

Aboriginal Midwifery in Canada: An Overview



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on Indigenous Birthing and Midwifery**
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Presentation Overview

- Background of NAHO
- NAHO and Aboriginal midwifery
- Geographic overview of midwifery & Aboriginal midwifery in Canada
- Midwifery legislation by province and territory
- Current initiatives to promote Aboriginal midwifery
- Aboriginal midwifery education programs in Canada



What is NAHO?

The National Aboriginal Health Organization (NAHO) is an Aboriginal designed and controlled body, that aims to influence and advance the health and well-being of Aboriginal Peoples by carrying out knowledge based strategies.



NAHO's Objectives

- To improve and promote health through knowledge-based activities;
- To promote understanding of health issues affecting Aboriginal Peoples;
- To facilitate and promote research and develop research partnerships;
- To foster participation of Aboriginal Peoples in delivery of health care;
- To affirm and protect Aboriginal traditional healing practices.



NAHO's Structure

NAHO has three Centres of excellence that work on self-identified, population-specific health priorities:

The **Métis Centre**, the **First Nations Centre** and the **Ajunnginiq (Inuit) Centre**, as well as

- a Communications and Research Unit;
- the Journal of Aboriginal Health;
- the National Aboriginal Role Model Program



NAHO's Work Related to Midwifery

Midwifery Research

- 2004: ***Midwifery and Aboriginal Midwifery in Canada***, a paper which provides an overview of the state of the profession in the provinces and territories. This report has recently been updated and will be posted on the website soon.

See URL: http://www.naho.ca/english/pdf/aboriginal_midwifery.pdf

- 2006: A report on NAHO's project, ***Exploring Models for Quality Maternity Care in First Nations and Inuit Communities***

See URL: <http://www.naho.ca/inuit/english/publications.php>

NAHO's Work Related to Midwifery (cont'd)

What's New • Events • Resources • News Clips • Training • Stories • Inuit Midwifery Bibliography • Meeting Reports • Contact Us

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Irnisuksiiniq - Inuit Midwifery Network



Imagine a day when most Inuit women can give birth in their home communities.

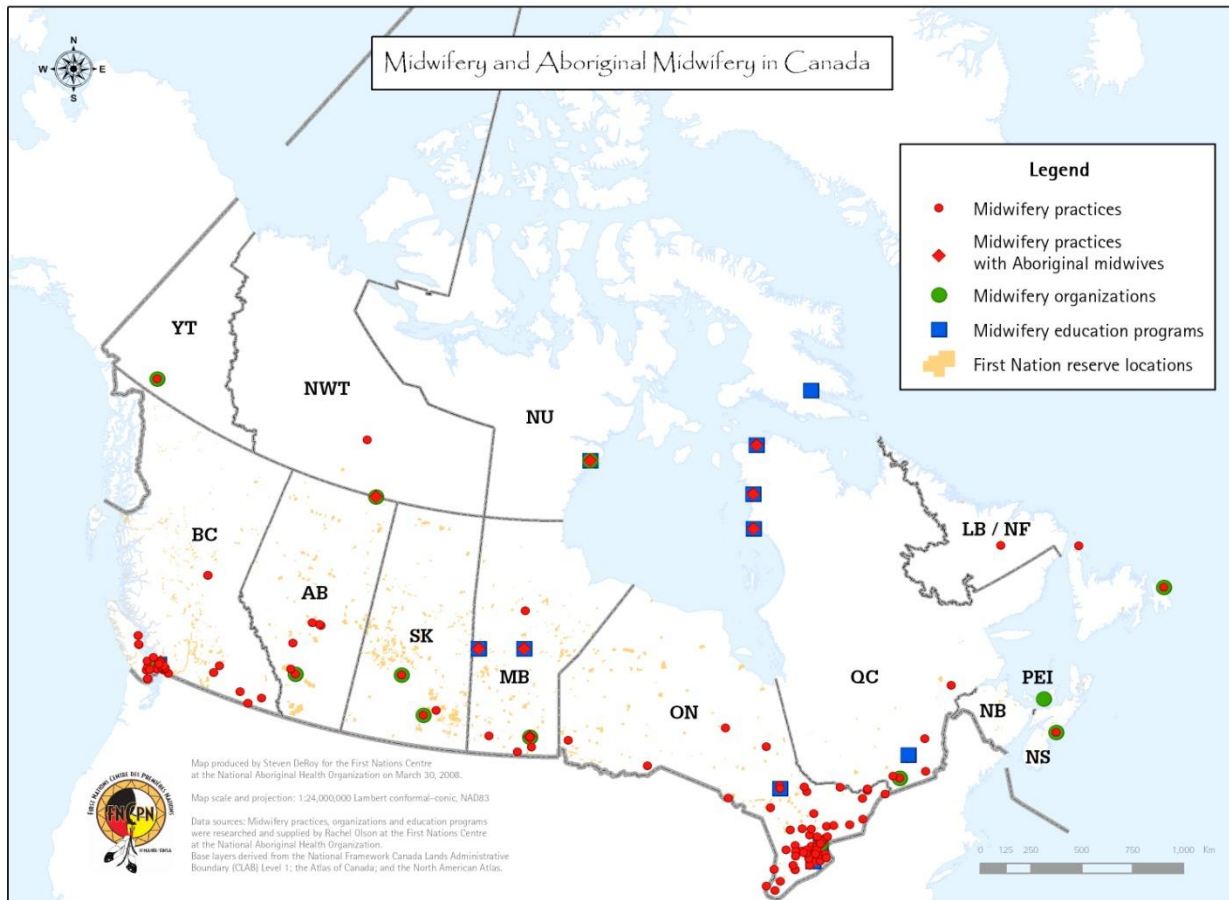
Through supporting Inuit midwives and maternity care workers and those who work with them with a variety of information services, the Irnisuksiiniq - Inuit Midwifery Network seeks to advance the cause of returning birthing to Inuit communities.

