Journal

Indigenous Birth Knowledge and Stories for My Baby

This book belongs to:

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Year: _____

If found, please contact me at:

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About the Journal

Why did we create this journal?

Along with our Indigenous languages, cultures, traditions and stories, much of our Indigenous birth knowledge has been lost or interrupted. These things are a key part of strengthening Indigenous cultural identity for our next generation. In an effort to reclaim this knowledge, Seventh Generation Midwives Toronto (SGMT) and Well Living House have gathered birth year teachings from different Grandmothers, Elders, and Knowledge Keepers, who fought to keep these stories alive. This book was prepared so we can share them with families who are preparing for the birth of their own child.

What is included in this journal?

This journal contains some of the traditional teachings we have gathered. Most of the stories we have included are from nations that are rooted in the lands in and around Toronto. Journal users are also encouraged to seek out additional cultural knowledge from family members and knowledge keepers from their nation.

Many of our communities are in an active process cultural recovery, but many families still do not have access to our beautiful and empowering birth year teachings. We know that sometimes cultural recovery has been linked to historic trauma or has been hard in other ways. In our teachings, babies are central to our societies. We hope to reclaim some of this knowledge as a way to help our families and communities today.

The teachings and stories on pregnancy and childbearing are told through many different voices or from a perspective of Indigenous

communities in the past. They may not make as much sense for the way that some families and individuals today live. In this journal, we aim to be as inclusive as possible to all Indigenous families, including two-spirited people, those without partners and those who may be struggling with basic material needs, mental health or addictions. We encourage you will engage with these stories and teachings in a way that makes sense and feels good to you.

How to use this journal?

You are encouraged to personalize your journal as a kind of "Baby Book". It is based on the lunar calendar and set up for parents and caregivers to record events, plans, and dreams that they find meaningful. Each month has space for you to write thoughts, create images, add photos and write down any other insights you have on your journey.

Start by entering the number of weeks pregnant you are in the lunar calendar month you are currently in. There is additional space at the end to write about your birth story, ceremonies, milestones, or other information that may be part of you and your baby's journey. You may also use this journal in another way that makes best sense to you. We hope you enjoy it!

Introduction

The Anishinabek Lunar Calendar

Women from many of cultures have noted the similarity of menstrual cycles to the moon cycle. The lunar calendar has thirteen months lasting 28 days, or four 7-day weeks, marking the new, waxing (half), full, and waning (half) moons. Thirteen of these months is 364 days. The traditional Anishinabek calendar year follows a similar thirteen-moon lunar cycle. Women's identity and power were closely connected to and honoured by this lunar cycle.

This journal is organized according to the 13 moons of the Anishinabek lunar calendar. It begins with Spirit Moon in the month of January and continues through to December, ending with a 13th month, Big Spirit Moon. Included are teachings for each moon cycle, with stories and traditional knowledge about conception, pregnancy, women as life-givers, birth, and caring for your infant.

The Anishinabek named each lunar cycle according to the seasonal changes that come with it. This was to remind our communities when the best time for harvesting, hunting, gathering, and ceremonies was. The calendar shows the deep connections between the moon cycles and the plant and animal life on Turtle Island. These beliefs are shared among many Indigenous nations; however, the names of each moon cycle varies between and sometimes within nations. Within the Anishnabek Nation, the moon is called Nabageesis, Grandmother Moon. It was believed that as she watches over all the waters of the Earth, like women watch over the waters of the people and those of her own body.

Grandmother Moon controls all female life and many Indigenous women often refer to menstruation as their 'moontime', because of how the moon cycles and their cycles of menstruation are similar. Being on one's moontime is considered sacred and can be a ceremony. During a woman's moontime many believe she is being cleansed mentally, emotionally, physically, and spiritually as her body prepares for new life. It is a powerful time in a woman's cycle when she is thought to be closest to Creator. It was often a time for women to take part in reflection and renewal by resting and taking care of their minds, bodies, and spirits.

Participating in full-moon ceremonies reflects the sacredness of our moontime and can support healing and recovery.

Learning from Oral Histories

Often relayed by Grandmothers, Elders, and traditional Knowledge Keepers, storytelling is the way in which First Nations, Inuit, and Métis cultures have passed on knowledge from generation to generation. Storytelling is based on the oral traditions of our people and includes the community's worldview and belief systems. Our stories hold knowledge on creation, history, gender, values, customs, laws and ceremony that are sometimes thousands of years old.

Sadly, the impacts of colonialism on Indigenous people are huge. For centuries, Canada used policies to assimilate us, dishonoured the treaties, and outlawed Indigenous spiritual traditions. Many of our traditional laws and governance systems as well as the passing on of traditional birth knowledge is at risk of becoming lost. A major method of assimilation was to force generations of Indigenous children to attend Residential Schools. Later, child welfare practices such as the

"60's scoop" further removed children from their families, lands, and culture. In school, our languages, stories, knowledge, histories, and traditions were silenced. The need to preserve and revitalize our oral traditions and stories, and to reclaim our identity and knowledge, has become even more important.

Our Knowledge Keepers, storytellers, and Elders hold an honoured and respected place in our communities because they help to ensure our traditions and culture are passed on to our children. The teachings in our stories gives us guidance at all stages of life. Instructions and a path for how to live a good, fulfilled, and balanced life are often included. The stories they tell are told with great care and respect.

This collection of stories and teachings has been gathered from a variety of resources, including research with Elders and readings in published books and articles. Many of the teachings are first-hand accounts, as told by the storytellers, while others are told from the perspective of the listener reflecting on the stories. Some are long stories while other teachings are gathered from parts of the stories. The wisdom in these stories and teachings may include many different languages, traditions, practices, and ceremonies.

There are short biographies for each of the Knowledge Keepers in the back of the book, including the Indigenous Nation of the storytellers. To learn more about teachings from your own nation, we encourage you to reach out to local Elders, Healers, or Knowledge Keepers and ask them to share their knowledge with you. Sometimes they are even members of our own family.

Approaching a Traditional Healer, Elder, or Knowledge Keeper

As our awareness and knowledge of our traditions and culture increases, so does our honour and respect for these ways. Many Indigenous Elders teach that tobacco was one of the four sacred medicines given by the Creator to many First Nations, along with cedar, sage and sweetgrass. Many Indigenous people have been using traditional tobacco for thousands of years for ceremonial or sacred rituals, relationship building, knowledge exchange, and healing and purifying. Some Indigenous communities do not use tobacco at all, and some use a unique blend of tobacco and other herbs based on traditional practices. Seventh Generation Midwives of Toronto (SGMT) houses the sacred medicines and are happy to share with community members when requested.

Individuals seeking knowledge, guidance, or healing can consider approaching a respected Healer, Elder, or Knowledge Keeper and tobacco can be given as an offering for respectful knowledge exchange. If you do not have traditional tobacco it is also acceptable to use pouch of tobacco or loose tobacco wrapped in cloth (called a tobacco tie). Talk to the Healer or Elder explaining why you have come to them; be yourself; many of us share a similar journey of learning and reconnecting to our cultural knowledge.

Acknowledgements

The Thirteen Grandmother Moon Teachings **that mark the beginning of each month** are by Arlene Barry, from her series of teachings, "Kinoomaadiewinan Anishinaabe Bimaadinzinwin".

Other Grandmother moontime and full moon ceremony teachings are used with permission from Anishnawbe Health Toronto, with special acknowledgement to the following Knowledge Keepers and Elders: Jake Aguonia, Garnett Councillor, Harlan Down Wind, Roger Jones, Rose Logan, Mary Louie, Dorothy Sam, Nelson (SugarBear) Shognosh, Geraldine Standup and Ella Waukey.

In the spirit of cultural rebirth, we acknowledge the work of four of the young Indigenous women who helped us find these stories and teachings in hard to find books and journals. Chii Meegwetch to Genevieve Blais (Oneida of the Thames Nation), Nicole Wemigwans (Serpent River First Nation), Hannah Schreck (Dene), and Celina Nahanni (Dehcho Dene), and to the following individuals that also helped put this book together: Rebeka Tabobondung (Ojibway), Melody Morton Ninomiya (Japanese-Mennonite), Dr. Janet Smylie (Métis), Sara Wolfe (Ojibway), Michelle Firestone (Polish), Raglan Maddox (Modewa Clan, Papua New Guinea), and Mackenzie Churchill (European).

Chii Miigwetch to Métis visual artist Christi Belcourt for use of "Honouring My Spirit Helpers", the beautiful artwork used in this journal.

Chii Miigwetch, Big Thanks to all the Grandmothers who kept these stories for us to learn from and pass down to our children.

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Spirit Moon January

The first moon of Creation is Spirit Moon, manifested through the Northern Lights. It is considered a time to honour the silence and acknowledge our connection within all of Great Mystery's creatures.

Honouring the First Moon Time

"In the past, when a young woman had her first moon time her aunts or grandmothers would take her to a small lodge where she would be close to the natural world. The young woman is sacred at that time. She is now able to give life. She would be given the teachings about her new life from her mother, grandmothers, or aunts. She would be taught about her role as a woman in the community. This is also a time for fasting and learning about the beauty and strength of women. Some women also go on a berry fast at this time, honouring life and our sacred berries. These ceremonies still exist with Tribes and families keeping this tradition. It teaches us that all women are to be respected and honoured." (Anishnawbe Health Toronto, Moontime [Brochure])

How do you feel about your moon time? In what ways do you connect to moon time?

