



PRESS RELEASE

For immediate Release

May 5th - International Day of the Midwife

Midwives: Changing the world, one family at a time

Montréal, May 5th, 2014 – Today on International Day of the Midwife, the Canadian Association of Midwives (CAM) and the National Aboriginal Council of Midwives (NACM) would like to join the International Confederation of Midwives (ICM) in calling attention to maternal and infant health around the world. Approximately 290,000 women and over 3 million infants die each year as a result of pregnancy and childbirth complications. If every childbearing woman received care with a well-educated, adequately resourced midwife, most of these maternal and newborn deaths could be prevented.

From May 28 - 30, 2014, Canada will be hosting the Global Maternal, Newborn and Child Health Summit: Saving Every Woman, Every Child. CAM has been invited to participate in this summit, helping to ensure that the life-saving care that midwives provide around the world will be on the agenda. It is key that this summit result not only in words of support; it must translate into direct action and funding for increased access to appropriate care for mothers and newborns around the world. Midwifery care is safe and cost-effective, and can save millions of lives every year. Investing in midwifery care can help achieve the Millennium Development Goals 4 and 5 of reducing child and maternal mortality by more than two thirds.

"We welcome the opportunity to participate in the upcoming MNCH Summit in Toronto," said Joanna Nemrava, CAM President and midwife in British Columbia. "To ensure that every woman has access to skilled maternity care for herself and her newborn, the 2011 UNFPA report *State of the World's Midwifery* estimates the need for 350,000 more midwives; direct funding for increased maternity care, including midwifery care, must be a priority at this summit."

This year, in honour of International Day of the Midwife, Members of Parliament Lois Brown and Peggy Nash have offered statements of support for midwifery care. This multi-party support speaks to the fact that midwives, as primary care providers, are part of the solution to the health care crisis here in Canada, as well as around the world. Currently, women and families in many parts of Canada, including Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador and the Yukon have zero access to midwifery care. CAM and NACM are also working with Members of Parliament to have May 5th recognized as National Day of the Midwife in Canada, a symbolic gesture that would help to increase accessibility to midwifery care for all women and families.

"Here in Canada, women living in rural and remote areas, especially Aboriginal women have limited or no access to maternity care in their own community, and we know that midwives can help to bring birth closer to home" said Kerry Bebee, NACM Co-chair and midwife in Ontario. "Maternal and infant health outcomes in Aboriginal communities are significantly worse than in the rest of Canada, and midwifery care, with its focus on continuity of care and community-based care, is key to improving these outcomes and saving the lives of moms and babies. Aboriginal midwives, working in Aboriginal communities, effectively diminish the health disparity that exists between Aboriginal mothers and non-Aboriginal mothers."

Important Facts

- Midwives are **primary health care providers who work as part of the health care system** in most provinces and territories. They provide care to women during pregnancy, birth and the

postpartum period. Evidence from around the world demonstrates that midwives are essential to improving the lives of mothers and babies. However, only 2% to 5% of women in Canada receive midwifery care services.

- **Women in remote areas often must leave their community for weeks before birth.** The disruption of social networks at this important time is detrimental to the health of women, their families and their communities. **Midwifery care is a safe and cost effective solution** that can be applied in rural and remote regions to bring birth as close to home as possible.

About Midwifery in Canada

There are 1300 registered midwives in Canada. The Canadian Association of Midwives (CAM) is the national organization representing midwives and the profession of midwifery in Canada. The mission of CAM is to provide leadership and advocacy for midwifery as a regulated, publicly funded and vital part of the primary maternity care system in all provinces and territories.

The National Aboriginal Council of Midwives (NACM) exists to promote excellence in reproductive health care for Inuit, First Nations, and Métis women. NACM advocates for the restoration of midwifery education, the provision of midwifery services, and choice of birthplace for all Aboriginal communities consistent with the U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

For more information about NACM, visit our website at www.aboriginalmidwives.ca

For more information about CAM, visit our website at www.canadianmidwives.org

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