

Celebrating the Circle of Life
Coming back to Balance and Harmony



*A guide to emotional health in pregnancy and early
motherhood for Aboriginal women and their families*

The BC Reproductive Mental Health Program (BCRMHP), a program of BC Mental Health & Addiction Services (BCMHAS), and Perinatal Services BC, both agencies of the Provincial Health Services Authority (PHSA), are proud to present Celebrating the Circle of Life.

The BCRMHP provides services to women with depression, anxiety and other psychiatric illnesses associated with pregnancy, postpartum, pregnancy loss, the menstrual cycle, perimenopause and menopause. Services include assessment, diagnosis and treatment, which may include pharmacotherapy, interpersonal therapy, cognitive behavioral therapy, marital therapy, parenting and group psychotherapies.

Perinatal Services BC works to improve the capacity and processes of provincial perinatal services through strategic leadership across a range of initiatives, with an overriding commitment to quality, accountability and resource planning, education and knowledge transfer, performance targets development and monitoring, and clinical standards achievement.

These programs share a vision to provide excellence in care, research, teaching and developing partnerships in order to improve the health of women, infants and their families across the province. They take provincial leadership roles, working with an extensive network of community partners to support service providers throughout BC. Collectively they make significant contributions in the areas of research and knowledge exchange in the field of women's reproductive mental health.

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www.perinatalservicesbc.ca

Celebrating the Circle of Life

This resource is for Aboriginal women, their partners,
families, friends, and community

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April 11, 2012



Acknowledgements

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Design By:

Mesich Media Advertising Limited

Funding By:

The Spectra Energy Transmission

Development of this resource has strengthened partnership with Aboriginal communities, health authorities, and the Ministry of Health with the goal of improving the health of Aboriginal people in B C. The passion, vision, and expertise of Doris Bodnar, MN, Reproductive Mental Health Program Outreach Coordinator of Métis heritage and Lucy Barney, RN, MN, Aboriginal Lead, Perinatal Services BC, from the Lillooet Nation brought wonderful energy and guidance to the project. As part of its community relations mission, The Spectra Energy Transmission kindly provided funding for this project.

Many other people gave generously of their time, knowledge, and support to ensure a culturally relevant and evidence-based resource. Thanks are given to the women of the community for their stories and quotes; as well to the staff (counsellors, nurses, doctors, and others) of BC Reproductive Mental Health Program, the PHSA Aboriginal Health Program, the First Nations Health Council, the Métis Provincial Council of BC, Sheway, the Aboriginal Wellness Program (Vancouver Coastal Health), Fraser Health, First Nations and Inuit Health (Pacific Region), the First Nations Chief's Health Council, and the Tripartite Planning Committee for Aboriginal Maternal & Child Health for their reviews, feedback, and suggestions. The expert feedback from Indigo Sweetwater, RN, MN, Mikmaq', and Brian Muth, Sto:lo, Nation was most helpful; as was Debra Isabel Huron, plain language editor for the Canadian Public Health Association's Plain Language Service

To everyone who worked together to make this a valuable resource for Aboriginal women and their partners, families, friends and communities, THANK YOU!



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INTRODUCTION

Forward

The experience of pregnancy, childbirth, and parenting for all women is a journey and each journey is unique. The journey is shaped by past and current social, cultural and socio-economic factors, as well as the physical environment and personal health. Canada's history no doubt is part of what influences health and the experience of pregnancy, childbirth and parenting for Aboriginal women in today's environment.

Mental and emotional health is critical for one's overall holistic health. Having a healthy experience throughout pregnancy, childbirth and parenting includes fostering positive mental and emotional health. Supporting individual resilience, creating supportive environments and addressing the influence of the broad determinants of health are important considerations.

Supportive environments and relationships are especially important for Aboriginal women who are journeying through pregnancy, childbirth and parenting today. They may have few role models (e.g. mothers, aunts, sisters) around them who can support them and pass on important traditional practices. There may be a loss of intergenerational community resources or events that help integrate past and current values and stories. Today, Aboriginal people, women especially, face some unique challenges in having healthy pregnancy, childbirth and parenting experiences. Many are very aware of and recognize these challenges, are eager to seek ways of meeting them, and respond in healthy ways to difficult emotions that may come with pregnancy.

Aboriginal women, their partners, families and communities know that it takes a village to raise

a child. They know that by taking advantage of the many available resources, they are more than capable of having meaningful and fulfilling relationships, and of raising a healthy and happy child.

Why this guide was created

This guide was created to help Aboriginal women enjoy good emotional health during pregnancy and following the birth of a baby. The guide discusses how baby blues and depression may affect women's physical, mental, emotional and spiritual well-being, and what to do if that occurs. It is designed to help women and their families learn about:

1. the importance of mental and emotional health during pregnancy and following the birth of a baby,
2. the signs and symptoms of baby blues and depression,
3. the importance of reaching out for help,
4. ways to come back to harmony and balance,
5. places to go for help, and
6. how family and friends can offer support.

Who this guide is for

Women: This guide was created to help soon-to-be and new mothers who are worried about their mood and/or experiencing depression. The guide is focused on emotional health and includes information on what to expect and how to cope with all of the changes that come with pregnancy and a new baby. As there is a lot of information in this guide, it is expected that women will work through it a few pages at a time. Women may also find it helpful to work through the guide with

a partner, family member, friend or healthcare worker.

Partners, Families & Friends: This guide can help partners, families and friends understand the emotional journey and challenges that some women face during pregnancy and following the birth of the baby. Part Five is written for partners, families and friends and includes information on how to support a woman during pregnancy, childbirth and the early months of being a parent.

Health Care Providers: This guide can also be used by health care providers who work with women and their families in the perinatal period, especially those who may be experiencing baby blues or depression. Health care providers may choose from the different part(s) of the guide to personalize the care and treatment approach, as well as assisting in accessing one or more of the resources in Part Six.

How to Use this Guide

This guide can be read alone, with a family member, friend, partner or healthcare provider, or even discussed in places where people gather and talk: sewing circles, talking circles, prenatal classes, etc.

It is perfectly reasonable to go through this guide a few pages at a time and it is often a good idea to review parts more than once. A lot of people find that some ideas make sense right away while other ideas only sink in after they have been reviewed a few times.

The guide is organized into six parts. Some people may find it helpful to read the parts in the order they appear, and others may prefer to start with the part that seems most related to their current needs or life situation. Each part has something helpful to offer, it is OK to go through the guide in any order.

PRAYER

Offered by Gloria Nahanee,
Squamish Nation

Creator

We come in a good and humble way.

*We thank you for our grandmothers who have our
history, teachings, songs and languages to pass down.*

*Bless the mothers to be with strong positive minds and
happy feelings for themselves and others.*

*For the unborn to come, bless them spiritually,
physically, mentally and emotionally that they
will grow to be free of drugs and alcohol
and at peace.*