistency. The lesson learned is that transformation occurs through repetition and normalization; wellness must become part of the daily rhythm of school life. Institutional calendars, staff meetings, and professional development sessions should all include wellness components to ensure that the commitment to staff health becomes habitual and normalized.

Teaching #5: Another central insight involves the indispensable role of leadership. Leadership turnover in key administrative roles, particularly among superintendents, assistant superintendents, Principals, and directors, disrupted progress and morale. Without stable leadership support, staff hesitated to commit to activities, and wellness priorities often shifted to accommodate academic or compliance-driven goals. Conversely, when leaders modeled participation, provided time for activities, and acknowledged staff well-being as a performance priority, engagement increased dramatically. The lesson is clear: leadership continuity and buy-in are structural determinants of wellness. For sustainability, the model must be incorporated into Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and formally adopted by the school board to ensure it is insulated from leadership changes and political shifts. Assigning a permanent Wellness Coordinator role further ensures that oversight, communication, and follow-through remain consistent across administrations.

Partnerships with external organizations emerged as both a strength and a challenge. Collaboration with Blackfeet Tribal Health, Indian Health Service, Blackfeet Community

College, and FAST Blackfeet brought access to expertise, facilities, and funding. These partnerships expanded the scope of the wellness model by integrating the cultural, medical, and educational dimensions of care. However, differences in agency priorities, staff turnover, and overlapping service mandates occasionally caused duplication or confusion. The lesson learned is that partnerships require a clear architecture—memoranda of understanding, defined timelines, shared calendars, and accountability frameworks. With firm structure, partnerships can be transformative; without it, they risk becoming fragmented or unsustainable.

Evaluation also provided valuable insight. The four performance indicators—biweekly self-assessment participation, employee retention data, engagement tracking via sign-ins, and annual assessments—were measurable within the district’s existing systems. When paired with qualitative feedback from staff, these data provided a comprehensive understanding of the program’s impact. Staff narratives gave meaning to quantitative data, helping administrators view wellness not merely as attendance or retention but as an indicator of belonging and trust. The lesson learned is that practical evaluation integrates quantitative and narrative data to produce a balanced picture that informs decision-making.

Healing-centered engagement was another critical finding. Through talking circles and interviews, participants shared deeply personal experiences of grief, exhaustion, and emotional overload. The safe, respectful environment created by Indigenous research methods allowed staff to express vulnerability without fear of reprisal. This reinforced the understanding that wellness cannot be separated from emotional and spiritual safety. Leadership behaviors—particularly communication styles, tone, and empathy—were directly shown to influence staff stress levels.

In other words, the way administrators give feedback or handle conflict is itself a wellness intervention. The lesson learned is that healing-centered supervision must be modeled, practiced, and embedded in professional development.

Several structural barriers also surfaced—logistical challenges, such as childcare, weather, and scheduling conflicts, limited participation. Financial constraints, including grant expirations and competing district priorities, reduced the availability of incentives and materials. Leadership transitions led to temporary disengagement, and some staff expressed skepticism about whether the model would endure. These challenges underscored the need for early planning, flexible scheduling, substitute coverage, and stable funding streams. To mitigate these barriers, the district began formalizing the model through policy, integrating wellness into calendars, and advocating for consistent budget allocations. The lesson learned is that institutionalization through written policy, funding, and time protection is the most reliable pathway to sustainability. These lessons point toward one overarching conclusion: wellness becomes real when it is embedded into the system rather than layered on top of it. The model's success lies in transforming individual acts of self-care into collective structures of care, aligning district operations with the Blackfeet values of balance, interconnectedness, and community responsibility.

In conclusion, the Browning Public Schools Wellness Model demonstrates that a culturally grounded, community-driven wellness approach is both feasible and necessary. The model's design and outcomes reflect a deep understanding of how Indigenous knowledge systems can inform modern organizational health. Guided by the AAUUKSTUKSIN framework

and developed through CBPR principles, the project has shown that relational, holistic approaches to wellness can improve morale, strengthen leadership relationships, and enhance staff retention. The integration of physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual wellness within school operations creates an environment that honors the whole person. Early results indicate that staff who participate in wellness activities report greater connection, motivation, and balance in their professional roles.

