“From Conception to Tribal Council: Healthy Native American Women lead to Health Native American Communities.”

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– Health studies: need more personalized report back, educate whole family
– Target “social body” rather than individual body
– O’Neil (2004:36) “We must insist, then, that the family should be a thinking body, whose common sense should be fostered in any health community and by any practical means.”

“The Family As a Thinking Body: Centering Healthcare in Native American Communities”
“If you can make the mother well than the family is well then the nation is well. It starts with one then filters up. If you can make the mother well, the man follows suit. It grows from the root and I believe the mother is the root.”

Louise Tewakierahkwa McDonald

Healthy communities begin at:

• Conception and pregnancy
  – fetal origins theory
  – Aboriginal midwives
  – Centering Pregnancy
• Proper guidance of adolescents
  – Oherok:en Rites of Passage
• Having the right policies in place to protect women and children
  – Konon:kwe Council
  – Violence Against Women Act
Fetal Origins Theory
Developmental Origins of Health and Disease

- Nutrition
- Smoking
- Maternal Diabetes
- Toxic/Infectious Exposures
- Maternal Low Birth Weight
- Maternal Stress/Mental Health
  - Mother’s own Childhood
  - Current/Prenatal
- Alcohol/drugs

“poor intrauterine envi” can lead to:

- Cardiovascular and metabolic disorders  BMJ 301 (6761):1111.
- Osteoporosis  (Early Life Origins Human Health 2009:100-112)
- Personality disorders  (Brain, Behav & immunity 2009 23: 905-916)
- Slow cognitive development  (Biol Psychiatry 2010:67:1026-1032)
- Breast cancer  (Early Life Origins Human Health 2009:42-51)
Diabetes

- Fetuses of obese mothers develop insulin resistance in utero. *Diabetes Care* 2009;32:1076-1080
- Maternal diet during pregnancy epigenetically affects child’s adiposity at age 9 yrs. *Diabetes* 2011;60:1528-1534
- Rapid weight gain in first 3 months of life associated with ↑CVD and diabetes risk factors by early adulthood. *JAMA* 2009;301:2234-2242

Fetal Programming of Type 2 Diabetes

- “...intrauterine environment may modify gene expression permanently. ...They might also be inherited transgenerationally, affecting the health of future generations. ...During intrauterine life, there are waves of epigenomic modification, intimately associated with growth and development, and opportunities galore for environmental factors to influence these processes. A fetus thus programmed travels a path of limited options.” *Diabetes Care* 2007;30:2754-5
- “It is important to understand that the story is not about birth weight but about fetal programming, and that intergenerational prevention of type 2 diabetes (primordial prevention) will need to target maternal nutrition and metabolism. ...Prevention of fetal programming of diabetes will need to concentrate on the health of young girls.” *Diabetes Care* 2010;33:1146-8

Ann Bullock 2011
Proper nutrition necessary for healthy babies

Creation, Skywoman, Pregnancy
Certified midwives

- Annual exams including gynecological care, primary care, health screening and counseling with a focus on health promotion and disease prevention
- History and physical examinations
- First exams for young women
- Family planning and prescribing of birth control methods
- Pre-conception counseling
- Well woman and adolescent gynecological care
- Perimenopausal and postmenopausal counseling and care
- Comprehensive maternity care including prenatal, labor, delivery, postpartum & newborn care
- Hospital admission, rounds and discharge
- Newborn circumcision
- First assisting at surgical procedures
- Obstetric and gynecologic screening procedures
- Evaluation and treatment of common health problems
- Public education activities
- Referral to specialists

TABC Logic Model

Issue
Aboriginal peoples have:
- Poorest health outcomes
- Poorest access and utilization
- Over-represent child protection
- Poor data
- Under-represent health care professionals

Outcomes
- Better health outcomes
- Better access and utilization
- More families together
- Better knowledge/data/understanding
- More Aboriginal midwives

Healthy women and babies means healthy families, communities, nations

Birth is at the centre – it is the strategy. Every birth represents the potential for the next generation
Centerring Pregnancy

Thirteen Essential Elements of Group Care:

Assessments occur within the group space
2. Participants are involved in self-care activities.

3. A facilitative leadership style is used.
4. Each session has an overall plan

5. Attention is given to core content; emphasis varies according to group need, with documentation and regular review

6. There is stability of group leadership
7. Group conduct honors the contribution of each member.
8. The group is conducted in a circle.

