National Aboriginal Health Organization
Ajunnginiq (Inuit) Centre

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Interviewed by Martha Flaherty (2007)

Audio Clip 1

MF: Are there any stories from your work as a midwife in the maternity clinic that you would like to share with me?

ᐃᖅᑲᓇᐃᓯᕝᕕᑦᑎᒍᑦ ᓇᔾᔭᐳᓕᕆᖃᑦᑕᕋᑦᑕ, ᐃᖅᑲᓇᐃᓯᕝᕕᑦᑎᒍᓂᑖᒃ ᖃᓄᖅ ᐃᒥᓂᒃ ᑲᒪᑦᑎᐊᒃᑲᓐᓂᕈᓐᓇᕐᒪᖔᓐ, ᐊᒻᒪ ᖃᓄᖅ ᓇᔾᔮᓪᓗᓂ ᖃᓂᒻᒪᓰᖏᓐᓂᖓᓐᓂᒃ ᐃᓅᓯᐅᑉ ᐊᑐᕐᓇᕆᓲᒥᒻᒪᐅᒃ ᓇᔾᔮᓃᖅ?... ᖃᓂᒻᒪᓯᖑᓐᓂᖓᓂᒃ ᖃᓄᕐᓗ ᐃᑲᔪᕐᑐᐃᒃᑲᓐᓂᕈᓐᓇᕐᒪᖔᑦᑕ, ᓲᕐᓗ ᒫᓐᓇ ᑕᒫᕐᖓ ᐃᒪᓐᓇ ᑕᐅᑐᓐᖑᐊᕐᑎᑦᓯᓪᓗᑎᒍ, ᓴᖅᑭᑎᑦᓯᓪᓗᑕᓘᓐᓃᑦ...ᐃᒪᓐᓇ ᑕᒫᕐᖓ ᐅᑭᐅᓂ ᓇᔾᔭᓕᕋᕕᑦ ᐃᒪᓐᓇᑎᑭᖅ ᑕᐅᑐᕐᑲᓪᓗᐊᓕᕐᐳᖅ.

In our work, we deal with maternity care. We teach mothers to live healthy lives, and teach them that pregnancy is not a sickness; it is part of a normal life. We teach about complications during pregnancy. We also tell about resources that are available to them. We teach them how to use those resources and the skills that we offer. Here in the [maternity] centre, we teach young mothers about healthy pregnancy by actually showing them and letting them know what is available for them and how to use it ... hands on training. For example ... if you are this many months [pregnant], then you should look like this (by using pictures).

MF: ᐃᑲᔪᕐᑎᐅᓪᓗᓯ ᑐᑭᓯᑎᑦᓯᓇᓯᐊᒃᑲᓐᓂᕐᑲᑦᑕᕐᐱᓯ ᐃᓄᑦᑎᐊᕐᓂᕐᒍᐊᖓᔪᓂᒃ?

MF: As caregivers, do you deal with a lot of prevention and awareness?

ᐄᖕ, ᐊᒻᒪᐃᑖᒃ ᖃᐃᓲᒍᒪᑕ ᓇᔾᔭᓚᐅᕐᓯᒪᙱᑦᑐᐃᑦ ᐋᑐᕗᐊᒥᓕ, ᐊᒻᒪ ᐅᓄᕐᑐᓂᒃ ᓇᔾᔭᓯᒪᓕᕐᑐᐃᑦ. ᑲᑎᑕᐃᓐᓇᓇᑎᕙᒃᓱᑎᒍᑦ ᐊᐱᖅᑯᑎᖃᕋ̇ᖕᖓ ᐊᑕᐅᓯᑯᓗᒻᒥᒃ ᐅᓄᕐᑐᐃᑦ ᐅᖃᐅᓵᑦ ᓴᖅᑭᓕᓲᑦ, ᖃᓄᖅ ᐃᒪᓐᓇᐃᒃᑲᓐᓂᕈᕕᑦ ᐃᓗᐊᕐᓂᕐᓴᐅᒃᑲᔪᕐᐳᑦ, ᐊᒻᒪᓗ ᐃᓐᓇᕐᒥᒃ ᖃᐃᑎᑦᑎᔪᕋ̇ᖓᑕ ᐅᓂᒃᑳᒃᑲᓐᓂᕐᓲᓂ... ᐃᒪᒃᑲᓐᓂᕐᓕ ᓇᔾᔭᑎᓪᓗᒥᑦ ᐃᓐᓇᐃᑦ, ᐃᓐᓇᐅᓕᕐᑐᑦ ᒫᓐᓇ ᖃᓄᐃᓕᐅᕆᐊᕐᑲᕐᑲᑦᑕᓚᐅᕐᓯᒪᓂᖕᒋᓐᓄᓪᓗ ᐊᒻᒪ ᖃᓄᐃᓕᐅᕆᐊᕐᑲᑦᑕᓚᐅᕐᓯᒪᖕᒋᓐᓂᓪᓗ.

