
Presentation Outline

• How Aboriginal childbearing practices have changed
• What is the traditional role of the Doula
• The Aboriginal Doula Initiative
  – Process
  – Training
  – Aboriginal Doula Campaign focus
  – Evaluation
  – Next Steps
How Aboriginal Childbearing Practices have changed

Women supporting each other during childbirth is an ancient and widespread practice. Over the last one hundred years there has been a shift from this tradition, whereby women have been isolated from their social support during labour and childbirth. For Aboriginal families, this impact has been amplified especially in remote regions where women are required to leave their home communities to give birth.


How Aboriginal Childbearing practices have changed...cont’d

• The medicalization and institutionalization of the childbirth process has further isolated women and families from their community and traditional birthing practices and supports
Access barriers to Perinatal care
Aboriginal women face today

• Lack of transportation to healthcare services
• Lack of culture-based prenatal outreach and support programs
• Mandatory evacuation of birthing mothers to distant hospitals, excluding families in the birthing process
• Traditional practices around birth and naming are delayed or abandoned

Ultimately this puts Aboriginal women at an increased risk for adverse health and maternity outcomes
(Kornelson, J., and Grzybowski, S., 2005)

The Doula - Supporting Aboriginal Traditional Birthing Practices

• Traditional beliefs and values were supported by the “traditional aunty” who provided care during the birthing process.

• The Doula builds on the role of the traditional aunty, a lay woman recruited from the community who bridges language and cultural barriers and provides the woman, her partner and family with continuous emotional support, physical comfort and assistance in obtaining information before, during, and just after childbirth
Traditional Doula and Traditional Practices: Kanahus
Benefits of Doula Support

The benefits associated with Doula care include positive impacts on labour and delivery, breastfeeding rates and attachment. Women who have had Doula support were also less likely to experience intrapartum analgesia, or operative births (Hodnett et al., 2003, p.1).
History of reintroduction of Doula Care

• The National Aboriginal Health Organization identified Doula care as an integral step in the re-introduction of social and emotional support during pregnancy and childbirth which has the potential to improve health outcomes of Aboriginal women and children (Olson, 2008)

• It can have implications that can extend beyond just one birth, and even beyond one generation, because it helps women reclaim a legacy of power that centuries of history have tried to take away (O’Sullivan, 2004)
History of the Aboriginal Doula Initiative in BC

• One of the 29 priorities identified in the Transformative Change Accord First Nation’s Health Plan (2006) was to bring birthing closer to home and back into the hands of women.

• The Aboriginal Perinatal Executive Committee provided the leadership and oversight on a pilot project introducing Doula support into two Health Authorities (IHA and NHA) in British Columbia.

Process: Tripartite First Nation Maternal Child Health Committee

• Tripartite: Federal, Provincial and First Nation Governments/peoples at the table

• Strategy Council – Roles – oversight

• Planning Committee – Roles – Plan

• Implementation Working Groups – implementing the work
Aboriginal Doula Initiative: Goals and Objectives

• Bring awareness of Doula services
• To increase the number of Aboriginal women receiving formal Doula training

Aboriginal Doula Initiative: Goals and Objectives ...cont’d

• Assist in creating supportive relationships between Doulas and pregnant women in their communities

• Improve maternal health services for Aboriginal women, by integrating sustainable Doula services within the healthcare continuum
2009 Aboriginal Doula Training Initiative

• Process – Early Tripartite process and involvement
• How many trained – 27 Aboriginal women from IHA and NHA
• Outcome – great training experience, however, certification and sustainability were issues brought up in evaluation of pilot
• Phase II – Thompson Cariboo Shuswap and VIHA...

5 – Training and Certification

• Community Organization Readiness –
• Selection Criteria for trainee
• Training to incorporate Aboriginal Beliefs and values of pregnancy and childbirth, DONA Curriculum, Storytelling,
• Support to certification (attend 3 birth scholarships)
• Support with certification (writing evaluations, travel, etc).
Expected Outcomes

• Improved access to early and regular prenatal care
• Improved continuity of care
• Improved parent-child bonding
• Reduced length of labour and medical interventions
• Increased breastfeeding rates
• Decreased evidence of depression during pregnancy and following childbirth

Experience with Aboriginal Doula Training

Click to play video
Expected Outcomes ...cont’d

– To increase the number of Aboriginal women utilizing Doula services in their community
– Attract/recruit Aboriginal persons to complete the Doula Certification process

Aboriginal Doula Campaign focus

The Campaign will focus on two areas:

• Increasing awareness of the benefits of Doula support amongst Aboriginal communities
• Integrating Doula services within the current health care environment
Aboriginal Doula Campaign: Goals and Objectives

• To generate awareness within the Thompson Cariboo Shuswap region about the Aboriginal Doula Initiative

• To generate interest and gain support for the Aboriginal Doula Initiative among the stakeholders and potential partners

Map of British Columbia
Stakeholders

The four stakeholder groups are:

• Expectant Parent(s)
• Community based family and child services
• Existing and future Doulas
• Healthcare professionals involved in Perinatal care

Evaluation

• A framework for evaluation was discussed early on in the process
• A Logic Model was used to visually express the Doula Project
• There are many steps and outcome measures for this project so we had to keep the logic model high level
Components of a Logic Model

- Inputs
- Activities
- Outputs
- Outcomes – Short term, medium term and long term
- Assumptions were also included on this model
Evaluation

Themes Identified in the Evaluation Framework

• Doula recruitment, training & ongoing support
• Community readiness
• Program development
• Pregnant Aboriginal women accessing services
Evaluation

• The framework is a living document at the moment so is going through some growth as the project comes to life.
• Further development is required for surveys for the doulas, the women as well as the community stakeholders.

Next Steps

• Initiate evaluation activities
• Follow up meetings to discuss integration of Doula services into the existing health care environment
• Recruitment, training and ongoing professional development of Doulas
• Supporting previously trained doulas to achieve certification
• Support relationships between doulas and community
• Establishment of Doula Network
Integrate Doula Programs in the current healthcare environment

Create a DVD power point on benefits of Doula services, creating opportunities for healthcare providers to understand the role of the Doula in Aboriginal Perinatal care

Create and provide educational materials outlining the role of the Doula

Supports the woman and her family through the healthcare system during pregnancy and after birth
In closing, our aim is to improve maternity care by re-introducing traditional Aboriginal support practices including Doula care. Awareness of the benefits for Aboriginal women will help place childbirth back into the hands of our women.