These are my

of pregnancy.

My baby is

old.

Preparation of the Body for its Role in Creation

"Mohawk herbalist Jan Longboat has always thought of health in terms of revering the sacredness of the body. She told me that her mother taught her respect for the female body by speaking about its role in creation: 'Mother always used to talk about preparation. Preparation of the body to give life. And I started to think about that at puberty, really. She was very conscious about keeping healthy to give life.' This thinking inspired healthy eating something which Longboat contends was more prevalent among women when they were more aware of their role in creation. For Longboat, the female body is 'gifted' because of the ability to give life, and this gift must be handled with the utmost care." (Anderson, 2000, p. 195)"

Excerpt from Kim Anderson's (Cree and Métis), "A Recognition of Being: Reconstructing Native Womanhood."

In what ways do you want to try to take care of your body in preparation for motherhood? Are there other things that you can do to honour your role in Creation?

These are my

of pregnancy.

My baby is

old.

Women as the Doorways to the Spirit World

"Our bodies are the doorways through which human beings come from the spirit world to this one, and that capacity and power in that moment of birth is available to us as women, as families, as relatives, to find our strength and wisdom and the stories of the people." (Cook, 2000, para. 23)

Excerpt from Katsi Cook's (Mohawk), "Into Our Hands."

In what ways do you consider birth as empowering?

Women Give Life

"'They talk about women and the ability to give life; that it is like the Creator. The Creator gives life, and women are like that. They give life. You can't get much better than that really!' If we can reclaim the traditional notion of woman as life-giver, we can reclaim a vital sense of our power. Whether we eventually give birth or not is not important; it is the symbol of life-giver that is significant." (Anderson, 2000, p. 164)

Excerpt from Barbra Nahwegahbow (Ojibway) from Kim Anderson's (Cree and Métis), "A Recognition of Being: Reconstructing Native Womanhood."

What would a symbol of life-giver look like to you?

my sketch

These are my

_____ to _____ WEEKS

of pregnancy.

My baby is

_____ WEEKS

old.

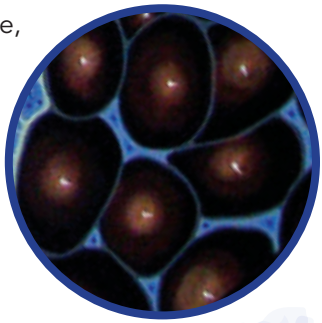
Bear Moon February

The second moon of Creation is Bear Moon, when we honour the vision quest that began in the fall. During this time, we discover how to see beyond reality and to communicate through energy rather than sound.

Preparation

"There was at one time a two-year period of preparation before a couple would try to conceive a child. One only entered into this process after establishing a partnership that was suitable for raising children. This time period would start with the couple making an offering of tobacco at one of the (Iroquois) seasonal ceremonies, such as mid-winter, strawberry, green corn, or harvest. You say, 'Okay. We are going to make this commitment now, to bring new life into the world. And so one mid-winter goes by, and by the time the second mid-winter has passed, two years have gone by. Twenty-six moons.' During the course of these two years, a couple has many things to consider. […]

"You start to learn with other people's children. You start to learn by practice. You give things up; you sacrifice things as a couple because now you can't just run out to the coffee house at ten o'clock, because they smoke there, and you can't drag the baby in it. You learn to communicate. You learn some songs. You talk about names. You know what the clan is. And you talk about how the child is going to be raised.



The couple must also ask themselves, 'Who is going to support this child?' This involved thinking about the extended family relationships that they will build upon or create. Traditional support mechanisms involve giving tobacco to aunties and uncles as a means of asking them to take responsibility for the child.

"'You have got to be as creative and imaginative about where that child is going to walk as possible. And so that is another reason why they say you offer your tobacco and you wait all this time.' According to the tradition, life is sacred also involves developing a relationship with spirit, so that you are prepared to call the new life when it is time. Aboriginal people will often say that we choose our parents when we come from the spirit world. Maracle points out that the two-year contemplation period enables parents to 'create the relationship so that the spirit you call knows who the parents are.' This involves learning to be honest about who we are, both with ourselves and with others." (Anderson, 2000, p. 197)

Excerpts from Sylvia Maracle (Mohawk) and Kim Anderson (Cree and Métis) in Anderson's "A Recognition of Being: Reconstructing Native Womanhood."

Are you able to list the family, friends and community members that you would like to have in your circle of supports?

These are my

_____ to _____ WEEKS

of pregnancy.

My baby is

_____ WEEKS

old.

Parenting Today

"Parenting today is very difficult. Everything seems to be more complicated as more of our First Nations families are breaking up. Nevertheless, we have to try and bring up our children the best we can. Our ancestors did not have to worry about the same issues and concerns as do current families. Clearly, we cannot live in the past, but we can continue to use the aspects of our culture and adapt them to modern day situations. We can discover and relearn how our ancestors raised their children and respect the values of our traditions. Fortunately, we still have some Elders who have been raised traditionally and, if we are wise, we will seek their advice before it is too late." (Safarik, 1998b, p. 78)

Excerpt from the Kisēwātotātowin: Aboriginal Parenting Manual.

In what ways do you make the spirit of your little one feel wanted?

Conception

"Some people say that spirit comes somewhere in that nine months, but I believe that spirit is there right away. Because we talk about making that spirit feel wanted, that we want that spirit here. We don't wait for like three months. You know when you are three months along, then there's a spirit and you start taking care of it. There's some people that have different opinions, but that's my opinion, that spirit comes at conception and we need to take care of it as such, as life." (Pegahmagabow as cited in Tabobondung, 2008, p. 128)

Excerpt from Faith Pegahmagabow (Oneida and Delaware) in Rebeka Tabobondung's (Wasauksing First Nation), "Women Sharing Strength For All Generations: Aboriginal Birth Knowledge and New Media Creation."

In what ways can you nurture spirit today?

Pregnancy as Sacred

"A pregnant woman was a very medicinal woman because she's carrying a new life inside her. As well as bringing the gift of new life to the community, a pregnant woman also brings political and spiritual insight that she might not otherwise be tuned into in which the community can benefit from. If there was a difficult decision coming on the reserve they'd approach this young pregnant woman and they'd ask her for her advice…they'd offer her tobacco. It's not that she ever encountered anything like that, but you know the advice that comes out of her, really helped those people." (Anderson as cited in Tabobondung, 2008, p. 128)

Excerpt from Marie Anderson (Ojibway) in Rebeka Tabobondung's (Wasauksing First Nation), "Women Sharing Strength For All Generations: Aboriginal Birth Knowledge and New Media Creation."

Have you noticed any new things or ways of understanding so far during your pregnancy or caregiving journey?

These are my

of pregnancy.

My baby is

old.

Spirit Moon March

The third moon of Creation is Sugar Moon. As the maple sap begins to run, we learn of one of the main medicines given to the Anishnabek which balances our blood, and heals us. During this time, we are encouraged to balance our lives as we would our blood sugar levels, by using Divine Law.

Tobacco Offering

"A pregnant woman would get up every morning and offer tobacco to Gzhe-mnidoo (Great Spirit) for this life that you're carrying, and ask for help to take care of that in the best way that you can." (Pegahmagabow as cited in Tabobondung, 2008, p. 130)

Excerpt from Faith Pegahmagabow (Oneida and Delaware) in Rebeka Tabobondung's (Wasauksing First Nation), "Women Sharing Strength For All Generations: Aboriginal Birth Knowledge and New Media Creation."

What are some of the ways you can ask for help during the pregnancy or after the birth?

These are my

_____ to _____ WEEKS

of pregnancy.

My baby is

_____ WEEKS

old.

Midwives

"As soon as this girl became pregnant someone would come to her in a dream. The dream was considered to be a gift, which would instruct the woman, 'You go and see someone, you tell them that you're going to be having a baby and she is the one that is chosen to help you.' So she takes her tobacco over there and goes and visits. And she tells them that: 'you came into my dream, you are the one whose been chosen to help me,' and she presents her tobacco. My mother did this in return. If there was a baby going to be born, that woman would approach her with tobacco and ask her: Do you think you could come and help me when my baby's born? And she was right there. The relationship between the midwife and pregnant mother starts right almost at the beginning of the pregnancy. The midwife shares important knowledge with the mother to be and watched over this girl and tells her everything she must do in order to maintain a healthy pregnancy. The close attention and teachings imparted by the midwives led to easier births and when childbirth came, they didn't need all those needles and stuff. For ten days, the midwife stayed with that girl. Ten days, for that whole time she taught her everything about the baby, everything that she was taught she handed down." (Tabobondung, 2008, pp. 126-127)

Excerpt from Marie Anderson (Ojibway) in Rebeka Tabobondung's (Wasauksing First Nation), "Women Sharing Strength For All Generations: Aboriginal Birth Knowledge and New Media Creation."

Who is providing your pregnancy care? What were the reasons you choose them?

These are my

_____ to _____ WEEKS

of pregnancy.

My baby is

_____ WEEKS

old.