9. The composition of the group is stable but not rigid.
10. Group size is optimal with 6-15 members to promote the process.
11. Involvement of family support people is optional

12. Opportunity for socializing within the group is provided.
There is ongoing evaluation of outcomes.
Sessions included:

- Relaxation, stress management
- nutrition
- Lamaze
- Dental
- Skywoman presentation
- Breastfeeding consultant
- Massage
- Domestic violence
- Birth plan
- Tour hospital
- Home safety
- Birth process, labor
- Post partum depression
- Birth control
- Sharing birth experience
Centering Model Implementation Steps

Step 1: Basic Information
Step 2: System Re-design
Step 3: Training Workshops
Step 4: Initiation of Groups
Step 5: On-going Consultation and Preparation for the Site Approval Visit
Step 6: Sustainability

Barriers to initiating Centering Pregnancy

- No space
  - Shared space became available
- No extra staff, staff skeptical
  - Trained existing staff
  - Nursing staff came to own program
- No extra money
  - Funding was obtained from Ford Foundation through their Sexual and Reproductive Health Program by the First Environment Collaborative of Running Strong for American Indian Youth and added support from MCH at I.H.S.
• 11/09: system redesign visit
• 1/10: centering Pregnancy training with Centering Health Institute
• 2/10: first centering group, second group two weeks later. First Centered babies born in April
• 2011: first Centering reunion attended by more than 30 moms and babies, support people, tribal council members, clinic staff
• 2011: after lengthy certification process, SRMHS earns approval from CHI becomes first tribally-run Centering site
• 2012: to date 84 women have had Centered pregnancies through SRMHS

Oherokon: “Under the Husk”
Rites of Passage

“Women are the architects of our social change” Louise Tewakierahkwa McDonald
Coming of Age Ceremonies:

- Provide psychological comfort at transitional time
- Formalize new roles and statuses
- Reinforce social connections, customs, values

(Markstrom 2008)
Lack of connection to culture

- Problematic behavior among adolescents
- Youth develop their own rites of passage
  - Premature behaviors
  - Unacceptable behavior

(Loran, Duran & Braveheart 1998)

20 week program

- Snowsnake
- Great Law
- Mid-Winter Ceremony
- Sweat lodges, moon lodges
- Women’s seed songs
- Men’s Atonwa
- Sexual health, HIV, STI awareness and prevention, pregnancy
- Star knowledge trip to planetarium
Willow Wheel

Flint Knapping
Energy Work

Team Work
Wilderness survival training

Activities cont.

- Climbing wall & ropes course
- Spear fishing
- Ceremonial lodge making
- Horsemanship/riding
- Fasting site preps
Shawl making

Concluding ceremony
Mother Earth gardens

Konon:kwe Council

is a Mohawk women-led effort that bases its work in an understanding of Kahnistensersa, or Mother Law. Kahnistensera is comprised of the root words Ista, meaning mother; kahni, for real, true; sten, for strength, sherah, indicating “always, all over” and kahniot, meaning “this is it.”

Est 2009
Konon:kwe Council

“As daughters descended from Sky Woman and founding clan mothers, we adhere to principles of peace, power, justice, and rules of conduct of the matrilineal descendancy, “Mother Law” (Kahnistensera), a natural law that binds our Onkwehon:we kinship society. The good health of our mothers and their infants are the foundation of our sovereignty, as the mother-infant bond is a complex of symbiotic physiological regulation reciprocity, and love”.

2nd International Meeting on Indigenous Women’s Health in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Pictured (from left) are Randi Rourke Barreiro and son Karakwatiron, Cherylann Brant, Louise McDonald, Jessica Yee, Katsi Cook, and Beverly Cook. (Courtesy of Sky Woman Media)
Konon:kwe goals

- Bring policy proposals to tribal council for resolutions
- Workshops to educate leadership, educators, health care providers
- Create bridge between Mohawk Council of Akwesasne and SRMT health programs
- Second women’s gathering, August 2012

Violence Against Women Act

- 1994, 2000, 2005
- $$ toward investigation and prosecution of violent crimes against women, imposed automatic and mandatory restitution on those convicted, and allowed civil redress in cases prosecutors chose to leave unprosecuted. The Act also established the Office on Violence Against Women within the Department of Justice.
- STOP Grants (State Formula Grants); Transitional Housing Grants; Grants to Encourage Arrest and Enforce Protection Orders; Court Training and Improvement Grants; Research on Violence Against Indian Women; National Tribal Sex Offender Registry; Stalker Reduction Database; Federal Victim Assistants; Sexual Assault Services Program; Services for Rural Victims; Civil Legal Assistance for Victims; Elder Abuse Grant Program; Protections and Services for Disabled Victims; Combating Abuse in Public Housing; National Resource Center on Workplace Responses; Violence on College Campuses Grants; Safe Havens Project; Engaging Men and Youth in Prevention
2012 Reauthorization of VAWA

• Senate version (passed April 26) includes recommendations by the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs and the Senate Judiciary Committee
  – Persons suspected of domestic violence can be arrested by tribal police even if they are not Native American.
  – Tribal courts can exercise full jurisdiction over these cases even if the offender is not Native American.
• The House passed its version of the bill on May 16 that excluded these provisions
• Next step: House and Senate meet in conference committee to agree to a single version of the bill that can be approved
• http://www.usa.gov/Contact/Elected.shtml

Helpful Websites

• Centering Health Care
  https://www.centeringhealthcare.org/
• Violence Against Women Act- impact on Native women
  http://www.tribal-institute.org/lists/vaiw.htm
• Fetal origins
  http://esciencenews.com/dictionary/fetal.origins
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