The theoretical contributions of this study are significant. It demonstrates that Indigenous wellness frameworks can guide institutional reform, bridging traditional teachings with contemporary organizational structures. It also extends the application of CBPR into workforce well-being, showing that participatory research is not limited to health outcomes but can drive systemic change in education. Furthermore, it advances healing-centered implementation science by highlighting how leadership, communication, and culture mediate wellness.

The practical contributions are equally compelling. The creation of a standardized operating policy, a self-assessment tool, and an evaluative logic model provides Browning Public Schools with a concrete infrastructure for sustainability. These tools ensure that wellness is measurable, repeatable, and adaptable. The inclusion of Indigenous frameworks transforms policy into practice, and practice into cultural revitalization. Moreover, by linking wellness to retention and performance data, the district now has a compelling case for continued funding and administrative support.

Policy implications are also clear. Wellness must be incorporated into district policy, protected in the calendar, and funded in the budget. Leadership and staff onboarding should

include orientation to the wellness framework and expectations for participation. An interagency wellness coach, comprising district leaders (i.e., administrators, tribal representatives, and community partners), should meet quarterly to coordinate activities, reduce duplication, and review progress.

Despite these successes, the study acknowledges several limitations. The qualitative design limits causal inference, and findings are specific to the Browning and Blackfeet context. Leadership turnover, funding instability, and limited access to mental-health providers continue to pose challenges. However, these limitations provide direction for future research and improvement rather than undermining the project's value. Future work should include longitudinal tracking to assess sustained effects, economic analysis to quantify cost savings from reduced turnover, and further integration of student-facing wellness programs to extend benefits beyond staff. This dissertation demonstrates that wellness, when rooted in Indigenous knowledge and community partnership, is not merely the absence of illness but the presence of balance, respect, and harmony.

The Browning Public Schools Wellness Model transforms the workplace into a space of healing and belonging. It offers a living example of how education systems can honor cultural identity while addressing systemic inequities. As the model becomes implemented within district policy, it has the potential to influence broader educational reform by showing that staff well-being is inseparable from student success. In centering Indigenous philosophies of interconnectedness, the Browning Public Schools Wellness Model stands as both a local solution

and a universal lesson: that schools can and must be places where healing, learning, and community renewal coexist.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

WELLNESS RESEARCH INFORMED CONSENT

Study Title: Browning Public School Wellness Model

Principal Investigator:

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Introduction

You are invited to participate in a research study about how best to develop a Wellness Model for the Browning Public Schools to promote wellness for the staff. Browning Public School staff have an opportunity to participate in wellness activities once a month. Each activity will be represented by the four quadrants of the Sacred Circle stones. The goal of developing a Wellness Model will decrease burnout, build relationships between staff and administrators, boost morale, and help individuals develop wellness plans to identify the strengths and weaknesses of their own health. This document is intended to inform you about the study and your potential involvement. Please read the following information carefully before deciding whether to participate.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose and aims of this study are to develop the Browning Public Schools Wellness Model is to assess the perspectives and knowledge of Browning Public School staff of physical, spiritual, mental & emotional health. Aim 1: Five focus groups (talking circles) and fifteen individual interviews with Browning Public School members ages between 25-65 years will be conducted, in each focus group and interviews the participants will be asked questions focused on burn out, how to build relationships between staff and students, how to boost morale in the in their work environment, how to identify strength and weakness of their

own health, how the school district can improve staff retention and how to decrease absenteeism for the staff. The individual who are identified are: one administrator, one principal, one teacher, one paraprofessional and one classified staff, for each of the talking circles and interviews. An informed consent and ground rules will be discussed at the beginning of the meetings, the participants will be able to decline participating in the talking circle and interviews if they choose to. The researcher and community advisory board will develop the questions, quantitative data will be collected from the focus groups (Talking Circles) and interviews.

