



# BE WELL OUT HERE

A WELLNESS JOURNEY INTO THE BIG GO WEST

Native Americans have long known the benefits of the natural environment and its ability to contribute to one's wellness. This connection was critical to their survival for thousands of years, long before Europeans arrived in the Americas. Several years ago, I began my own self-study recording how I felt both physically and mentally when I would take my annual excursions out to the great expanses of the American West. I discovered that my physical and mental wellness benefited each time I immersed myself in the woods, mountains and rivers. The connections I made with the natural environment are difficult to describe with words, but there was no doubt that each of these adventures permanently changed my perspective and outlook on life.

I found this remarkable.



To be well, one must invest themselves into the journey. I am deeply grateful to The School of Arts and Sciences at Otterbein University and their support that allowed my son and I to explore some 24,000 miles of roads, trails, rivers and coastlines in South Dakota, Wyoming, Montana, Idaho, Oregon, and Washington from the end of May to the end of December, 2017. That distance is just shy of circumnavigating the Earth at the Equator. Much of our time was spent in the presence of mountains, forests and rivers, where we were often the only humans set against the backdrop of a place remembered. This sabbatical leave allowed us to experience a special part of the planet during all four seasons. We came away from this adventure forever changed.

This exhibition will hopefully inspire you to go out into the natural environment and explore its beauty and discover its secrets. In doing so, you will learn much about our planet, and perhaps, learn even more about yourself. It should be noted that all of the images presented in this exhibition were taken with an iPhone 7+. One does not necessarily need to be outfitted with extensive equipment to record moments that have a tremendous impact on your well-being. Getting "Out Here" is the key. Trees convert the air we exhale back into pure oxygen. Rivers reflect our existence and purify the Earth and our souls. Oceans are the origin of all life. Deserts and Mountains put into perspective our place on the planet. When you make a connection with Nature, you are in tune with the Universe.

After spending a year in Outer Space aboard the International Space Station, Astronaut Scott Kelly remarked, *"I've learned that grass smells great and wind feels amazing and rain is a miracle. I will try to remember how magical these things are for the rest of my life. I've learned that following the news from space can make Earth seem like a swirl of chaos and conflict, and seeing the environmental degradation caused by humans is heartbreaking. I've also learned that our planet is the most beautiful thing I've ever seen and that we're lucky to have it."*

The exploration of places Out Here led us to discover peace within ourselves... a peace that is called *wellness*.

