

## One man's role in a 6,000-mile run through North America

### Level 1 • Pre-intermediate / Intermediate

#### 1 Warmer

- How many kilometres are there in one mile?
  - 1.2km
  - 1.6km
  - 1.9km
- How long is a standard marathon?
  - 20.6 miles
  - 22.6 miles
  - 26.2 miles
- Which of these things do you most like doing.
  - running
  - swimming
  - walking in the countryside

#### 2 Key words

Match the key words with the definitions. Then find them in the article to read them in context. The paragraph numbers will help you.

immigrated

ancestral

reconnect

indigenous

unexpected

- the people who lived in a place for a very long time before other people came to live there \_\_\_\_\_ (para 1)
- came into a country because they wanted to live there \_\_\_\_\_ (para 1)
- make a connection with something again \_\_\_\_\_ (para 3)
- belonging to someone who is related to you who lived a long time ago \_\_\_\_\_ (para 3)
- when something is surprising because you did not plan it \_\_\_\_\_ (para 4)

assault

relay

injury

dumbest

staff

- a stick that is carried or used on special or formal occasions \_\_\_\_\_ (para 7)
- where each member of the team does part of a run and then another member continues \_\_\_\_\_ (para 8)
- most stupid or idiotic \_\_\_\_\_ (para 12)
- a physical attack on someone \_\_\_\_\_ (para 13)
- physical damage done to part of a person's body \_\_\_\_\_ (para 14)

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#### Spirit Journey: one man's role in a 6,000-mile run through North America

Rich Tenorio

30 March, 2020

- 1 Mexican-American runner Noé Álvarez showed his passport to the border officer in Nogales, Arizona. Álvarez was running in the Peace and Dignity Journeys (PDJ), an ultramarathon for runners from indigenous families. His group had already run 3,200 miles from the Arctic to the US border with Mexico. They still had many miles to run before their destination of the Panama Canal. But for Álvarez, crossing into Mexico had a special meaning – it was the homeland of his parents before they immigrated to the US.
- 2 It's an important moment in Álvarez's book, *Spirit Run: A 6,000-Mile Marathon Through North America's Stolen Land*. The book is about his run in 2004 and also about the background of the author and his immigrant parents.
- 3 The PDJ takes place every four years to reconnect indigenous runners with their ancestral lands. In 2004, Álvarez's group ran south to meet another group running north from Argentina.
- 4 There were unexpected difficulties on the run – a mountain lion in Oregon, people throwing stones out of cars in Mexico and arguments between some of the runners. And he had to finish his run early.
- 5 Álvarez grew up in the United States, the son of Mexican immigrants of Purépecha heritage. His father worked in an orchard, his mother at an apple-packing factory. When he was a teenager, he worked with his mother at the factory. He also started to run.
- 6 He joined the PDJ in British Columbia after the group had already started its journey from Alaska. The people in his running group came from nine indigenous communities.
- 7 PDJ runners start and end each day with a ceremony and carry feathered staffs during the run. Each day, they run to another indigenous community. At each stop, community members share an important cultural story with the runners and add a feather to the runners' staffs.
- 8 The run was not always easy for Álvarez, who had never run more than ten miles a day before. The PDJ takes place relay-style – each runner runs a certain number of miles each day while others travel by car until it is their turn to run.
- 9 He learnt to eat and run at the same time. He and the other runners slept in many different places, from campgrounds to casinos, and they ran across many different types of land, from the forests of Canada to the deserts of Washington and Arizona to the jungles of Mexico.
- 10 "The run is a story about why land is important to people," Álvarez says. He saw that in the Canadian forests, trees are cut down for the skiing industry and the Winter Olympics, and other areas were too dry.
- 11 "We were walking, running and connecting with the land every step of the way," Álvarez says. In Oregon, he had an unexpected meeting – with a mountain lion.
- 12 "I kept running", Álvarez says. "Luckily, I'm still here. I read about what you're supposed to do, and you're definitely not supposed to run. It's probably the dumbest thing I've ever done."
- 13 After the group crossed into Mexico, there were different kinds of danger. People who threw rocks from cars. Female runners were also at risk of assault. "Some places were extremely unsafe. If you didn't want to run, you didn't have to," said Álvarez.
- 14 In the end, an injury made Álvarez finish his run in Guatemala before he could reach the Panama Canal. He calls it "probably the toughest decision I've ever made."
- 15 "I didn't want to stop," he says. "But knowing when to stop was part of the lesson." Another lesson he learnt was that running helps him to deal with life's difficulties.

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#### 3 Comprehension check

Are these sentences true (T) or false (F)? Correct any that are false.

1. The Peace and Dignity Journeys (PDJ) take place every year.
2. Noé Álvarez ran in the PDJ in 2004 and wrote a book about it.
3. He joined the PDJ and the other runners in British Columbia on the first day of the journey.
4. His group planned to run to Argentina.
5. Álvarez ran many marathons to train for the PDJ.
6. He had to leave the PDJ before the end because he could not run anymore.
7. The runners stopped at indigenous communities on the way and learnt about their culture.
8. A mountain lion chased Álvarez in Mexico.
9. The runners carried staffs. The feathers in the staffs showed how many countries they had run through.
10. PDJs help indigenous people reconnect with the land that belonged to their parents, grandparents and great-grandparents.

#### 4 Using the key words

a. Use some of the key words from task 2 to complete these sentences.

1. Steffi heard an \_\_\_\_\_ sound from the garden.
2. Buying that sports car was the \_\_\_\_\_ thing Rob had ever done.
3. My grandparents \_\_\_\_\_ here from Turkey in the 1970s.
4. I'd really like to \_\_\_\_\_ with my old school friends.
5. The Jamaican team won the \_\_\_\_\_ race for the third time.

b. Write your answers to the following questions.

1. Who are or were the **indigenous** people in your country?
2. Talk about an **injury** you once had.

#### 5 Discussion

- Why do you think that so many people go running?
- Noé Álvarez says that running helps him with life's problems. What activities help you to deal with life's difficulties?

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#### 6 Webquest

a. The following places are from the group's run. Find them on a map.

- British Columbia
- Nogales, Arizona
- Guatemala
- the Panama Canal

How would you prefer to do that journey? E.g. running, by car, by train, by plane, not at all.

b. Find out more about one of the indigenous groups from the article or another in North, Central or South America. Say:

- where they live
- what language they speak
- what special things they wear and eat
- how they show that they are connected to the land.

c. Prepare a three-minute presentation for the class.