Aim#2: Develop a culturally appropriate Wellness Model for the Browning Public Schools based on the results of Aim 1, by conducting a participatory analysis with a community advisory board. The culturally appropriate model will be based on engagement from the participants of the wellness days, talking circles and interviews. The questions for the participants will identify the need of the wellness model. All the qualitative data will be analyzed to give a better understanding of that the problems that Browning Public Schools employees are having that is causing burnout, and lack of motivation.

Aim #3: Implement the Wellness Model in the Browning Public Schools through integration into school personnel policies (Standard of Operation) by presenting to the Browning Public School Administration and the Board of trustees, Blackfeet Tribal Business Council. The Browning Public School Administration, Board of Trustees and the Blackfeet Tribal Business Council will be able to participate in the activities and take on the model to implement in to other organization on the Blackfeet reservation. The tools of the wellness model will help other organization with employee issues, retain employees and build relationships.

We aim to explore the short-term impact of the Wellness Model is to develop and implement to the Browning Public School staff and present the model to the Browning Public School Administration and Board of Trustees. The long-term impact of the Wellness Model will be written into the Browning Public Schools and Office of Public instruction standard of operation. Through the Wellness Model a Standard of Operation will be developed, a Standard of Operation is a set of instructions compiled by the Browning Public Schools to help employees to carry out routine operations. A Standard of Operation can be amended if needed, to where as a policy in the school district will not be able to amend the Wellness Model.

How will the Browning Public School Wellness Model help the staff decrease burnout, build relationships between leadership and students, boost morale in the district, identify strength and weakness of their own health, improve staff retention and decrease absenteeism? The Wellness Model will be able to address these issues and the employees will be able to voice their concerns of their work environment. The Wellness Model will develop three products.

1) The Browning Public Schools Wellness Model will be a guide for staff to take in consistent consideration of a streamline of intervention efforts and evaluative measure of one's health. 2) a self-assessment tool for the school staff based on the Wellness Model. 3) a Browning Public Schools standard of operations will be implemented to promote Health and Wellness policy based on the Wellness Model. The positive vision or outcome of the Wellness Model is to give a healthier way to handle stress, and promote a positive health impact to the Blackfeet Community, to create a positive ripple effect in the community. The mission of the Wellness Model is to focus on one's health and increase the quality of life.

With the positive impact of the Wellness Model in the Browning Public Schools will set an example of how much the schools district values their employees and encourages a healthier lifestyle.

Procedures

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to take part in the one of the Browning Public Schools five focus groups or participate in an interview of fifteen individuals and a bi-weekly self-assessment survey that will be grounded within the Indigenous Sacred Circle Stone “AAUUKSTUKSIN” Framework of physical, spiritual, mental & emotional health. The participants will be able to decline participating in the talking circle, interviews and bi-weekly self-assessment survey if they choose. All participants for the focus groups (Talking Circles), interviews and bi-weekly self-assessment survey will be ages 25-65. The researcher will recruit what Browning Public School staff member will participate in the focus group (Talking Circles) and interview by email and offer various incentives and a free lunch. The participants will be sharing their own story of wellness stories to identify common themes of the Wellness days. Participation will involve approximately an hour for the focus groups or interviews over a period of one wellness Day in the Fall of 2024.

Potential Risks and Discomforts

There are minimal risks associated with participating in this study. However, some participants may experience physical, mental, emotional and spiritual fatigue particularly related to wellness activities, such as physical and emotional discomfort. If you feel

uncomfortable at any point, you may withdraw from the study without any penalty or you may contract:

Indian Health Service Behavioral Health or Urgent care for an appointment
(406) 338-6100

Or

Blackfeet Tribal Behavioral Center and Southern Piegan clinic
(406) 338-7921

Potential Benefits

Your participation may contribute to a better understanding of your individual health and wellbeing, also to provide mental, cultural, emotional and mental health resources, The participants input into the study is setting the ground work for the Wellness model and a Standard of Operation for the Browning Public Schools. Additionally, you may personally benefit from changing an unhealthy lifestyle and bring and increased awareness of personal health and well-being.