Pregnancy is a Sacred Time

"In his reflections about new life, Mosôm Danny shared stories about how healthy communities began with care and celebration of each individual from the earliest stages. He pointed out that pregnancy was generally considered a sacred time; a time to honour the spirit that was coming as well as the mother who carried that spirit. Danny learned this from his grandparents, who told stories about a time when communities used to fully invest in the well-being of pregnant women.

"'In those days, they had a big celebration when a woman got pregnant,' he said. 'Everybody knew about it. Everybody wanted to be part and parcel of that child within that womb. The child had to have a sense of belonging through the mother, and the woman had to have a sense of pride because she was contributing to the life of the community. She was bringing in new life, and she was treated special.'" (Anderson, 2011, pp. 42-43)

Excerpt from Kim Anderson's (Cree and Métis), "Life Stages and Native Women: Memory, Teachings, and Story Medicine."

How have you or loved ones celebrated your pregnancy?

my sketch

These are my

_____
to
_____
WEEKS

of pregnancy.

My baby is

_____
WEEKS

old.

Sucker Moon April

The fourth moon of Creation is Sucker Moon, when sucker goes to the Spirit World in order to receive cleansing techniques for this world. When it returns to this realm, it purifies a path for the Spirits and cleanses all our water-beings. During this time we can learn to become healers.

Madjimadzuin the 'Moving Life'

"Midwives, and older women in general, had a significant role in overseeing how new life came to northern Algonquian peoples. Although not as valued as they had once been, midwives carried authority into the 1950s until hospital or doctor-assisted births began to take over in Native communities. All of the historian participants I met with were delivered by a community midwife, in many cases their grandmothers or another female relative. Yet the authority of these women was not simply a question of catching babies. In the greater scheme of things, it was about maintaining madjimadzuin, the 'moving life' or the human Milky Way, which began with responsibilities around family planning." (Anderson, 2011, p. 40)

Excerpt from Kim Anderson's (Cree and Métis), "Life Stages and Native Women: Memory, Teachings, and Story Medicine."

Who are your midwives/pregnancy care providers?

_____

_____

What are some helpful things your Midwives/pregnancy care providers have shared?

_____

_____

_____

These are my

of pregnancy.

My baby is

old.

Children with Disabilities

"Faith discussed the value of children born with disabilities and how they brought with them teachings related to their disability. 'We had special children and they were our teachers in life, to teach us whatever it was that afflicted them.' Faith pointed out that, 'nowadays women can go have tests early in pregnancy, and if it's found that they're at risk to have a downs baby or spinabifida baby, they can terminate that pregnancy before so many weeks.' Faith explained the traditional understanding imparted to her is that 'they bring that life as fan along as they can then it's the Creators will. If that child dies shortly after birth than that's probably what the Creator planned for, if there were no other influences on that baby's development.'" (Tabobondung, 2008, p. 175)

Excerpt from Faith Pegahmagabow (Oneida and Delaware) in Rebeka Tabobondung's (Wasauksing First Nation), "Women Sharing Strength For All Generations: Aboriginal Birth Knowledge and New Media Creation."

How can partners, caregivers and other support people provide support in a good way?

Nesting

"Things that pregnant women should be doing include picking medicines and harvesting food, all that nesting stuff. In the past it would have been picking all your birch bark, picking all your sweet grass, all your medicines that you'll need, even probably gathering firewood. Harmony remarked that responsibilities for women today include 'getting the stuff that you'll need together, making stuff for the baby, like those first pair of moccasins, and making gifts for a giveaway to people that you're going to invite to become sponsors for those babies.'" (Tabobondung, 2008, p. 139)

Excerpt from Harmony Rice (Potawatomi) in Rebeka Tabobondung's (Wasauksing First Nation), "Women Sharing Strength For All Generations: Aboriginal Birth Knowledge and New Media Creation."

How are you nesting and preparing for your baby?

my sketch

These are my

_____
to
_____
WEEKS

of pregnancy.

My baby is

_____
WEEKS

old.

Flower Moon May

The fifth moon of Creation is Flower Moon, where all plants display their Spirit sides for all the world to see. This life giving energy is one the most powerful healing medicines on Mother Earth. During this moon we are encouraged to explore our Spiritual essences.

Maintaining Balance

"The values of balance in all aspects of life and relationships was reiterated frequently by the women interviewed. This balance included the relationship between humans and the natural world; between community members; between men and women and between the spiritual, emotional, intellectual, and physical parts of the self.

"Women were responsible for ensuring a healthy pregnancy, labour, and newborn by maintaining balance within their emotional and physical aspects of themselves through exercise, nutrition, and avoiding stressful situations. They shared the responsibility of maintaining the spiritual wellbeing of their unborn children with the fathers and the general community. Faith explained that a pregnant woman is responsible 'for being in a good frame of mind,' because a baby in utero can be affected and influenced by its parent's emotions and experiences." (Tabobondung, 2008, p. 136)

Excerpt from Faith Pegahmagabow (Oneida and Delaware) in Rebeka Tabobondung's (Wasauksing First Nation), "Women Sharing Strength For All Generations: Aboriginal Birth Knowledge and New Media Creation."

What helps you to keep balance in your life?

What does balance in your life look like?

my sketch

These are my

_____ to _____ WEEKS

of pregnancy.

My baby is

_____ WEEKS

old.

Singing to your Baby

"The expectant mother was also told to talk and sing to her baby while in the womb so that the baby would feel the love and kindness the mother had for her child. The most important teachings during pregnancy are kindness, respect, happiness, love, cleanliness, sharing, strength, hope, and good child rearing." (Safarik, 1998a, p.14)

Excerpt from the *Kisēwātotātowin:* Aboriginal Parenting Handbook.

What song(s) do you sing to your Baby?

A Pregnant Woman Carries the Future Generations

"The knowledge that is carried by midwives is a part of the connection that we have from the Eastern door, which represents the prenatal time, birth and new life, to the Western door, which represents the passing of life from our body, and journey of our spirit into the next world. When I think of the connection we have with the sky world to the land we are born on, I think of Sky Woman and the creation of Turtle Island. Sky Woman brings with her everything she needs, including new life and the seeds of a new generation of people and nourishment.

"As Sky Woman falls through the opening in the sky, I think of the fertilized ovum that has travelled first as an egg from the ovaries and through the fallopian tubes to be fertilized and into the sky world of the uterus where it falls softly into the nourishing landscape of the uterus. From there as women our bodies create the placenta and waters that both sustain life and protect the growing baby.

"From my teachings one of the most important things is that the pregnant woman must be treated with respect and dignity. As a water carrier, she carries the future generations and nations within her. As a community we have a responsibility to support and to nourish women so that babies are born healthy into a strong and vibrant community of Indigenous people across Turtle Island." (E. Blais, personal communication, August 2, 2017)

Excerpt from an interview with Ellen Blais (Oneida), Indigenous health advocate and midwife.

What would a picture or symbol of future generations look like to you?

my sketch

Strawberry Moon June

The sixth moon of Creation is Strawberry Moon. The medicine of the strawberry is reconciliation. It was during this moon cycle that communities usually held their annual feasts, welcoming everyone home, regardless of their differences over the past year, letting go of judgment and/or self-righteousness.

Strawberry Teachings

"The strawberry plant is considered to be a woman's medicine in most Indigenous cultures. It is used to teach young women about creation, community, and love. As Ojibwe Elder Liza Mosher teaches, a young woman fasts from strawberries and other berries for a full year when she gets her first menstrual cycle. During this year, she spends time with grandmothers who teach her about her womanhood and how to bring life into the world. She also gathers berries, which she will present to her community when she completes her fast. Hence, she learns how to care for and sustain her people." (Wabano Centre for Aboriginal Health, 2015, p. 9)

Excerpt from the Wabano Centre for Aboriginal Health's "Building Strong Foundations."

Translating Our Traditions

"[Our] traditions instill responsibility in Native men who are expecting to be fathers. Although it may no longer be relevant for many men to observe things like hunting taboos, we can translate most of these traditions to suit our contemporary lifestyles. In her work with Aboriginal teens, Sylvia Maracle advises the young parents to abstain from watching violent movies or engaging in violent behaviour, not to stay out late at night, drink, or engage in any other type of behaviour that would be difficult or unfitting for either the father or his pregnant partner. These expectations are drawn from our spiritual understanding that what either the male or female parent ingests will be taken in by the unborn. These teachings connect the father to the child and encourage him to make the practical changes in his lifestyle that will be necessary to undertake an active parenting role. Jan Longboat learned from her grandmother that the traditional parenting role of the man was to be a 'helper' to the woman: 'I used to listen to my grandma, who was a midwife. She always said our belief was that it was the responsibility of the man to be in calling distance to the woman…It wasn't that the man had to be right beside her all the time, but within calling distance of need. That was the concept of being in the supportive role to women.'" (Anderson, 2000, pp. 206-207)

Excerpt from Kim Anderson's (Cree and Métis), "A Recognition of Being: Reconstructing Native Womanhood."

Are there traditions that are meaningful to you?

my sketch

These are my

_____ to _____ WEEKS

of pregnancy.

My baby is

_____ WEEKS

old.

