Indigenous Doulas as a Cultural Intervention for First Nations Women Who Travel for Birth

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First Ceremony for Project
Indigenous Women’s Role in Birth

Photo by Kathleen Bluesky, Manitoba Indigenous Doula Initiative
Indigenous Doula Initiative Founded in 2015
Sacred Circle of New Life Training calling to lead this work....

Current Volunteer Board of Directors
Sacred Circle of New Life

“So that every baby is born into the sacred circle”
Teachings from the Grandmothers

1. Most critical years of instilling identity and pride = 0-5 Years
2. In order to achieve overall health and wellness, we must work together to restore the sacred bond between parents and their children from the moment they are born.
3. Women have traditional roles – Women’s Helper, Auntie, Grandmother, birth workers, teachers
4. By revitalizing the Rites of Passage – we set our children on a path lead by their Spirit.
First Rites of Passage - Birth

The first rights of passage begins with the flowing of sacred birth waters to bring new life....

This is where we must begin to restore and protect the sacred bond.
Sacred Circle of New Life Training

- Scope of indigenous birth helpers (practice and ethics)
- Impacts of colonization on birthing
- Rites of Passage and teachings of the life stages
- How to integrate traditional knowledge into your practice
- Building positive relationships with others (clients, staff, etc)
- Facilitating prenatal and postpartum visits
- Labor Support techniques
- Supporting initial chest/breastfeeding
- Resource Access
- Postpartum Care
- Building trust and client confidentiality
Additional workshops

- Monthly gathering of families and doulas in project with elder to share teachings
- Chest/Breastfeeding workshop
- Creating traditional teaching tools workshop
- Full Moon Ceremonies
- Sweat lodge Ceremonies, Pipe Ceremonies
- Medicine picking, making
- Walking with a family through Grief
Building Birthing Bundles
Indigenous Research Framework

Spiritual leadership
Band Council Resolutions
Advisory Committees in FNs
Hiring and Training FN local Data Collectors
Hiring and Training Indigenous Doulas
Incorporating Local Indigenous Knowledge into Indigenous Doula Training

* MOU to define research partnership
WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THESE TWO GROUPS?

**30 WOMEN**

- **Cross Lake Doula** provides prenatal support
  - Measure: prenatal anxiety and prenatal care

- **Thompson or Winnipeg Doula** provides delivery support
  - Measure: birthing experience

- **Cross Lake Doula** provides postpartum support
  - Measure: postpartum depression, interpersonal support and resiliency

**30 WOMEN**

- **Expectant mom** has no doula support
  - Measure: prenatal anxiety and prenatal care

- **Expectant mom delivers baby in Thompson or Winnipeg without a doula**
  - Measure: birthing experience

- **New mom does not have doula support for postpartum**
  - Measure: postpartum depression, interpersonal support and resiliency
Interview Scales

Demographic information
Pregnancy and prenatal care, Reasons for getting prenatal care, quality of prenatal care
Health behaviors
Multidimensional locus of control
Family hardiness index
Self-esteem
Interpersonal support
Mother’s autonomy in decision making
Prenatal support services – MCH home visitor
Edinburgh depression scale form
Questions from the Communities...

- Conditions for release (such as TB vaccinations)
- Admissions to neonatal
- Integration of culture into birth experience
- Difference with doula compared to previous pregnancy
- Family planning pressures
- Childbirth experience questionnaire
- Mothers on Respect Index
Current Status of Project

- We are currently working with Pimicikamak Cree Nation (Cross Lake), Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation (Nelson House) & Misipawistik Cree Nation (Grand Rapids)
- 12 Doulas trained in Cross Lake, non-intervention group data collection complete, intervention group data collection underway with 20 babies expected to arrive in March and April
- "City Doulas" trained in Thompson & Winnipeg,
- 6 community doulas trained in Nelson House, 12 trained in Grand Rapids, non intervention groups underway, beginning to intake moms to pair with doula
Community Impacts

Baby Welcoming Celebration

You're invited

GREETING ALL NEW ARRIVALS AND THEIR PARENTS TO THE NCN COMMUNITY
For babies that were born Jan-June 2018

July 6, 2018
11:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
at NCN Family and Community Wellness Centre

JOIN US FOR:
Baby Bundle Gifts
Welcoming Honour Song
Cree Spirit Name Ceremony
Feast and Refreshments

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