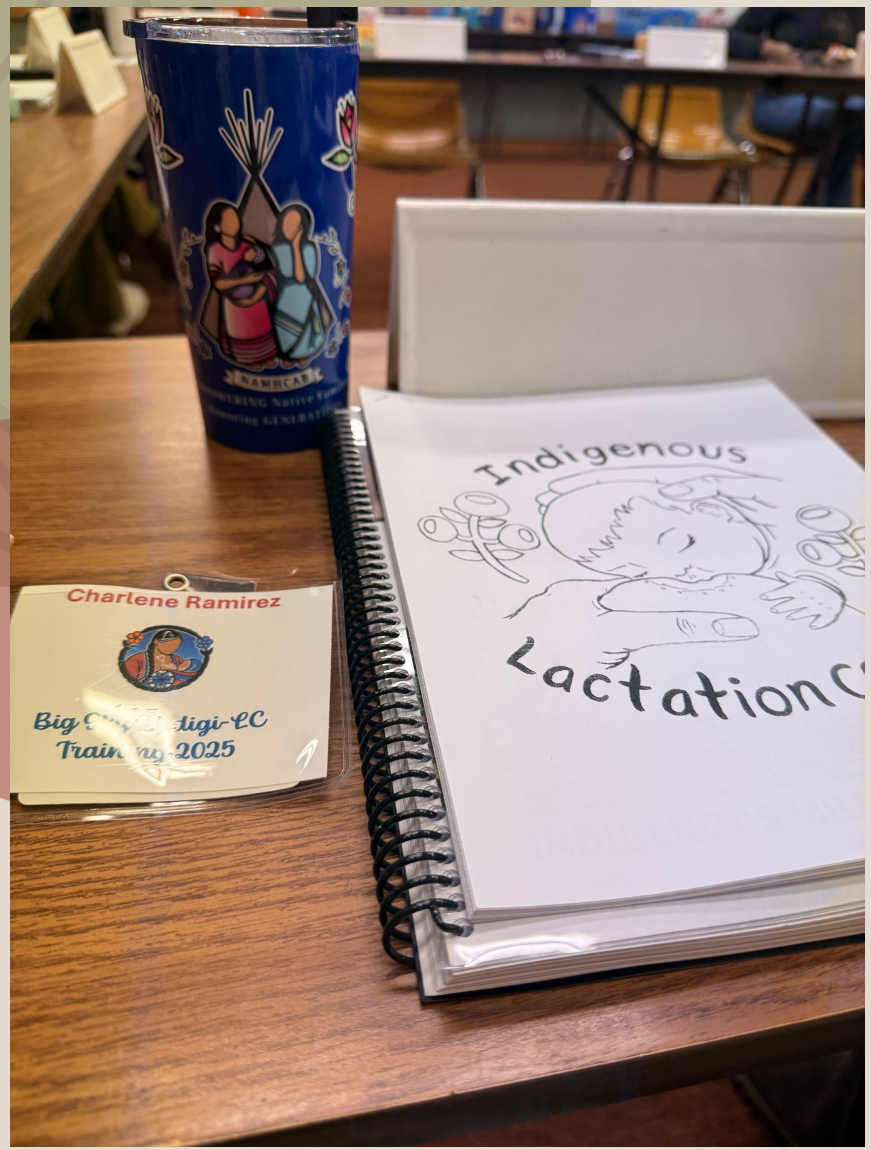
Charlene Ramirez, DNP, RNC-OB, IBCLC

We are a group of Indigenous Lactation Counselors (ILCs) led by an International Board Certified Lactation Consultant

We are certified to provide culturally tailored breastfeeding support, combining clinical lactation education with traditional knowledge dedicated to provide service to all families in Yellowstone County

We are fiscally sponsored by Billings Community Foundation



Indigenous Lactation Counselor Training

- 5-day, 45-hour course
- Provides foundational lactation education and certification to Native people so that they provide clinical breastfeeding support in their communities

Together, We Nourish and Flourish

Highest Standard: IBCLCs hold the only internationally recognized certification in lactation care, requiring extensive health science education, hundreds of clinical hours, and a rigorous board exam

Medical Problem Solving: They evaluate and manage complex challenges like low milk supply, engorgement, tongue-tie impacts, and painful latches

Improved Health Outcomes: Studies link higher availability of IBCLC's to better rates of breastfeeding initiation and exclusive feeding at three and six months

Support Lactation in Rural Communities

- Overcoming Geographic Isolation
  - Long travel times: Rural families often face long drives to reach regional hospitals or certified lactation consultants.
  - Telehealth expansion: Local support networks and telelactation via mobile apps bridge the distance gap for virtual consultations.
- Improving Health Outcomes
  - Baby and mother health: Breastfeeding lowers infant risks for infections, obesity, and diabetes, while reducing chronic disease risks for mothers.
  - Mental wellness: Proper guidance helps prevent the frustration and isolation that can worsen postpartum anxiety and depression.
- Shifting Cultural Norms
  - Reducing stigma: Formula feeding is sometimes the dominant cultural norm in isolated areas, making nursing mothers feel ostracized.
  - Peer encouragement: Community peer groups normalize breastfeeding and build maternal confidence.

Indigenous Doula

critical role in improving maternal health outcomes in rural areas of the United States

providing continuous emotional, physical, informational, and advocacy support throughout pregnancy, labor, and the postpartum period

associated with lower rates of cesarean delivery, reduced induction, fewer preterm births, increased breastfeeding initiation, and improved postpartum engagement

an essential component of rural maternal health infrastructure, helping ensure safer births, stronger families, and more resilient communities.

Coping Strategies and Community Support

Relying on networks: Parents searched across multiple stores, used online parenting groups to track stock, and traded or shared unexpired formula with friends and local families.

Seeking professional guidance: Many consulted pediatricians, lactation consultants, and WIC offices for feeding advice.

Relactation: Some parents attempted to restart lactation or increase their breast milk supply with medical support.

Donor milk: Others turned to informal milk sharing or milk banks

PUMP IT FORWARD!

Give the Gift of Nourishment

COMMUNITY BREAST PUMP DONATION DRIVE

HOW IT WORKS

1.

DONATE
your gently used electric breast pump.
(Medela, Spectra, etc. models shown)

2.

WE PROFESSIONALLY CLEAN & SANITIZE
every donated pump.

3.

WE PROVIDE NEW HYGIENE KITS
(tubing, bottles, flanges)
to a mom in need.

EVERY MOM DESERVES THE CHANCE TO PUMP.

Collaborations

Provide culturally grounded education while providing childbirth and +breastfeeding education

Encourage participants to engage with respected elders within their tribal communities to gain culturally accurate knowledge, deepen their understanding of traditional practices and values, and strengthen their connection to their cultural heritage. Consulting tribal elders can provide valuable firsthand perspectives that support cultural learning, preservation, and appreciation

Providing education at a Powwow!!!

References

Bartkowski, J. P., Klee, K., Xu, X., Roach, J. B., & Jones, S. K. (2024). It Takes a Village: How Community-Based Peer Support for Breastfeeding Bolsters Lactation Prevalence Among Black Mississippians on the Gulf Coast. Pediatric reports, 16(4), 1064–1076.