Father's (or Partner's) Role

"Faith indicated that 'the father is supposed to be talking to that baby in utero.' In order to communicate love and cultural knowledge he talks 'about its clan family about the clan songs, talking to it in the language, telling it about what its life is going to be like when it gets here and how much it's loved and how much it's wanted.' According to Faith, 'that child is learning right from conception and that child hears everything that is going on outside and so that's why you treat it and its mother in a good way.' Faith elaborated that the father's responsibility was to 'treat the mother in a good way, and she looks after herself too, but she shouldn't have any worries.'" (Tabobondung, 2008, pp. 140-141)

Excerpt from Faith Pegahmagabow (Oneida and Delaware) in Rebeka Tabobondung's (Wasausking First Nation), "Women Sharing Strength For All Generations: Aboriginal Birth Knowledge and New Media Creation."

Are there traditions or family knowledge that you wish to pass on to your child?

These are my

of pregnancy.

My baby is

old.

Drumming and Birth

"Faith noted that drumming and birthing are linked – 'There's a ceremony for when a drum comes and it comes in a birthing lodge and there's singing and dancing.' Faith elaborated that dancing and singing is 'a celebration of life so that it was an important part of the birthing process.' Faith explained that the reason that baby likes the drum is because it is also, 'the heartbeat of Mother Earth, that's what they're used to hearing because they're right under their mother's heart when they're growing for those nine months. So that's familiar to them so they're really drawn and attracted to that.'" (Tabobondung, 2008, p. 152)

Excerpt from Faith Pegahmagabow (Oneida and Delaware) in Rebeka Tabobondung's (Wasausking First Nation), "Women Sharing Strength For All Generations: Aboriginal Birth Knowledge and New Media Creation."

Are there songs, drumming or music that is meaningful for you and that you would like to pass on to your baby? What are they?

These are my

of pregnancy.

My baby is

old.

Raspberry Moon July

The seventh moon of Creation is Raspberry Moon, when great changes begin. By learning gentleness and kindness, we may pass through the thorns of its bush and harvest its fruit, knowledge that will help in raising our families.

Birth is Like the Sundance

"There are many Aboriginal ceremonies that simulate the birth experience, and Rajan's birth gave me insights about how extreme pain and/or physical exertion can stimulate spiritual epiphany. I don't believe we need to suffer to achieve transformation, but I now understand why many spiritual practices include physical challenge or deprivation. People fast, sweat, and dance in most Aboriginal traditions, and many of our ceremonies simulate birth. The sweat lodge is a womb-like place where we go to find birth and renewal. It can be mild or it can be difficult, but it always involves physical challenge and spiritual gain. The Sun Dance is a ceremony in which dancers labour for days, without sleep, without shelter, eventually tearing their flesh. Dancers thus make sacrifices for the community through total physical exertion. In the past, women did not dance or tear at the Sun Dance, and women did not always go into the sweat lodge. It was understood that women achieve cleansing and transformation through their own bodily cycles and experiences. Women's bodies allow for a coming together of the physical and meta-physical. Birth is the most powerful teacher of this sacred ability." (Anderson, 2006, p. 18)

Excerpt from Kim Anderson's (Cree and Métis) chapter in Memee Lavell-Harvard (Wikwemikong) and Jeannette Corbiere Lavell's (Ojibway; Wikwemikong) "Until Our Hearts Are on the Ground: Aboriginal Mothering, Oppression, Resistance and Rebirth."

What are your thoughts about birth?

Quiet Time

"When she first became a mother, Rebecca learned that quiet time in the newborn stage was important because of the precariousness of new life, and this was the reason for staying close to home with the newborn. 'My Elder explained that the spirit is pulsing inside the new baby,' Rebecca said. 'In order for the spirit to become secure, a mother needs to stay at home for six weeks, all the while maintaining a sense of peace. Over the six-week period, the spirit will eventually quiet and fill the child.'" (Anderson, 2011, p. 57)

Excerpt from Rebecca Martel (Métis) in Kim Anderson's (Cree and Métis), "Life Stages and Native Women: Memory, Teachings, and Story Medicine."

What is important for you in maintaining a sense of peace?

my sketch

These are my

_____ to _____ WEEKS

of pregnancy.

My baby is

_____ WEEKS

old.

Cedar Baths

"Harmony and Marie shared that one of the first ceremonies practiced for a newborn was being wrapped in cedar then given a warm cedar bath. Marie recalled her mother telling her, 'As soon as I was born they wrapped me up in a blanket and they covered me in cedar. She said they kept the cedar close to me, they cleaned me up, and they wrapped me in cedar again. Cedar was all over me.' Harmony explained 'there used to be a ceremony for when the baby lost his or her umbilical cord. That was when the baby would have their first bath.' Harmony explained that, 'once it fell off they would have a cedar bath ceremony and it would be in a bath with cedar water and cedar in it. The cedar would cleanse and purify the baby and also introduce that connection to the natural world to the baby and that relationship to the medicines as well.'" (Tabobondung, 2008, p. 158)

Excerpts from Marie Anderson (Ojibway) and Harmony Rice (Potawatomi) in Rebeka Tabobondung's (Wasauksing First Nation), "Women Sharing Strength For All Generations: Aboriginal Birth Knowledge and New Media Creation."

What were some of the special first things your baby has or you want them to experience?

These are my

of pregnancy.

My baby is

old.

Thimbleberry Moon August

The eighth moon of Creation is the Thimbleberry Moon, when we honour the Thimbleberry which produces an abundance of fruit once every three years. It was one of the first plants put on Mother Earth, and its purpose is to protect the Sacred Circle of Life by allowing us to recognize and understand the teachings that come from the Spirit World.

I-kicikawicik

"Elders believe some infants are slow in rhythm. They refer to them as 'I-kicikawicik' the relaxed people. Baby's are close to the spiritual world and can leave this one easily. Elders recommend that parents remain vigilant with their infants. Leave bedroom doors open, be observant, rely on your senses and look in on your infant." (Safarik, 1998a, p. 21)

Excerpt from the Kisēwātotātowin: Aboriginal Parenting Handbook.

What are ways to stay in tune with your newborn's needs?

Oskawawis

"Oskawawis means a new child in the Cree language. When a child is born it was important that the entire family right from the grandparents to the young siblings participated. Newborns were never left alone even when the mother went about her chores – she would carry the baby on her back. It was important that all the family especially the mother sing and talk with her baby."

Excerpt from the Kisēwātotātowin: Aboriginal Parenting Handbook.

Babies recognize the voices of those who were around them before they were born. What things do you talk to your baby about?

These are my

_____ to _____ WEEKS

of pregnancy.

My baby is

_____ WEEKS

old.

Naming Ceremony

"The women all expressed the value of providing a baby its Anishinaabeg name. For Faith, 'the most important thing is to ensure that that child is welcomed and that it has its Anishinaabeg name.' Faith explained that since a baby at birth cannot talk 'then it's the responsibility of the mother and father to find out what that child's name is; what name the Creator gave it.'

"Harmony explained that in the past, 'they used to say that it had to be as early as possible, that baby had to get its name.' Harmony explained that when a baby was born there would be a welcoming ceremony, 'sometimes almost immediately right after the birth, they would sing songs, and sometimes the name was already prepared, like the name would have come to the person that had already been asked to give the name and then sometimes it would be after they already had the baby, after the name giver met the baby. You know if you have somebody there who is talking to the baby after the birth, then that might be the time where they also acknowledge their name.'

"Faith described the importance of providing an Anishinaabeg name because it also imparts aspects of the child's spiritual identity. She explained how a baby's name is closely linked to its connection to the Creator and its relationship with the spirit world. It describes attributes of its spirit, which conveys the baby's life purpose: 'Our belief is that before conception, that child's spirit sits with the Creator and it's given instructions on what its life is going to be like when it comes here. And it's also told what it will do in its life here on earth and what its name is going to be.'

"Since babies and Elders maintain the closest connection with the spirit world, it is usually between them that communication on this level takes place. Faith elaborated how the 'grandmothers and

grandfathers are really instrumental in naming the welcoming of that child.' Faith commented that 'people got away from giving their children Anishinaabeg names or Indian names but now it's a practice that's coming back and it's getting stronger and stronger. I think that's really important for a child to know who it is by its name and by its clan.' According to all the participants, asking for a name is an important responsibility placed on the parents. Providing a name acknowledges and establishes an Anishinabek spiritual identity and purpose while also protecting the baby's vulnerable spirit. The name should be given to the child as soon after its birth as possible and parents are encouraged to offer tobacco to an Elder prior to the birth of the child." (Tabobondung, 2008, p. 148)

Excerpts from Faith Pegahmagabow (Oneida and Delaware) and Harmony Rice (Potawatomi) in Rebeka Tabobondung's (Wasauksing First Nation), "Women Sharing Strength For All Generations: Aboriginal Birth Knowledge and New Media Creation."

How are you preparing to name your baby, or what helped you choose your baby's name?

Corn Moon September

The ninth moon of Creation is the Corn Moon, during which time we learn about the cycle of life. Each cob of corn has thirteen rows of multi-coloured seeds which represent all the spirits waiting to begin their Earth Walk. These will be the future generations for whom we must prepare.