Confidentiality

Your privacy is of utmost importance. All data collected during this study will be kept confidential and stored in a secure laptop with a backup system and housed at the Blackfeet Community College Medicine Springs Library, all data will not be used in any other future studies. Any information that can identify you will be removed before the data is analyzed. Results will be reported in a way that does not identify any individual participant.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, for any reason, without any consequences. If you choose not to participate or

withdraw, it will not affect your relationship with Browning Public Schools or any services you receive.

Compensation

Each Participant will receive lunch and an Incentive

Contact Information

If you have any questions or concerns about the study, please contact Cinnamon Salway at (406) 845-3765 or (406) 338-4380 ex 4355 email: cinnamon.crawford@student.msu.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a participant, you may contact the BNIRB Board at (406) 338-5411 or BNIRB@bfcc.edu

Consent

I have read the information provided above. I understand the purpose of the study, the procedures involved, and the potential risks and benefits. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and received satisfactory answers. I consent to participate in this study.

Participant's Name: _____

Participant's Signature: _____

Date: _____

Researcher's Name: _____

Researcher's Signature: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX B

COMMUNITY ADVISORY BOARD INTERVIEW & FOCUS

GROUP QUESTIONS

Interview Questions

1. How do you usually take breaks throughout the day of work?
2. In your opinion, how would you boost morale in your school building? Please explain
3. What kind of physical, mental, social, and spiritual/culture wellness activities would you be interested in participating in?
4. How well and often does the Browning Public School district promote safety and well-being?
5. How do you feel supported when managing stress within the workplace? Please explain.
6. How can the Browning Public School District improve staff retention?
7. How does the Browning Public School District assess physical, mental, social and spiritual/Cultural well-being in each building?

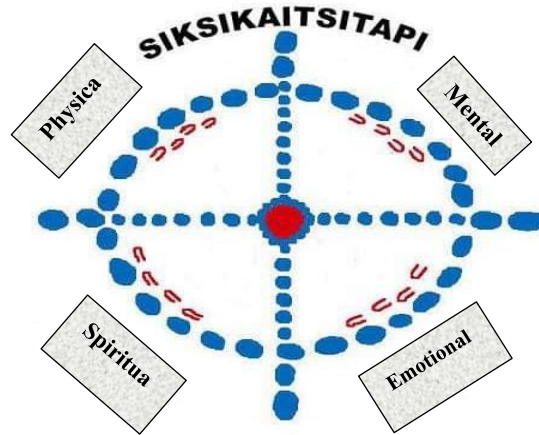
Focus Groups Questions

1. In your opinion, how can you build a positive relationship with your leadership and students?
2. How often do you and your colleagues feel stressed, burned out, and overwhelmed?
3. Do you think there's enough opportunities for physical, mental, social, and spiritual/cultural activities at your disposal within the Browning Public School District?
4. Do you have any ideas of how Browning Public School district can better support your overall wellbeing?
5. What other initiatives, facilities or activities would you like to see implemented in the future?
6. In your opinion what can change to improve staff retention?

APPENDIX C

BI-WEEKLY SELF ASSESSMENT

PRODUCT 1 SELF-ASSESSMENT

**Biweekly Wellness Assessment****Physical health goal**

How will I accomplish my physical goal?

What support can the Browning Public School Wellness Committee offer to help you accomplish your goal?

Mental health goal

How will I accomplish my Mental health goal?

What support can the Browning Public School Wellness Committee offer to help you accomplish your goal?

Spiritual goal

How will I accomplish my Spiritual goal?

What support can the Browning Public School Wellness Committee offer to help you accomplish your goal?

Emotional goal

How will I accomplish my Emotional goal?

What support can the Browning Public School Wellness Committee offer to help you accomplish your goal?