Understanding Breastfeeding in the Native American Community

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Minnesota Breastfeeding Coalition Annual Meeting 2018

Overview
- My personal journey
- Breastfeeding through an Indigenous Lens
- Indigenous Breastfeeding Coalition of Minnesota (IBCMN)
- Success Stories & Suggestions

Disclosures
- Division of Indian Work
- Indigenous Breastfeeding Coalition of Minnesota

My Journey
- 1st pregnancy
- High risk
- Utilizing my resources
- Post-partum Issues
Resources

- Print resources: WIC book, pamphlets, brochures, etc.
- Breastfeeding class at Babies-R-US (Le Leche League)
- Supportive spouse, family, & friends
- Researched hospitals: “Baby Friendly” credentials
- Labor & Delivery Nurse
- Regions Hospital Lactation Consultant X2
- Health Partners Lactation Consultant X2
- WIC Lactation Consultant
- MOMS Study through the University of Minnesota
- Facebook Breastfeeding Group
- WIC Peer Breastfeeding Counselor

Notable Quotes

- “I wasn’t going to give these to you yet.”
- “Well don’t you think you should try now?”
- “Are you going to count her hiccups for the next 18 years of her life?”
- “She’ll stop by at some point.”
- “Let’s try a nipple shield.”
- “Oh wow! Your milk really has come in!”
- “My son…”
- “You’re using a nipple shield??”

Aha Moment!

- Trained labor & delivery doula
- Mothers of Tradition – White Bison Wellbriety Training
- Co-Leading IBCMN
- Indigenous Breastfeeding Counselor Training
- Family Spirit Home Visiting Program
- Peer Recovery Worker Training
- Certificate of American Indian Public Health through Johns Hopkins University
- IBCLC, MPH, Midwifery??...
Breastfeeding Through an Indigenous Lens

Terminology
- Indian
- Native American
- American Indian/Alaska Native
- Indigenous

Not appropriate: Injun, Squaw, Savage!

Why it’s necessary?
Many people experience:
- Racism
- Sexism
- Ageism
- Classism
COLONIALISM!

Historical Trauma

- refers to a complex and collective trauma experienced over time and across generations by a group of people who share an identity, affiliation, or circumstance

Kill the Indian, Save the Man” - Pratt

- Indian War Era (1700s to 1920s)
- Indian Removal Act (1830)
- Indian Appropriations Act (1851) – formation of reservations
- Dawes Act (1887)
- Boarding School Era (1860 – present)
- Indian Relocation Act (1956)
- Indian Placement Program (1954-1996)
Continued…

- Indian Health Services under Dept. of War until 1955
- Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (1960s to present)
- Sterilization of Native American Women (1970s)
- Native American children being “adopted out” (until ICWA 1978)
- Commodities- powdered & canned milk w/ syrup
- Minnesota has the highest rates of Native American children being placed in foster homes than any other state (2018)

But how does it relate?

Loss of:
- People; healers, storytellers, medicine keepers
- Land; access to food and medicines
- Knowledge; language, traditions, ceremonies, songs
- Connection; ancestors, tribes, elders, each other

What now?

Indigenous Breastfeeding Coalition of Minnesota
- Started September 1, 2016 in Red Lake with an “American Indian Breastfeeding Promotion and Support Meeting”
- Brainstorming of “American Indian Collaborative Breastfeeding Project”
- Shari Bebeau, MDH WIC Consultant
- Two conference call meetings were held Spring 2017
- Fall of 2017: Millicent Simenson, Natalie Nicholson & Takayla Lightfield joined
- Meets every-other-month via conference call, and once/year for an in-person gathering
- Official members of MBC Spring of 2018
- Zero Budget
Goals:
1. Develop a breastfeeding toolkit for American Indian families.
3. Normalize breastfeeding in our communities.
4. Be active coalition members by doing community outreach and building support networks.

Our mission is to re-establish a strong, traditional breastfeeding support network for our Native families and caregivers.

Success Stories in Minnesota
- Mewinzha Ondaadiziike Wiigaming (Beginning Life Beautifully), Bemidji
  - Host COPE trainings which includes community-based lactation educators (CBLC)
  - Acquired funding and hosted the 2nd EVER Indigenous Breastfeeding Counselor (IBC) training
  - Host monthly Breastfeeding Circle lunches for breastfeeding mothers
  - Hosted fall gathering to celebrate pregnant and breastfeeding mothers and their families
  - Host cultural classes; making regalia, ribbons skirts, herbs to use during pregnancy

Success Continues!
- Red Lake Indian Health Services
  - 2018 Recognized as Breastfeeding Friendly Workplace by MDH
  - 2018 Recognized as Bronze Level Breastfeeding Friendly Health Department by MDH
  - Breastfeeding rates at 2 months of age have increased from 4.8% in 2017 to 16.7% in 2018
  - New pediatrician, Dr. Tatum, is a lactation counselor
  - Adapted breastfeeding and safe-sleep education into prenatal visit curriculum
  - Have lactation supplies available: double electric breast pump, manual breast pump, soothies, nipple shields, nipple shells, pump membranes, reusable breast pads, hands-free pump bra & Lanolin cream

Say yes to success!!!
- Boise Forte
  - Family Spirit Home Visitor has built a relationship so that the hospital calls her to come see patients/clients in the hospital
  - Upholding community champions: one mother in particular nurses her baby everywhere, and when she has a baby the whole community’s breastfeeding rates increase
  - Increased community education efforts by talking about and NORMALIZING breastfeeding
  - Breastfeeding initiation rates are 95% right now!
Heck yes, success!!!

- White Earth Indian Health Services
  - Developed really good rapport with Essentia in Detroit Lakes so that IHS is seeing the in the clinic at 3 days post-partum!
  - Highlight Nurse Champion who has educated the providers on breastfeeding while on the methadone program (White Earth MOMS), so moms are able to breastfeeding in the hospital.

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- Twin Cities
  - Advocated for the inclusion of breastfeeding into the Native American Nutrition Conference
  - Ensure there’s a lactation space, encourage, and welcome breastfeeding at all events
  - (Statewide) Cross trainings: Community Health Workers, Peer Recovery Workers, Home Visitors, Doulas and Indigenous Breastfeeding Counselors so that more community-based and peer educators have the tools necessary to help breastfeeding families

What can you do?

- Be our ally
- Refer to appropriate people or organizations
- Focus on relationship building with your patients/clients/customers/colleagues
- Take a cultural awareness training (or two, or three)
- Practice trauma-informed care
- Fund our efforts (to any funders in the room 😊)

Questions?

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Pilamayaye!

Resources

- http://www.mewinzha.com/
- https://www.wibreastfeeding.com/
- http://www.changingwomaninitiative.com/
- MDH WIC – American Indian Breastfeeding Women Posters
- Camie Jae Goldhammer, MSW, LICSW, IBCLC, (Sisseton-Wahpeton) – hear her speak!