Nourishment

"Babies never developed allergies because breastfeeding was the only method of feeding. Our ancestors believed that this was the most important time for the mother and the baby to form a bonding that would last a lifetime. New-born babies were never left with baby sitters and even when the mothers went about doing their chores and berry picking, they would carry their babies on their backs. At the time of birth the midwife would take a piece of animal intestine and dip this in maple syrup which the new born baby would suckle. The maple syrup cleaned out the baby's stomach. Food in the form of soup was introduced to the baby anywhere from six to eight months, and gradually other foods such as meat. Elders advised mothers to feed their babies as their first food, teaspoons of soup that contained wild meat so that the baby would develop a taste for wild food." (Safarik, 1998b, p. 28)

Excerpt from the Kisēwātotātowin: Aboriginal Parenting Handbook.

What are your plans for feeding your baby?

These are my

of pregnancy.

My baby is

old.

Placenta Ceremony

"Harmony explained, 'with women who had just delivered babies, they would have a ceremony for the afterbirth of that baby.' Harmony explained how establishing identity and strong roots are also important to the ceremony, 'the purpose is so the baby would always stand really strong and always have really firmly planted feet in the world, and always have a relationship to the land where ever that child was in their life.' Harmony also discussed how location was also a significant aspect of the ceremony. 'They would take the afterbirth and they would take it to the community they were from and they would go and they would bury the after birth for that baby [there].' Harmony explained the purpose of locating the ceremony to a baby's home community is that as the child grew older it 'would always have that connection to home as well; to their home community. That is where they were born from and that is the land they came from.'" (Tabobondung, 2008, p. 162)

Excerpt from Harmony Rice (Potawatomi) in Rebeka Tabobondung's (Wasauksing First Nation), "Women Sharing Strength For All Generations: Aboriginal Birth Knowledge and New Media Creation."

What are the places that you feel most connected to?

Which place or places would you like your baby to be connected to?

Kisewatisiwin (Cree)
"Elders teach and practice Kitimakeyihtowin and Kisewitisiwin – which is love, kindness, and respect, the foundation on which children are reared and on which relationships are based. Kisāwētotētowin means having love, kindness, and respect for one another and the Elders tell us that what we do and say to each other is built on this foundation." (Safarik, 1998b, p. 24)

Excerpt from the Kisāwētotētowin: Aboriginal Parenting Handbook.

How will you show love, respect, and kindness to your baby?

How can you encourage the practice of Kitimakeyihtowin and Kisāwētotētowin in your family?

These are my

_____
to
_____
WEEKS

of pregnancy.

My baby is

_____
WEEKS

old.

my sketch

These are my

_____
to
_____
WEEKS

of pregnancy.

My baby is

_____
WEEKS

old.

Falling Leaves Moon October

The tenth moon of Creation is the Falling Leaves Moon, a time when Mother Earth is honoured with the grandest of colours. As all of Creation makes their offerings to her, we become aware of all the miracles of Creation before us and our spiritual energies are once again awakened.

Nabageesis

"Our connection to Nabageesis our Grandmother moon; she comes once a month; that's the same when our moon times come, once a month. The moon also controls how that water moves. She controls when are babies are born because she determines when that waters going to come so that baby can be born." (Pegahmagabow as cited in Tabobondung, 2008, p. 103)

Excerpt from Faith Pegahmagabow (Oneida and Delaware) in Rebeka Tabobondung's (Wasauksing First Nation), "Women Sharing Strength For All Generations: Aboriginal Birth Knowledge and New Media Creation."

What moon are you expecting your baby to be born during? What do you think your baby will be like?

These are my

_____ to _____ WEEKS

of pregnancy.

My baby is

_____ WEEKS

old.

Welcoming the Baby Ceremony

"Marie explained that the community really valued babies because they acknowledged that in the future 'these children are going to be our leaders of the community. They really valued that. And that's how come they used to put on big occasions for them, like a welcome feast when they're born, a welcoming naming ceremony.' Marie recalled her mother telling her stories about welcome feasts in the community and how they included conversing between community Elders and the baby. Marie pointed out the strong spiritual connection between babies and Elders, she said the main purpose for the conversing in the ceremony was 'they want to find out who this baby is.' After the feast begins, Marie shared, 'it's the Elders first that come around, they sit around with a young child standing beside them and it goes from Elder to a child, Elder to a child.' Marie explained that the child would be bundled up in hide and passed to the Elders: 'he travels from one Elder to the next Elder, sometimes he had presentations given to him like beads or a little pouch with tobacco in there, sweet grass. Whatever that little boy was presented he carried it over to the next Elder; and as he travels around the circle of that feast table, there is one Elder that little boy or girl will speak too. When they talk to this baby, sometimes this baby will just say two words, and the Elder will translate what this baby said.' Marie recalled her mother saying 'that little baby will look right at you, and he will tell that Elder where he came from; he will tell that Elder who he is; and what he's going to be doing. This is the true Nishnaabe way.'

"Describing the point of communication between baby and Elder, Marie recalled her mother sharing 'as this gift would pour in, all the people would stand up and the drum would start - as soon as that little baby starts to talk the drum would start beating.'

"The community held babies in very high regard based on the belief that Marie expressed 'when they come in to this world they're full of knowledge.' The purpose of the welcome feast was to connect and gain important insight from that knowledge which Marie reiterated ensured the feast and ceremony were held with extreme care 'everything has to be just so. This feast takes a long time it's just like a whole ceremony takes a long time.'

"According to Marie the main dishes served at the feast were 'wild meat and berries.' The welcome feast is also a time when gifts are presented to the baby and the community to express thanksgiving, appreciation, and assistance and according to Marie 'everybody came out with a little gift for the child.' She explained that boys were presented with a miniature 'axe or chisel; some of them are presented with bows and arrows. The girls are presented with a little bag or a piece of hide with craft material in there; leather, porcupine quills, birch bark, sweet grass. And it's all folded and it's tied in a ribbon. Some of them receive expensive earrings or a beautiful necklace and this goes in her little bag as she travels along.' The gifts held purpose and were meant to empower the child and her life as she grew. Marie indicated that the individual autonomy a child held over the gifts he received as they were 'all put into a leather bag and they are never to be opened again until he opens that bag himself."(Tabobondung, 2008, pp. 167-168)

Excerpt from Marie Anderson (Ojibway) in Rebeka Tabobondung's (Wasauksing First Nation), "Women Sharing Strength For All Generations: Aboriginal Birth Knowledge and New Media Creation."

Do you have any special ways you want your baby to be welcomed when they are born?

These are my

_____
to
_____
WEEKS

of pregnancy.

My baby is

_____
WEEKS

old.

Our Connections to the Land

"Marie talked about how the umbilical cord created a connection between the child and the land, based on what she had heard from her Elders. They put [the cord] into a little piece of hide and they tie it with sinew and then they go and approach this tree. They go down to this clear lake - not a place where there are cottages. This person walks around with this in their hand and when this tree speaks to them, 'Ahniin,' that's where this person stops. Then that tree will converse with the person that's got this umbilical cord in their left hand. It's supposed to be a very young girl or an Elder that carries this, and the tree tells this person about the life and the journey of the baby. In a lot of cases, it's the tree that gives this person an idea of what the Anishinaabe name of that child will be. I have heard that part too. What they do is they dig down quite a bit and if you can find the root, that's where this cord goes. You put it under the root and cover it back up. You put some Sema tobacco there. In this practice, the cord establishes a connection between the lifelong journey of the child, the young and old of the community, and the land."
(Anderson, 2011, pp. 51-52)

Excerpt from Marie Anderson (Ojibway) in Kim Anderson's (Cree and Métis), "Life Stages and Native Women: Memory, Teachings, and Story Medicine."

How will I teach my child about their connection to the land?

Sponsors

"Marie and Faith shared their understandings of the concepts of godparents, also referred to as sponsors. Both women refer to how aspects of this tradition have changed but still continue on in different forms today. Marie explained, 'today when a child is born there are godparents. It wasn't like that in those days. They claim that the first man that walked in when that child was born, that was the godparent and the same thing with the woman. The first woman that entered that house when this child is born, she was the godmother.' Marie explained this man and woman had a special responsibility to care for the wellbeing of the child as well as celebrate their significant milestones and achievements through ceremony. 'If it was a young boy, when he first went out and made a kill for deer, they'd have a ceremony for him. When he'd catch his first fish, which was very small, they taught them very young, they'd have a ceremony for that.'

"Faith discussed how the practice of choosing godparents in the community has changed. Today the practice has come to be that the parents of this baby will approach people and give them tobacco to be a 'sponsor' to that child. An underlying purpose for sponsors is to care for and raise the child should anything happen to prohibit the parents from taking care of their child, such as illness or death. However Faith also explained the responsibility of a sponsor is to 'take that child and raise it in a good way.' Faith elaborated that the role of a sponsor is to be present throughout the child's life. 'They help raise this child whether it's discipline that child needs, or guidance, or even just teaching them things that they need to know about their role in life.'"

"Because a sponsor plays such an important role in the upbringing of a child, the parents must ensure they have 'an appreciation and

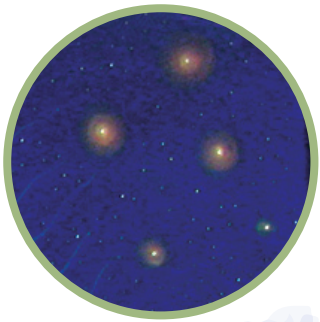
an understanding and faith' in their sponsors. Faith explained that sponsors are not necessarily family members but rather are 'several community members' who each contribute different knowledge that 'would help with that child' in different ways. Faith discussed that when selecting sponsors one should look to creating a balanced perspective; 'I would have the same number of each gender to give that child that balance.'" (Tabobondung, 2008, p. 172)

Excerpts from Faith Pegahmagabow (Oneida and Delaware) and Marie Anderson (Ojibway) in Rebeka Tabobondung's (Wasauksing First Nation), "Women Sharing Strength For All Generations: Aboriginal Birth Knowledge and New Media Creation."

