

# INDIGENOUS MIDWIFERY STRATEGIC PLAN

*Seven Generations Sustainability + Growth Pathway*

20  
22



MIDWIVES ASSOCIATION  
of BRITISH COLUMBIA

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## 2022 MABC SEVEN GENERATIONS STRATEGIC PLAN

Published December 2022 on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the Coast Salish peoples, including the Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), the Stó:lō and Səlílwetaʔ/Selilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh), and the xwməθkwəy̓əm (Musqueam) Nations.

# 1.0 INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

**The Midwives Association of British Columbia (MABC) is the professional association for midwives in BC and is registered under the Societies Act. MABC has a Board of Directors composed of at least six elected members and one student representative.**

The MABC recognizes that Midwifery in Indigenous Communities holds a unique historical context, with birthing traditions that are deeply meaningful. As such, the MABC has a dedicated Indigenous Advisor, historically supported by the Committee for Indigenous Birthing to support Indigenous Midwives.

This Committee is currently in the process of transitioning to a new support structure known as the Indigenous Midwifery Advisory Council. This Strategic Plan for Indigenous Midwifery outlines the long-term strategic goals, priorities, and action steps required to ensure Indigenous Midwifery becomes a sustainable practice.

The process to develop this Strategic Plan, titled Seven Generations Sustainability and Growth Pathway, included the participation of Indigenous Midwife Members and students with flexible and accessible opportunities to participate in planning. A survey format was used to solicit feedback on values and priorities that Indigenous Midwives, or students studying to become an Indigenous Midwife hold related to Indigenous Midwifery.

The data was analyzed and used as foundational information within the first Strategic Planning Workshop, where participants contributed to a SOAR Process (Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, Results), and provided additional feedback on their vision for Indigenous Midwifery and the values associated with their work.

The SOAR Process was analyzed and used to identify Strategic Priority Areas to focus a facilitated discussion on recommendations. In a second Workshop, participants were engaged in a dialogue on recommendations and actions in support of Indigenous Midwifery. Each step in this process was undertaken to ensure that the resulting vision, values, and recommendations in this report reflect the voices of Indigenous Midwives and students studying to become an Indigenous Midwife.

The resulting Seven Generations Sustainability and Growth Pathway includes a vision practice for Indigenous Midwifery, and values for Indigenous Midwifery that can be used to guide future planning and decision-making. Five strategic focus areas highlight the priorities that the participants chose to focus on, including (1) Leadership, (2) Scope of Service, (3) Support Networks, (4) Education and (5) Cultural Safety. Recommendations are included within each of the five strategic focus areas, and a summation of overall recommendations has also been included.



## 2.0 VISION AND VALUES



### VALUES

The Vision Statement was developed through dialogue with participants, to articulate an aspirational vision for Indigenous Midwifery. In relationship with our communities, Indigenous Midwives provide care and healing that is rooted in culture, for all life stages.

### VISION

The Values were developed to guide future decision-making regarding the growth and development of Indigenous Midwifery in BC.

Self- determination

Responsibility to  
Community

Honouring the  
life stages

Revitalizing  
cultural practices

Generosity

## 3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

Five focus areas have been developed to support the growth and development of Indigenous Midwifery. The focus areas include (1) Leadership, (2) Scope of Service, (3) Support Networks, (4) Education and (5) Enable an Environment of Growth for Indigenous Midwifery. The recommendations shown below were developed by Indigenous midwives and midwifery students and are grouped within each of the five focus areas.

### 3.1 Leadership

#### *Create space for Indigenous leadership in Midwifery and related structures.*

1. Advocate for Indigenous midwives to be in leadership roles in the health system (e.g. FNHA, provincial health authorities, PHSA, etc.).
2. Ensure that Indigenous midwives have a seat at every table, are well-funded, and are respected on their own territories and within all key organizations.
3. Apply anti-oppression and anti-colonial lenses to all discussions on Indigenous Midwifery, especially when decision-making.
4. Broaden recognition of Indigenous midwives as experts in maternity care in Indigenous communities.
5. Invite First Nations Health Authority (FNHA), Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC) and Métis Nation of BC to share statements of support for Indigenous Midwifery.

### 3.2 Scope of Service

#### *Expand and define the Scope of Practice for Indigenous midwives.*

6. Expand and define the scope of practice for Indigenous midwives to reflect Indigenous community needs, including:
  - Sexual and reproductive health across the lifespan.
  - Holistic care which is inclusive of social determinants of health, including housing and keeping families together.
  - Other Indigenous care practices that extend beyond the scope of western midwifery care.
7. Ensure appropriate funding models are in place to support Indigenous Midwives providing an expanded scope of practice.

## 3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

### 3.3 Support Network

#### *Support relationship building among Indigenous midwives and their support systems.*

**8.**Support an annual Indigenous birthing cultural camp or retreat for continuing education and as a means for supporting relationships among Indigenous midwives

**9.** Support ongoing collaboration, learning and connection between Indigenous midwives, students, locums, Elders, and birth workers across distance.

**10.** Create opportunities and support for Indigenous midwives and students to invest time and energy in revitalizing and reconnecting with Indigenous teachings:

**11.** Support the recruitment and retention of Indigenous Midwifery students in ways that they can stay connected their communities.

**12.** Encourage allies to support Indigenous midwives in their learning and practice.

- Providing funding for Elders to support Indigenous midwives in their education and practice.

**14.**Create opportunities for knowledge exchange among Indigenous midwives.

**15.**Strengthen the education experience for Indigenous midwives by:

- Integrating diverse training modules
- Providing separate classes and learning opportunities for Indigenous Midwifery students

**16.**Support educational opportunities for Indigenous Midwives to become leaders in their communities and the B.C. healthcare system.