The Ajunnginiq Centre believes the Network is an ideal way to:

- Provide midwives and maternity care workers with up-to-date resources and the latest research on the midwifery field
- Connect Inuit midwives in remote communities to midwives working in other Inuit regions
- Inform midwives and maternity care workers of upcoming gatherings, training, and events related to their field
- Assist midwives and maternity care workers to share their stories and experiences with other professionals

The Irnisuksiiniq - Inuit Midwifery Network provides several information services. [Join the network](#) to receive information through e-mail, fax or regular mail.

Midwifery and Aboriginal Midwifery in Canada: A Geographic Overview



Status of Midwifery Legislation in Canada

Province/Territory	Legislation
Alberta	Yes - 1998
British Columbia	Yes - 1998
Manitoba	Yes - 2000
New Brunswick	In process
Newfoundland & Labrador	No
North West Territories	Yes - 2005

Province/Territory	Legislation
Nova Scotia	In process
Nunavut	In process
Ontario	Yes - 1994
Prince Edward Island	No
Quebec	Yes - 1999
Saskatchewan	Yes - 2008
Yukon	No

Midwifery Legislation and Aboriginal Midwives in Canada

- **Midwifery Acts** of British Columbia, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec and Nunavut make reference to **Aboriginal midwives**.
- The **British Columbia Midwifery Act** provides a general definition of Aboriginal midwifery that includes Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples and recognizes both traditional and contemporary practices.
- The **Manitoba Midwifery Act** is the only statute that includes a Standing Committee created to advise the College of Midwifery on issues related to midwifery care for Aboriginal women.
- The **Ontario Midwifery Act** allows Aboriginal midwives who provide traditional midwifery services to use the title “Aboriginal midwife.”

Midwifery Legislation and Aboriginal Midwives in Canada (cont'd)

- The Midwifery Acts of British Columbia, Ontario, Quebec and Nunavut provide an **exemption from registration** for Aboriginal midwives.
- The **British Columbia** and **Nunavut Acts** state that exemption is only available for midwives who practiced Aboriginal midwifery before the Acts came into force, creating a “grand mothering effect.”
- In **Ontario**, Aboriginal midwives providing care to Aboriginal communities are exempt from the Regulated Health Professions Act.

Midwifery Legislation and Aboriginal Midwives in Canada (cont'd)

- The **Quebec Act** allows Aboriginal midwives to practice without being registered members of the provincial Association, provided that the nation, group or community has entered into an agreement with the government.
- The Quebec government has also passed an Act stating that people of the **Cree Nation** can receive midwifery services through their health and social services board.
- In addition, midwives who conduct **home deliveries** for Cree Native persons in Quebec are excluded from the Regulation Respecting Standards and Conditions of Practice for Conducting Home Deliveries.

Current Initiatives in Aboriginal Midwifery



There are currently initiatives taking place across Canada to promote Aboriginal Midwifery. These range from the local to the national level, and are being supported by federal, provincial, territorial, non-governmental and community groups.