What people do you think will play an important role in your child's life?

Freezing Moon November

The eleventh moon of Creation is the Freezing Moon, a time when the Star Nation is closest to us. As every creature being prepares for the coming fasting grounds, we are reminded to prepare ourselves for our spiritual path by learning the sacred teachings and songs that will sustain us.



Staying Active

"The role of the midwife was to support the pregnant woman in achieving optimal health during pregnancy. If the midwife noticed something, she would say: Come on, it's time to go for a walk. She'd take that girl for a walk about an hour and a half at a time, for the exercise. The main teachings they have, the midwives, is to keep moving, keep active, doing something. Don't lay around because your labour is going to stretch longer the more you lay around…a women that walks will have a healthy baby." (Anderson as cited in Tabobondung, 2008, p. 130)

Excerpt from Marie Anderson (Ojibway) in Rebeka Tabobondung's (Wasauksing First Nation), "Women Sharing Strength For All Generations: Aboriginal Birth Knowledge and New Media Creation."

What are some of the ways you try to be healthy during your pregnancy?

my sketch

These are my

_____ to _____ WEEKS

of pregnancy.

My baby is

_____ WEEKS

old.

Moccasins

"A small circle was cut out from the bottom of a baby's first pair of moccasins. This circle was a symbol that the baby would outgrow the moccasins and grow to be an adult as well as allowing the baby to touch the Earth Mother." (Safarik, 1998a, p. 19)

Excerpt from the Kisāwētotētowin: Aboriginal Parenting Handbook.

What kinds of special things would you like your baby to wear?

These are my

_____ to _____ WEEKS

of pregnancy.

My baby is

_____ WEEKS

old.

Tikinagans

"All of the women spoke about the value of the tikinagan/cradleboard, to both the baby and mother. The tikinagan served many practical purposes. As Faith explained, 'when the women were outside working, that tikinagan could be set up against a tree or hung from a branch and it could see the world, could see its natural family, and the women would know their babies were safe.' As well as serving the practical needs of allowing working mothers to be hands-free, Marie described the tikinagan as a tool in passing on the teaching of love. 'Today you see the mother's just put the babies down, the mother's a long time ago, they bundled the baby up and they put them in a tikinagan.'

"While I interviewed Marie in the Elder's room of the Shawanaga Healing Lodge she showed me a moss bag for a tikinagan that she and other Elders were making. 'That's what it's going to be, it's going to be all shaped out.' Marie reflected on the high importance and value of the tikinagan and caring for new babies and how she believes it may have been 'the only thing they prepared for him. This showed the baby love right from day one; it showed him that he was loved. Even if the mother was away from him he was all cuddled up in that little tikinagan and he would sleep so peacefully in there.' Marie explained how the babies felt comforted by the support of the tikinagan: 'When it seemed it was a struggle, when they undid them, or let them loose, they wanted to be tied up again. They liked it, yes.' According to Marie, the tikinagan imparted other important teachings to the child as well: 'This child grew up very strong and compassionate; he had love for everything.'" (Tabobondung, 2008, pp. 172-173)

Excerpt from Marie Anderson (Ojibway) in Rebeka Tabobondung's (Wasauksing First Nation), "Women Sharing Strength For All Generations: Aboriginal Birth Knowledge and New Media Creation."

What is important for you in caring for your new baby?

Do you have a special gift in mind?

What colours would you like included?

Are there other ideas or details?

These are my

of pregnancy.

My baby is

old.

Little Spirit Moon December

The twelfth moon of Creation is the Little Spirit Moon, a time of healing. By receiving both vision of the spirits and good health, we may walk the Red Road with purest intentions, and we can share this most positive energy with our families and friends for the good of all.

Responsibility as Life-giver

"The power of woman to nurture is embraced spiritually in our own cultures. The importance of children is also recognized. These two elements create a powerful infrastructure that informs our way of interpreting our cultures and women's roles within it. I grew up with a sense of women's responsibility for all the people.

"'It's not just women's responsibility to the children – we have a responsibility to all the people. We have to. We are the lifegivers. We are the life force of the nation. Our responsibility is to everyone; male and female, young or old, because we are that place from which life itself emanates. And there is nothing greater than that.'– Ivy Chaske (Dakota)" (Anderson, 2000, p. 169)

Excerpt from Kim Anderson's (Cree and Métis), "A Recognition of Being: Reconstructing Native Womanhood."

How do you feel about being or supporting a life-giver? In what ways to you feel a sense of responsibility to your child, community or nation?

Parenting

"There is usually a great and profound meaning attached to all the small lessons about life that a child must learn. Children learn by example. They learn how to be parents by observing their own parents. They will repeat the actions of their parents when they have their own children. This is why parents must work on their own healing and be the best role models they can. To teach children respect, parents need to show them respect from the time they are small. As babies, parents need to show them they are special and treat them with kindness and respect. If children are treated gently, they will grow to be gentle. If a parent treats a child roughly, that child will not grow up to respect other people. Traditionally, children learned by watching the world around them, by observing the behaviour of others and by experiencing life. Parents allowed children to make their own mistakes without interference. In this way, the child would learn valuable unforgettable lessons." (Safarik, 1998b, p. 85)

Excerpt from the Kisāwētotētowin: Aboriginal Parenting Manual.

What are your thoughts about healing? What character traits do you want your child to have?

These are my

of pregnancy.

My baby is

old.

Birth as Ceremony

"Ojibway midwife Carol Couchie interprets the sweat lodge ceremony as a metaphor of birth. The dome-shaped lodge has often been equated with the womb of the mother earth. During the ceremony, a fire is lit outside the lodge, and the grandfathers and grandmothers (rocks) are placed in that fire. Couchie interprets these as the genes of our ancestors. That fire/heat represents male energy and enters the womb/lodge, which represents female energy through the rocks. After this symbolic act of procreation, the people inside the sweat lodge go through a period of growth. Like new life, their growth takes place in a hot, dark, wet, and female place. When they crawl out, it is as though they are being born. The line of cedar that trails out of the sweatlodge is like an umbilical cord; it is the lifeline. The firekeeper watches from the outside in the same way a midwife attends a birth. It is her or his job to make sure that everything is safe, to care for that life line, and to allow the birth process to happen. Couchie also related the Sun Dance to birth metaphors: 'One of the things that men try to do in the Sun Dance lodge is tear their flesh. This can be compared to the same way a woman will wtear her flesh giving birth. The Sun Dance ceremony allows a man to give to the community with total physical exertion. Anyone who has given birth will understand this.'" (Anderson, 2000, pp. 164-165)

Excerpt from Carol Couchie (Ojibway) in Kim Anderson's (Cree and Métis), "A Recognition of Being: Reconstructing Native Womanhood."

What does birth mean to me? What does it represent? How is it special?

These are my

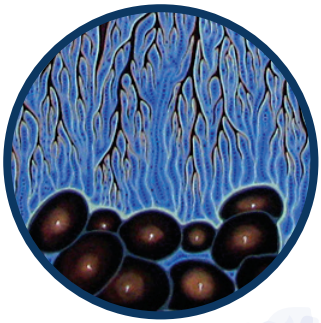
of pregnancy.

My baby is

old.

Big Spirit (Blue) Moon

The thirteenth moon of Creation is Big Spirit Moon. Its purpose is to purify us, and to heal all of Creation, a process which may take a three month long spiritual journey. During this time, we receive instructions on the healing powers of the universe and transform into our own vision of the truth.



Encouraging Dreams and Imagination

"Marie recounted how she and Claude focused on the positive values they could give their children, regardless of their financial situation.

"'So when…we had Rene and Nicole…Claude was talking about, well I won't have the money to give them a start in life. And I goes, that's not what you give a child to start a life, you give the child the ability to dream and to reach for those dreams. And he goes, well how are we going to do that? And I said, but Claude there's grants, there's all kinds of stuff. So just teach them to dream and everything will take care of itself from there.

"'From the time they were very little, if they said they were interested in something we helped them find out about it…It's important from the beginning to get their imaginations working and teach them to dream. Whether it's showing them a caterpillar becoming a butterfly and that, then talking about science….if that interests you, one day you can study this and you can learn about it and do something with it.

"'It's absolutely important that from the time, you know they're young…That you work with their imagination and their ability to see beyond themselves and that, and not to think that money is everything….that it's the be all and the end all. Because it's fine if you got it, but if you don't have the ability to dream and the ability to do, then it doesn't matter how much money you have.'" (Métis Nation of Ontario [MNO], Canadian Institutes of Health Research, St. Michael's Hospital, & Well Living House, 2013, pp. 51-53)

Excerpt from Marie Laprise (Métis) in the "Métis Baby Bundle Book."

What were some of my dreams as a child? How will I help to encourage my child(ren)'s dreams and imagination?