Yes, because a lot of the time the young women here in Ottawa who come are expecting for the first time, and [we receive] women with many children. We meet with them, and during those meetings, if there are questions, we usually end up with a lot of discussion.... For example, we teach them what is best for them and how to do it. When we invite an elder, she would talk to them about what is the best way to look after yourself during pregnancy, and she tells them about best practices from traditional ways.

Audio Clip 2

MF: What is the birth you remember the most - or - enjoyed the most? (Don’t give personal identity) Please describe.

ᐅᖓᑖᓂ ᐃᕐᓂᓱᒃᓯᖅᑕᐅᓯᒪᒐᒪ, ᑕᒪᕐᒥᓕᒫᑦᑎᐊᖅ ᐊᓕᐊᓇᐃᒋᑦᑐᒋᑦ ᐅᐱᒋᔭᐃᓐᓇᕆᑦᑐᒋᑦ. ᐸᓂᑦᑖᕐᑐᐃᑦ, ᐸᓃᑦ ᐱᐅᒋᓂᖕᓴᐅᕆᒐᒃᑭᑦ, ᐅᐱᒋᓂᖕᓴᕆᓲᒃᑲ. ᖃᑦᓯᓂᑭᐊᖅ, ᒪᕐᕿᓐᓂᖅᑲᐃ, ᖁᔾᔭᙵᔪᑯᓘᓐᓂᒃ ᐃᓅᔪᖅᑲᓚᐅᕐᓯᒪᑦᑐᓂ ᑕᙯᐅᑎᐊᕐᑎᑦᑐᖓ, ᐊᔾᔨᖏᐊᔾᔪᒃᑭᑦᑐᓂᐅᒃ. ᒪᑭᑕᖕᒑᕐᑐᓂᒃ ᐃᓅᔪᖅᑲᓚᐅᕐᓯᒪᒻᒪᑦ ᒪᕐᕿᖅᑯᕐᑐᓐᓂᒃ ᑕᙯᓃᑦᑎᑦᑐᖓ ᑲᑉᐱᐊᓇᕿᑎᕐᑲᕐᑰᔨᓚᐅᕐᓯᒪᔪᖅ ᑕᐃᒪᓐᓇ ᑕᑯᓕᒪᓇᑐᐊᓚᐅᖕᒋᓐᓂᑯᒧᑦ. ᐃᑖᒃ ᓂᐊᕐᑯᖕᒐᓕ ᐊᓂᖅᑳᕿᓂ ᑮᓇᑯᑐᖕᒋᑦ ᐳᑦᓕᓲᑯᔫᒻᒪᑕ, ᐃᓱᖕᒐᖕᒋᑦᓕ ᐊᓂᖅᑳᕐᑐᐃᑦ ᐃᓱᒐᖕᒋᑦᑕᐅᖅ ᑕᐃᒪᓐᓇ ᑐᖑᔪᕐᑐᑯᔫᒋᑦᑐᑎᒃ ᐳᑦᓕᕐᑐᑯᔫᓰᑦ.

Before I came here, I used to be a midwife, I fully enjoyed everything about it and am very proud of it. Personally, I enjoy delivering baby girls more. I am very proud of them, even more so than boys. In the past, during my duty, I’ve experienced maybe two breached pregnancies, where I had to help, and that was different. I believe there have been two breached babies born here and that is a little scary, because it is rare. Normally the baby’s face is a little puffy when born. Well it’s like that too with breached [births], but on the feet--the little feet are puffy and purple.

MF: What is the birth that scared you the most? What happened?

