



Ahnin, Quay Quay , Tansi, Sago, Koolamalsi,

March 20, 2020

We hope this finds you all well and healthy. We know that many of you have begun to understand the meaning of the phrase 'worried sick' as we work while worrying about our communities and loved ones.

As we watch how COVID-19 - and our responses - unfold, it is clear this virus is not just affecting our bodies. Our bodies are vulnerable, but so are our spirits. The toll this could take on our mental and emotional well being is real.

Many of us are trying to set up contingency plans that include hard questions about providing care when we were already stretched thin. As Indigenous midwives we need to look after pregnant people and newborns, but also our Elders and many others in our communities. Our care often extends beyond the clinic, beyond pregnancy and birth. We care for those who already live with illnesses and compromised immunity, for those living in overcrowded homes, struggling with mental illness, substance use and trauma. COVID-19 is a new and added layer to our work.

Our communities are at the front lines of an inequitable system. The trauma experienced within a health care system that is systematically biased and racist is real for us and for our clients. It's a system that leaves us with limited supplies, inadequate or no clinical space and is painfully slow to respond to our needs. COVID-19 is a new and added layer to this.

This pandemic will reiterate something we know well: we need midwives providing care in our communities. It will greatly expose the risks - socially and clinically - of the routine and blanket practice of birth evacuation. We will worry about the impacts of longer stays in social housing, risk of infection, quarantine and isolation during the postpartum period.

As a small and distinct group of health care providers acutely aware of the issues outlined above, we know we also need to look out for each other. In larger centers, with bigger teams, practices are making contingency plans for when our colleagues fall sick. As Leaders, we are especially reaching out to our members who are already working in solo practice, or in very small or geographically isolated teams. We need to be a circle of support for one another.

We are working with the Canadian Association of Midwives, as well as the provincial and territorial midwifery associations on a new Taskforce to provide support our members in the coming days.

While we may not have the capacity of larger professional associations, Indigenous midwives our core values and the teachings of our elders and ancestors guide us as we take care of each other and our communities in moments of crisis. We know how to bring safety to our communities. We know how to protect vulnerable people. We have additional strength in our connection to traditional medicines which have played a role in our survival in many past crises. Let's make use of technology and share with each other as we draw on this knowledge.

Our communities are in rural, remote and urban centers from Coast to Coast to Coast. Although we are physically distant from one another, we are together in spirit. As we face the challenges of COVID-19, we will continue honoring what our ancestors taught us.

Indigenous midwives: you are a critical, invaluable resource in your community. Look after yourself. Be safe. Know that you carry ancient knowledge that will allow our communities to be stronger and survive this pandemic as we have survived in the past.

We remember what gives us life and what feeds and nourishes us. Be grateful for those plant and animal people and the earth and waters that sustain us. It is in humility and gratitude that we will be stronger on the other side of this.

All our relations,  
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**Initial Resources**

<https://canadianmidwives.org/2020/03/18/coronavirus/>

<https://www.ontariomidwives.ca/infectious-diseases>

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/coronavirus-disease-covid-19.html>