

# National Aboriginal Council of Midwives

## Aboriginal Midwives Working in Every Aboriginal Community: A Symposium on Midwifery for Aboriginal Leadership

August 30<sup>th</sup>, 2011

Dear Chief & Council, Executive Director in charge of Health, and Community members,

My name is Carol Couchie and I am an Aboriginal midwife. I am writing to you on behalf of the National Aboriginal Council of Midwives (NACM) to invite you to our upcoming event “*Aboriginal Midwives Working in Every Aboriginal Community: A Symposium on Midwifery for Aboriginal Leadership*”. We are very excited to be hosting this important one-day conference for First Nations, Inuit and Métis leaders who are interested in learning how midwifery and Aboriginal midwives can provide excellent primary health care for Aboriginal women and their families in communities across Canada.

The conference will be held on November 7<sup>th</sup> at the Community Hall in Ohsweken, Six Nations of the Grand River. The conference will begin with opening remarks and lecture from Dr. Don Wilson, the first Aboriginal Obstetrician and Gynecologist in Canada and chair of the Aboriginal Women’s Health Committee of the Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists of Canada. Presentations from Aboriginal midwives working in a range of Aboriginal communities, representing urban, rural and remote practices, will be followed with an in-depth tour of the Six Nations Birthing Centre (Tsi Non:we Ionnakeratstha Ona:grah), a leading example of community-based maternity care operating on reserve.

The National Aboriginal Council of Midwives believes there has never been a time in our history when the knowledge and services of Aboriginal midwives has been needed more. Maternal and child health statistics in our communities fall well below that of the rest of Canada. As the rest of Canada’s fertility rates decline, the fertility rates of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples increase. This is in the midst of a severe shortage of maternity health care providers. Our communities are already underserved and will feel the effects of this crisis disproportionately in the coming years. It is therefore crucial that we take birth back into our own hands, and step up our efforts to provide access to midwifery care services in all Aboriginal communities.

This conference will give you the opportunity to hear about what present day Aboriginal midwives do for their communities, the education they have received and the values and traditions they preserve for the families they provide care to. Presentations will highlight the improved health outcomes in communities where there are midwives and the high levels of client satisfaction of women who have been cared for by midwives. This is an important opportunity to meet Aboriginal midwives who have been educated through a variety of education routes (from traditional apprenticeship programs to university programs) and who work in a diversity of communities across Canada.

The conference will close with a shared meal, entertainment, and the warm hospitality of the Six Nations communities. Our goal is that by the end of this day, you will have had an opportunity

to learn about midwifery directly from midwives and be provided with tools to begin or continue to plan your next steps towards improving maternal care in your community, with the help of the midwifery model. We will insure that you have all materials and information you need to share the knowledge and excitement of the conference with your communities.

Conference registration, which includes three meals on November 7<sup>th</sup>, is free of charge. Unfortunately, we are unable to provide funding for travel or accommodation. Accommodation at a reduced rate is available at the Sheraton Hotel in Hamilton (please mention NACM when booking to receive group rates). A shuttle service between Hamilton and Ohsweken will be provided free of charge. Please RSVP your presence by filling out the attached Registration Form and sending it to Eby Heller, [eheller@canadianmidwives.org](mailto:eheller@canadianmidwives.org), 514 807-3668. Early notification of your attendance will allow us to develop a personalized package on the midwifery services in your area. We look forward to sharing this groundbreaking day with you.

Regards

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Carol Couchie B.H.Sc.".

Carol Couchie, BHSc, Aboriginal Midwife