ᐄᖕ, ᖃᖓᑦᑎᐊᕌᖑᓚᐅᕐᑐᖅ ᐃᑖᒃ ᓲᕐᑲᐃᒻᒪ ᐋᑐᕚᒥ ᖃᐅᔨᒪᔭᐅᓕᕋᒪ, ᓇᔾᔨᔪᓂᑦᑐ ᐃᕐᓂᕌᕐᑐᓂᑦᑐ ᐱᖃᑎᖃᐃᓐᓇᓲᖑᔪᖓ ᐱᖃᑎᖃᖕᒋᑦᑐᖅᑕᖃᓂᐊᓚᐅᕐᒪᑦ, ᐊᓱᐃᑦᑖᒃ ᐊᖕᒋᕐᕋᕐᓯᒪᓕᕐᑎᑦᑐᖓ

ᑕᓚᕗᕐᑕᐅᒐᒪ...ᐃᕐᓂᓱᓕᕐᒪᒌᖅ ᐅᑦᓵᕉᖅ ᖄᕈᔾᔨᖅᑲᐅᒻᒪᑦ ... ᑕᕝᕙ ᐃᖅᑲᓇᐃᔭᕈᓐᓇᐃᕐᓯᒪᔪᖕᒐᐅᒐᓗᐊᖅ. ᐊᓱᐃᓛᒃ ᐅᐸᒃᑲᒃᑯ, ᓇᖏᕐᓯᑎᓪᓗᒍ, ᖃᐃᓕᖕᒐᒻᒪᖖᑦ ᑕᑯᓇᒃᑯᒃᑯ, ᐊᓱᐃᓛᒃ ᐃᕐᓂᓱᓕᕐᐳᕈᖅ. ᐋᓐᓂᐊᕕᒻᒧᐊᕐᕙᑕᓗ ᐃᑲᕐᕿᓕᒫᖑᖏᑦᑐᕐᔫᓐᓃᑦ ᐊᓂᕌᓚᐅᕐᓯᒪᔪᖅ. ᐊᕙᑦᑎᓐᓄᑦ ᐃᖅᑲᓇᐃᐅᔭᕐᕕᑦᑎᓐᓄᑦ ᑐᓵᒻᒪᕆᖅᑲᑦᑕᐃᓐᓇᕐᓂᕐᒪᑦ ᖃᓄᐃᓕᐅᕆᐊᖅᑲᕐᓂᕐᒥᓂᒃ.

Yes, recently, because I live here in Ottawa, and people know that I work here, I do meet with expecting women, and women in post- and pre-natal care ... because of that, one time while I was at home, I got a call from a lady who was in labour ... she said her water broke that morning ... and here I was, off work. Once I got there, she got up, and told me she was indeed in labour. We went to the hospital, and within less than an hour she delivered. That went well, because she used what she was taught by us, staff, so it tells me our work is very helpful.

Audio Clip 3

MF: Please give an example of how you use Inuit cultural knowledge and practices in assisting births today.

ᑕᕝᕙᓃᓛᒃ ᐃᓄᖕᓂᒃ ᑕᑯᑲᑕᐃᓐᓇᖅᑲᑦᑕᕋᑦᑕ, ᐃᓄᐃᓐᓇᕐᓄᑦ ᑐᕌᖕᒐᓇᓱᒃᑲᑦᑕᕋᑦᑕ, ᓴᖅᑭᑎᑦᓯᓚᐅᕐᑐᒍᑦ ᕿᕐᓕᕐᑐᒥᒃ (CD),ᒥᒃ. ᑕᐃᓐᓇ ᓲᕐᓗ ᐱᔾᔪᑎᒋᓐᖑᐊᕐᕙᒍ, ᓇᔾᔨᓂᖕᒐᓂ ᑖᓐᓇ ᐊᕐᓇᖅ ᐅᖅᑲᐅᔾᔪᐃᒃᑲᓐᓂᕋᓱᒃᑐᖅ ᕿᕐᓕᕐᑐᒥ ᑖᓐᓇ ᐅᖅᑳᓚᒃᑲᒥ...ᐃᓄᒃᑎᑐᑦᓕ ᐃᓐᓇᕐᒥᒃ ᑐᓴᕈᒪᓂᖕᓴᐅᓱᒍᒐᑦᑕ, ᑕᐃᓐᓇ ᕿᕐᓕᕐᑐᖅ ᐊᑑᑎᖅᑲᓂᕐᐸᖕᔫᓯᒪᔪᖅ ᐃᖅᑲᓇᐃᔭᕐᕕᑦᑎᓐᓂ, ᐊᑐᐃᓐᓇᐅᑦᓗᓂᓗ.

Since our clients are all Inuit, we try our best to have our services and resources be designed for Inuit and available for Inuit, and we have developed a CD to help them. In this CD, an Inuk elder is explaining about healthy living, etc. … It is educational and awareness material that we developed to help young women to understand more about pregnancy ... because we Inuit, we are more tuned to listen to our elders ... therefore this CD has been most useful in our work, and it is available.

Audio Clip 4

MF: Do you feel there are any conflicts between your cultural knowledge and practices and Western midwifery knowledge and practices? Please describe. (Examples: food; positions; exercise etc.)