Children as Sacred

"For Anishinaabeg people, the first seven years of a child's life are very important. Children come from the spirit world, and they have a close and vital relationship with that realm. Children are respected as spiritual beings, and are looked up to because they have knowledge their parents, who live largely in the physical world, do not. That is a very different way of positioning children in comparison to settler society. Children are not viewed as helpless babies who need to be controlled, they are viewed as independent spiritual beings, who have many things to teach their parents.

"Children are gifts. They are leaders. They are gifts that require respect, patience, love, attachment, listening; gifts that require us to face our own conflicts, faults, and misgivings. In our culture, children have a lot of freedom to experience the world themselves, they have few boundaries, and they learn the natural consequences of their actions under the careful watch of their mothers, fathers, aunties, uncles, and grandparents. This is often misinterpreted as Anishinaabeg parents not parenting. This kind of approach actually requires a very strong attachment to children, which is nurtured in those first seven years.

"The way we mother is incredibly important, because the way we conduct ourselves as mothers, models for our children how to live as Anishinaabeg people." (Simpson, 2006, pp. 26-27)

Excerpt from Leanne Simpson's (Mississauga Nishnaabeg) chapter in Memee Lavell-Harvard (Wikwemikong) and Jeannette Corbiere Lavell's (Ojibway; Wikwemikong) "Until Our Hearts Are on the Ground: Aboriginal Mothering, Oppression, Resistance and Rebirth."

What happy memory do I have of my own childhood?

Can I think of an image for my family?

my sketch

These are my

_____ to _____ WEEKS

of pregnancy.

My baby is

_____ WEEKS

old.

Interacting With Your Child

"Marie Laprise shared her reflections about how important it is to connect emotionally with your child.

"'And maybe it's because it came natural to us that when we saw people who would just kind of park their kids, you know, and we could see that it wasn't right because the little ones get very whiney… Because nobody's loving them, and they need to be loved…I think a lot of it has to do with connecting emotionally with your child when they're newborns and that, to say, that little person is the most important thing in the world to me. And so I have to dedicate myself to that little person's life, it can't be about me taking the easy way out, it's got to be about me taking the half hour to sit and read with that child. Not about putting him in front of the TV so I can read or I can play computer, you've got to be fully aware from the beginning that if you're going to have a child, your job is that child. Everything else is secondary, your career, all of that, you've got to focus on that baby; it's got to be your primary thing.'" (MNO et al., 2013, p.55).

Excerpt from Marie Laprise (Métis) in the "Métis Baby Bundle Book."

What are ways I feel love for this baby?

Parents Are Not Perfect

"It's accepting that they're not going to perfect…the first thing every new mom and dad should know is they're not going to be perfect parents, there's no such thing on earth…

"They don't come with a manual, you know, you're flying by the seat of your pants…

"And it doesn't matter how many books you read because every child is different, so there's no such thing as a perfect parent and there's no such thing as a perfect child.

"And so parents need to know that from the get go, just enjoy them." (MNO et al., 2013, p. 7))

Excerpt from Marie Laprise (Métis) in the "Métis Baby Bundle Book."

How did you feel about having a baby when you first found out your were pregnant? How do you feel about it now?

New Life as Hope

"If we look at the Anishinaabe teachings of Mosôm Danny, Basil Johnston, and others, it becomes clear that infants and toddlers were seen as bringing hope, happiness, and a sense of potential to families and communities. The teachings tell us that new life was cherished, and at one time pregnant women, infants, and toddlers were nurtured and cared for in that spirit. All community members had roles to play in preparing for new life and ensuring that the proper care was given to the pregnant woman and then the newborn. As Danny points out, this sense of identity and belonging began as early as conception and was fostered through infancy, so that from the youngest age, community members knew their place and developed a sense of trust." (Anderson, 2011, p. 38))

Excerpt from Mosom Danny Musqua (Salteaux) in Kim Anderson's (Cree and Métis), "Life Stages and Native Women: Memory, Teachings, and Story Medicine."

What things do you hope for your child/children?

Full Moon Ceremony

When Nabageesis Grandmother moon is full, women can do a ceremony to honour, pray and seek guidance. The ceremony can be simple. A woman can sit on the ground and ask Grandmother Moon to replenish her body with new energy. She takes water with her which she prays for the Moon to bless. That water then becomes her medicine. Full moon ceremonies are held in many communities. The ceremony may differ from place to place. It is held either on the Full Moon or two days before or after the Full Moon, depending on the teachings given to the women in a particular community.

In the ceremony women often gather in a circle often around a fire from the youngest to the oldest, representing the life journey from infancy to old age. They drum and sing together. Tobacco is placed in the fire as offerings and prayers for the healing and cleansing of herself and her relations, for the earth, and for the waters of the lakes, rivers and oceans.

In some ceremonies, each woman brings a container of water. They pour this water into one bowl and this water is offered to Grandmother Moon and to the Earth. At the end of the ceremony, the water, now called moon water, can be used as a medicine throughout the month.

Around the full moon, women on their moon time can also become very intuitive. It is also an opportunity for women to take time for themselves to help foster their intuition and to have strong dreams.

Full Moon Ceremony

When was it?

Who was there?

Thoughts and Reflections:

Prenatal Notes

Date of My First Prenatal Visit:

My Pregnancy Provider(s):

How to Contact Them:

When is my baby due?

When was my first ultrasound?

What pregnancy symptoms do I have?

When I first heard the baby's heart beat:

When I first noticed the baby's movements:

Your Naming Ceremony

Your Spirit name:

How did you receive your name?

Prenatal Notes

Date of My First Prenatal Visit:

My Pregnancy Provider(s):

How to Contact Them:

When is my baby due?

When was my first ultrasound?

What pregnancy symptoms do I have?

When I first heard the baby's heart beat:

When I first noticed the baby's movements:

Prenatal Notes – Tests

Results

Initial Blood Work

Genetic Screening

Pap Test and Vaginal Swabs

Anatomical Ultrasound (around 20 weeks)

Gestational Diabetes Screening

GBS Swab (Group B Strep)

Prenatal Notes

Date:

Weeks Pregnant:

Care Provider Seen:

Fetal Heart Rate:

Things I'm Doing Healthy:

Other Notes:

Prenatal Notes

Date:

Weeks Pregnant:

Care Provider Seen:

Fetal Heart Rate:

Things I'm Doing Healthy:

Other Notes:

Prenatal Notes

Date:

Weeks Pregnant:

Care Provider Seen:

Fetal Heart Rate:

Things I'm Doing Healthy:

Other Notes:

Prenatal Notes

Date:

Weeks Pregnant:

Care Provider Seen:

Fetal Heart Rate:

Things I'm Doing Healthy:

Other Notes:

Prenatal Notes

Date:

Weeks Pregnant:

Care Provider Seen:

Fetal Heart Rate:

Things I'm Doing Healthy:

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Fetal Heart Rate:

Things I'm Doing Healthy:

Other Notes:

Prenatal Notes

Date:

Weeks Pregnant:

Care Provider Seen:

Fetal Heart Rate:

Things I'm Doing Healthy:

Other Notes:

Prenatal Notes

Date:

Weeks Pregnant:

Care Provider Seen:

Fetal Heart Rate:

Things I'm Doing Healthy:

Other Notes:

Birth Plan

Who is on call for my birth: Pager number:

Birth Story

Baby's Name: Mother's Name:

Date of Birth (include any day of week):

The baby was born at (home, hospital, birth centre, other place) :

Who Was There?

How Did the Birth Go?

Birth Story (continued)

What was going on in your family around this time?

Birth Story (continued)

What was going on in the world around this time? (eg season, weather, news, etc.)

Paste a Photo Here:

Naming Ceremony

Date:

Who Was There?

Significance of the Day:

BABY'S NAME

What is the significance of your baby's name?

How did your baby receive their name?

Welcome Ceremony

When was it:

Where was it:

Who attended:

Welcome Ceremony

Baby gifts:

Other notes about the event:

Baby Milestones

First Laugh

First Smile

First Toys

First Words

First Steps

Baby's Name:

Baby's Clan:

Place of Birth:

Date of Birth:

Time of Birth:

Weight:

Height:

Colour of eyes:

Birthmarks:

BIOGRAPHIES OF OUR KNOWLEDGE KEEPERS

Kisāwētotētowin: Aboriginal Parenting Handbook: The making of this manual included shared wisdom and knowledge from Elders from the five Nations: Cree, Salteau, Dakota, Dene, and Métis. The publication in its current form is the result of the leadership and guidance of Ile-a-la-Crosse Elder Marie Favel. Marie has been active in community engagement and leadership in child and family health education for over 35 years.

Marie Anderson (Ojibway): Marie is Ojibway and grew up on Wasauksing First Nation, an island in Georgian Bay adjacent to Parry Sound, Ontario. Marie went to school on the reserve and to high school in Parry Sound. She graduated from the University of Western Ontario with a teacher's degree and taught for many years. Marie's leadership perhaps came from being the daughter of the acclaimed World War I hero Francis Pegahmagabow, who was also a community leader and the primary informant for the ethnographer Diamond Jenness. Marie was a fabulous storyteller who sadly passed away in 2010. Marie is a recognized community Elder who held vast knowledge including a solid understanding and grasp of the language.