### 3.4 Education

#### *Support the training and ongoing education of Indigenous midwives.*

**13.**Support Indigenous approaches to learning through mentorship and intergenerational relationships.

- Providing traditional mentorship to future midwives, prior to attending university, to inspire and connect them to their spirituality.



## 3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

### 3.5 Enable an Environment of Growth for Indigenous Midwifery

#### *Remove barriers to practice for Indigenous midwives.*

- 17.** Advocate for cultural safety to be embedded in all education and training for students and Midwives.
- 18.** Advocate for uncapping hospital privileges for Indigenous midwives.
- 19.** Advocate for compensation models that accommodate Indigenous Midwifery.
- 20.** Ensure accountability to Indigenous communities for all perinatal services.
- 21.** Develop resources, such as birth centers, within Indigenous communities to help support the return and growth of Indigenous Midwifery.

#### *Create an environment for Indigenous midwives to feel safe to practice and thrive.*

- 22.** Encourage accountability from education institutions, health systems, and colleagues of Indigenous midwives to identify and dismantle white supremacist characteristics and practices, including:

- Understanding and respecting the diversity and role of Indigenous midwives.

- Acknowledging Indigenous midwives as valued and specialized health care providers with a unique role and relationship to Indigenous care.
- Educating stakeholders, health institutions and colleagues on the importance and uniqueness of Indigenous Midwifery.
- Moving away from pan-Indigenous language and towards Nation and community-specific language.
- Removing the expectation for Indigenous people to educate others and dismantle white supremacy, and placing the onus on settlers and colonial institutions to unlearn and learn.
- Celebrating Indigenous midwives in their traditional territories, to support their growth and recognition.
- Developing respect for Indigenous knowledge, ways of being, and values in Indigenous Midwifery, such as being in relationship, kinship, relationship to land and water, etc.

## 4.0 HIGH LEVEL OVERVIEW OF RECOMMENDATIONS

**This section presents an overview of Indigenous world views and key themes and ideas visible throughout the recommendations.**

### ***Foundation of Indigenous World Views and Need for Broad Systemic Change***

In alignment with many Indigenous world views, the recommendations display the need for a holistic understanding of Indigenous midwifery which extends far beyond the scope of dominant or biomedical approaches to midwifery (Recommendations 7–8).

This includes care which extends past the stages of pregnancy, labour, birth and postpartum, to community wellness at all life stages. Similarly, the scope of Indigenous approaches to care address holistic wellbeing through all health and wellness needs, inclusive of the social determinants of health, and inclusive of mental, physical, spiritual, and emotional wellbeing.

Also in alignment with Indigenous world views, the recommendations speak to the importance of a broad team of birth workers and care providers, including midwives, doulas, Aunties and Elders, which is unique from the dominant approach to midwifery.

### ***Removing Barriers to Midwifery Practice***

***Many recommendations speak to the removal of barriers to Indigenous Midwifery practice :***

- Access to culturally safe environments to practice and receive education and training
- Access to hospital privileges
- Accountability for Indigenous communities
- Support for the development of culturally relevant birth centers in communities
- Access to adequate compensation and funding support.

### ***Culturally Relevant Education and Support***

***The recommendations related to education and support emphasize the need for culturally relevant approaches:***

- Relational,
- Intergenerational,
- Involves mentorship,
- Nation or community-specific,
- Connects to culture, Elders, and Indigenous knowledge,
- Connection and accountability to communities, and
- Indigenous-specific education approaches and requirements.



A common theme throughout the recommendation is for peers, health and education systems to unlearn harmful beliefs and learn the value and meaning of Indigenous Midwifery. Through gaining this understanding, these systems and peers can better support, celebrate, reduce the burden on and act as allies to Indigenous midwives (Recommendation 23). Complementary to this, the recommendations highlight the need to create space for Indigenous leadership in midwifery (Recommendations 1-6).

### 3.7 Potential Priority Areas

**For each of the high-level areas above, potential priority areas for next steps are identified.**

#### ***Foundation of Indigenous World Views and Need for Broad Systemic Change***

- Revise the Scope of Practice for Indigenous midwives to reflect Indigenous world views (across life stages, inclusive of social determinants of health, and mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual health).
- Acknowledge and support the roles of doulas, Aunties and Elders as essential, skilled and appropriately compensated care providers to work alongside Indigenous midwives.
- Support the development of other tangible actions that will contribute to the improvement of Indigenous health and wellbeing beyond the scope of midwifery.

#### ***Removing Barriers to Midwifery Practice***

- Implement payment and funding models that are more in alignment with the needs of Indigenous midwives.

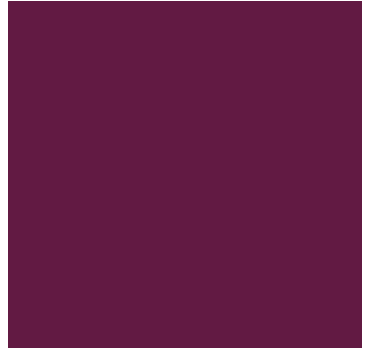
- Increase funding and enhance support staff, so they are available and accessible to Indigenous midwives.
- Remove barriers for Indigenous midwives to gain hospital privileges.

#### ***Culturally Relevant Education and Support***

- Support and advocate for prioritization of cultural safety in midwifery programs and trainings.
- Develop and support the production of specialized Indigenous Midwifery education and support in alignment with the recommendations and Indigenous values

#### ***Learning and Unlearning***

Develop and implement an action plan that highlights the importance of Indigenous Midwifery and encourages the unlearning of harmful, racist, or oppressive beliefs related to Indigenous people and Indigenous Midwifery, for both midwifery peers and relevant institutions.



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