Canadian Association of Midwives (CAM)

- **CAM** is the national organization representing midwives in Canada
- In **2005**, CAM passed a resolution to "... take an active role in entering into dialogue with First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities and organizations about issues related to appropriate recognition, legislation, regulation, funding and education for Aboriginal midwives in Canada."
- The CAM Board has developed a **consultative process** with traditional and registered Aboriginal midwives.
- **First Nations and Inuit Health** (FNIH) of Health Canada funded a project that engaged Aboriginal midwives and communities in a dialogue with CAM to explore their needs and interests.

Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada (SOGC)

- **SOGC** promotes excellence in the practice of obstetrics and gynaecology to advance the health of women
- In 2007, the Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (SOGC) started to develop an **Aboriginal Birthing Strategy**.
- This strategy will have the same core elements as the national birthing strategy, but with additional mechanisms and considerations to address the “unique requirements and expectations of First Nations, Inuit and Métis people.”
- It is stressed that an Aboriginal birthing strategy is needed to “generate action to improve the health of Aboriginal children, to address health inequities and create a framework for comprehensive, collaborative partnerships” (SOGC, 2007).

Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada

- **Pauktuutit** is the national non-profit association representing all Inuit women in Canada
- Pauktuutit is committed to advancing a **National Inuit Midwifery Strategy**.
- This Strategy will:
 - “Identify the needs, benefits, barriers, and best practices that are relevant to the profession in all Inuit regions;
 - Provide a comprehensive review of the current training, legislation, certification, and curriculum related to midwifery in the four Inuit regions;
 - Integrate traditional Inuit knowledge into the delivery of maternal care services in the North; and
 - Promote the broader objective of promoting healthy pregnancies and healthy communities.”

Cree Board of Health and Social Services of James Bay (CBHSSJB)

- The Public Health Department of the **CBHSSJB** was created in 2002 and is officially recognized by the government of Quebec.
- The **Awash Team** of the CBHSSJB promotes the health and safety of young children and their families
- The Awash Team has been exploring the implementation of midwifery services for James Bay Cree communities. They have undergone an extensive **consultation process** with their communities and have developed strategies for midwifery education and implementation.
- This consultation has been filmed, and a **documentary** will soon be released

Aboriginal Midwifery Education Programs

kanaci otinawawasowin Baccalaureate Program (KOBP)

- A **four year degree program** offered through the University College of the North in The Pas and Norway House, Manitoba.
- The **goal** of the program is to “establish a comprehensive and sustainable midwifery program in Manitoba that reflects a blend of traditional Aboriginal and western methods of practice, and the necessary support systems, for persons of Aboriginal ancestry.”
- It is based on a **mentorship model**, and prepares students in the competencies required for registration with the College of Midwives in Manitoba.

Aboriginal Midwifery Education Programs

Tsi Non:we lonnakeratstha Ona:grahsta'/Aboriginal Midwifery Training Program in Six Nations, Ontario

- The **first formal training program** for Aboriginal midwives in Canada.
- The **vision** of the program is to “provide an educational opportunity for Aboriginal women to gain skills and knowledge in Aboriginal midwifery and to participate in the resurgence of Aboriginal midwifery in Aboriginal communities.”
- **Three year program** that combines western obstetrical practices and standards with traditional Aboriginal practices and standards.
- Graduates are instructed to seek formal recognition and authorization to practice from their home communities.

Aboriginal Midwifery Education Programs

The Inuulitsivik Midwifery Education Program

- **Academic and clinical education program** for Inuit women working in their own communities.
- Birthing centres established in communities of **Inukjuak, Puvirnituaq and Salluit**
- The program uses “modular competency based curriculum consistent with clinical content of southern midwifery education programmes.” It has been “adapted for northern realities and an expanded scope of practice.”
- The program emphasizes learning in ways appropriate to Inuit culture, and focuses on the role of the midwife in community health, especially in the areas of sexual health and well woman care.

Aboriginal Midwifery Education Programs

Maternity Care Worker Certificate Program and Midwifery Training, Nunavut Arctic College

- **Maternity Care Workers** are prepared to assist midwives and support mothers and newborns and provide childbirth and parent education programs. Graduates of this program can qualify to take the Midwifery Diploma and Midwifery Degree Program.
- The program is to be **transferable** for advanced credit towards the University College of the North's four-year Midwifery Degree program in Manitoba.

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