Kim Anderson (Cree and Métis): Dr. Kim Anderson is a Cree/ Metis writer, researcher and community-based educator. Kim is recognized as an advocate of Indigenous women and has devoted her career to researching and writing about the health and well-being of Indigenous families. As a consultant working in community based settings for twenty years, Kim has extensive experience with Aboriginal organizations and communities. Kim has published numerous book chapters and journal articles, covering the subjects

of Indigenous motherhood, Indigenous feminism, Indigenous women and governance, Indigenous family well-being, and health research ethics in Indigenous communities

Ellen Blais (Oneida): Ellen Kanika Tsi Tsa Blais is from the Oneida Nation of the Thames and is an Indigenous midwife. She works as the Director, Indigenous Midwifery at the Association of Ontario Midwives and is the former National Co-Chair for the National Aboriginal Council of Midwives. Ellen is a co-founder of Seventh Generation Midwives of Toronto. As an Indigenous adoptee, Ellen believes in the reclamation of Indigenous birth practices and ceremony as integral to the identity and health of Indigenous peoples.

Maria Campbell (Cree and Métis): Maria grew up in a Road Allowance community near Prince Albert National Park. Her community and others in the region consisted of families who had moved there following the 1885 (Riel) resistance. After thwarted efforts to homestead in the area, many of these families ended up living on the "road allowance," which was patches of Crown land on either side of the roads. Maria's people lived in this territory in extended family groups that subsisted on hunting and trapping. She has written about these early years in her acclaimed autobiography Halfbreed (1973). As an artist, researcher, and educator, Maria has focused on issues pertaining to Métis history

Katsi Cook (Mohawk): Katsi is a Mohawk midwife from the Mohawk Nation at Akwesasne. She is also an environmentalist, Indigenous rights activist, and women's health advocate. She is the director of the Running Strong for American Indian Youth and founder of the organization Woman is the First Environment Collaborative which

supports community-based health projects that seek to empower Indigenous women of all ages and increase knowledge concerning reproductive health.

Carol Couchie (Ojibway): Carol is from the Ojibway people of Nipissing First Nation, but was raised in Niagara Falls. She was the first registered Native midwife in Ontario and is currently practicing in North Bay. Carol is often called upon to teach Native women about matters related to pregnancy and birth, which she does from a traditional perspective.

Mary and Claude Laprise (Métis): Marie and Claude live in a small rural community in Wallaceburg, Ontario and have been married for over 40 years. They have raised two beautiful girls and very proud Mémé and Pépé of five grandchildren. They are also organizers of the 'Fiddle and Sash Association' which they started several years ago because of their deep pride in Métis heritage and their hopes to pass their knowledge on to the next generations. They share those traditions with other Métis in the area through their annual Old Fashion Métis Rendezvous, which they have been hosting for the past number of years.

Jan Longboat (Mohawk): Janice Longboat (Kahehti:io), Mohawk, Turtle Clan of Six Nations of the Grand River is a Traditional Herbalist, Healer and Elder. Kahehti:io is recognized in her community as an Elder and received the Six Nations Community Treasure Award in 2010, the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian "Peacemaker Award" in 2007 and an Honorary Doctorate of Laws degree in 2011. She is the keeper of Earth Healing Herb Gardens and Retreat Centre at Six Nations. During her life she has experienced

the many losses of our values, culture, language and traditional healing arts and medicines. Jan believes our ancestors have left us a great legacy of knowledge in how to have good well-being. Our responsibility is to go back and pick up the pieces that we have left along our journey of 500 years

Sylvia Maracle (Mohawk): Sylvia is from the Mohawks of the Bay of Wuinte, near Bellevile, Ontario. She has been the Executive Director of the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres for 20 years. Sylvia is a leader in community work at the local level in the city of Toronto, as well as at the provincial and national levels. She is often called upon as a traditional healer.

Rebecca Martel (Métis): Rebecca Martell (Métis, b. 1950) spent her childhood in northern Saskatchewan, where the economy was based on mining, trapping, hunting, and fishing. Rebecca's family lived on their own and "in the bush" in the summer, where they resided in a log house or in tents, depending on the activity. During the winter, Rebecca's family would move into town, where Rebecca attended a day school. The languages spoken in the community of Rebecca's youth were English, Cree, and Dënesułiné (Chipewyan).

Vera Martin (Ojibway): A Grandmother to the Ojibway Nation, Vera has been active in the Native healing movement and the spiritual and cultural revival of Aboriginal peoples since the 1970's. She has worked as an Aboriginal addictions counsellor and trainer and with women who are survivors of abuse. Vera raised eight children and is also a great-grandmother.

Liza Mosher (Ojibway): Ojibway Elder Liza Gaasongii-Kwe Mosher, Bear Clan, is Odawa, from Wikemikong First Nations, Manitoulin Island and carries the Midewin teachings and has been helping people on their healing journey for the past 30 years through one-on-one guidance, teachings and traditional ceremonies. Liza received an Received Honorary Doctorate from Laurentian University Doctor of Laws Correction Service of Canada, received Certificate of Appreciation In Recognition of her contribution to development of the Healing Lodge for Federally Sentenced Aboriginal Women

Danny Musqua (Salteaux): Danny (Saulteaux, b. 1937) is a member of the Keesekoose first Nation, a reserve formed after the signing of treaty 4 (1874) and located in southeastern Saskatchewan near the Manitoba border. Danny's family were farmers and hunters, and Danny himself farmed for over thirty years. As he was a sickly child, Danny was raised by his grandparents, who instilled in him a lot of the traditional knowledge that he shares today in post-secondary institutions, as well as Native organizations and communities.

Barbara Nahwegahbow (Ojibway): Barbra Nahwegahbow, Wolf Clan, is a member of the Whitefish River Ojibway First Nation in northern Ontario. Her late father was a trapper and her mother raised eleven children. For the past 28 years, Barbara has lived in Toronto, where she has been a political activitist and community organizer. Barbara still speaks her language (Ojibway) and is a writer and a traditional singer.

Faith Pegahmagabow (Oneida and Delaware): Faith's Anishnabe name is Miskomoneshikwe and she is a member of the Mukwa Dodem (Bear Clan). Faith is of Oneida and Delaware decent and is a member

of Wasauksing First Nation, which she now considers home. Faith has lived and raised her family in Wasauksing for over thirty years. According to Faith, the basis of her knowledge is from the Ojibway people although she also has some from the Haudenosaunee or Ongwehongwe people. Faith is a respected Midewiwin traditionalist and is currently a student at The Aboriginal Midwifery Training Program in Six Nations.

Tom Porter (Mohawk): Tom Porter is a member of the Bear Clan of the Mohawk Nation of Akwesasne. He held the position of sub-chief for the Tehanakarine Chieftainship title for 21 years, officiating marriage ceremonies, death ceremonies, and numerous other traditional ceremonies held throughout the year. He was the director of, and teacher at the Akwesasne Freedom School and taught at the Kahnawake Survival School. Currently, Mr. Porter works as the Native American consultant for the New York State Penitentiary System and as Chaplain for all of the Native inmates. Mr. Porter has authored various books and pamphlets, all of which teach about Mohawk traditions and spirituality.

Harmony Rice (Potawatomi): Harmony is Potawatomi and was raised in the Midewiwin tradition. Her Anishnabe name is *Nowgiishigokwe* and she is member of the *Migize* Dodem (Eagle Clan).She is a young parent and community leader, a multimedia artist, performer and Publisher of SPIRIT Magazine. SPIRIT Magazine is an identity, arts and culture-based magazine distributed across Canada. Harmony has experience in programming and producing music, cultural and artistic events for small communities and urban centres that are culturally appropriate, transformative and empowering.

Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (Mississauga Nishnaabeg): Leanne Simpson is an Indigenous writer, musician, and academic from Mississauga, Nishnaabeg and is a member of Alderville First Nation. She is notable as the author of the several books and papers on Indigenous issues in Canada, and for her work with the 2012 Idle No More protests. She writes about contemporary Indigenous issues and realities, particularly from her own Anishnaabe nation, across a variety of genres.

Rebeka Tabobondung (Wasausking First Nation): Rebeka is the Editor-in-Chief of MUSKRATMagazine.com, an on-line Indigenous arts, culture magazine. Rebeka is also a filmmaker, writer, poet, Indigenous knowledge, and oral history researcher. Rebeka's latest research and film work documents traditional birth knowledge from Wasauksing First Nation where she is also a member. Her short documentary, Spirit of Birth, explores Indigenous birth and the Toronto Birth Centre is available for viewing at MUSKRAT Magazine.

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For more information on pregnancy or birth, please consult a midwife or doctor. To find or get more information on midwives, contact the Association of Ontario Midwives www.aom.on.ca or call 416-425-9974. To find a physician or obstetrician/gynecologist in your area, please call Health Care Connect at 1-866-532-3161, TTY 1-800-387-5559.

Resources and Community Supports

It is important to feel safe and supported along your pregnancy and parenting journey. This space is to list family and/or community resources or services you can use to support you.

What things do you hope for your child/children?

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Well Living House, Centre for Urban Health Solutions, Li Ka Shing Knowledge Institute, St. Michael's

Image Credit: Honouring My Spirit Helpers, by Christi Belcourt Used with permission from the Artist and The Well Living House.

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