ᖃᐅᔨᓯᒪᔭᒃᑯᑦ, ᐊᑐᕐᓯᒪᔭᒃᑯᑦ, ᐃᓄᐃᑦ ᓂᕿᖏᑦ ᐊᑐᕐᑕᐅᓂᕐᐹᖑᓯᒪᔪᐃᑦ ᐊᐅᖕᒍᑦᑐ ᐱᐅᓂᕐᓴᐅᒫᑕ. ᐅᕙᖓᓕ ᓲᕐᓗ ᓇᔾᔨᓪᓗᖓ ᐱᐅᒍᓐᓇᐃᕈᑎᔭᒃᑲᒪ ᐊᐅᐸᐃᓖᒃ. ᐃᓄᐃᑦ ᓂᕿᖓᓂᒃ ᖄᖓᑐᐃᓐᓇᖅ ᖃᐅᔨᒪᔪᑐᐃᓐᓇᕐᓂᑦ ᐋᑦᑎᕕᐅᖏᓐᓇᐅᔭᖃᑦᑕᓚᐅᕐᐳᖓ ᖃᓄᐃᖏᑦᓯᐊᕐᓗᖓ ᓇᔾᔨᓂᐊᕋᒪ. ᐃᓄᐃᑦ ᓂᕿᖏᑦ ᐊᓅᑎᖃᑦᑎᐊᕐᑐᐃᑦ ᓇᔾᔨᐊᒍᑦᑐ ᓇᔾᔨᔪᒍᑦᑐ. ᐊᑐᐃᓐᓇᐅᔭᕆᐊᓖᑦ. ᐋᑐᕗᐊᒥᐅᑕᐅᓚᓗᐊᕈᑦᑕ ᑕᑉᐹᓂᕐᒥᐅᑕᐅᓚᓗᐊᕈᑦᑕ, ᓇᓂᕐᒥᐅᑕᐅᓚᓗᐊᕈᑦᑕ ᐊᑐᐃᓐᓇᖅᑕᖃᕆᐊᖃᖅᑐᖅ ᓇᔾᔨᔪᓄᑦ. ᐅᖃᒃᑲᓐᓂᕈᒪᔪᖓ ᓲᕐᓗ ᐋᑐᕗᐊᒥᐅᑕᐅᓪᓗᖓ, ᐃᓐᓇᕐᑕᖃᐅᓲᒍᒻᒪᑦ ᑕᒫᓂ, ᑕᑉᐸᖕᓗᕐᑐᒥᓪᓘᓐᓃᑦ ᐃᓄᖕᒥᒃ, ᐃᕐᓂᓱᒃᓯᓂᕐᒥᒃ ᖃᐅᔨᒪᑦᑎᐊᕐᓱᑎᒃ, ᓲᖃᐃᒻᒪᓕ ᓘᑦᑖᕐᑕᖃᐅᕋᒥᒃ ᑕᒫᓂ ᖃᓂᒪᔪᑎᑐᑦ ᓇᑦᓚᖓᑐᐃᓐᓇᕐᑐᑎᑐᑦ ᐃᕐᓂᑎᑕᐅᓲᒍᓕᕐᒪᑕ, ᐊᑯᓂᐅᒃᑲᓐᓂᓕᕐᔪᓂᓗ ᑖᓐᓇ ᐃᕐᓂᓱᒃᑕᖓ. ᑕᕝᕙ ᐃᓄᖕᓂᒃ ᐃᕐᓂᓱᒃᓯᔪᖃᕈᓂ ᕿᓚᒻᒥᐅᑎᑦᑎᑲᓐᓂᕐᓴᐅᓗᑎᒃᑦᓗ, ᖃᓂᒻᒪᓯᐅᖏᒻᒪᑦ.

In my experience, or from what I've seen, is that Inuit food has been used the most and it is the best, in our culture. When I am pregnant I usually have low iron, so that has helped me a lot. People brought me Inuit traditional food whenever they could, so I would have good pregnancy. Inuit food is very nutritious for both the mother and a baby. Country food should always be available. Whether you live up north or in Ottawa, Inuit food should always be available for expectant mothers. I'd like to add by saying, that since I came to live in Ottawa, there are elders that come and live here who are very knowledgeable about midwifery. But there are doctors or caregivers who have no knowledge about Inuit ways, and there are doctors in the South who treat pregnancy as an illness, who tell women to lay down, take it easy etc. so at the end a woman has a long labour. Where as if they were using traditional ways, they would have delivered very quickly, because we don't treat it like a sickness.