



Indigenous Breastfeeding Counselor (IBC): A Culturally Relevant Breastfeeding Intervention for Native American Mothers

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Background

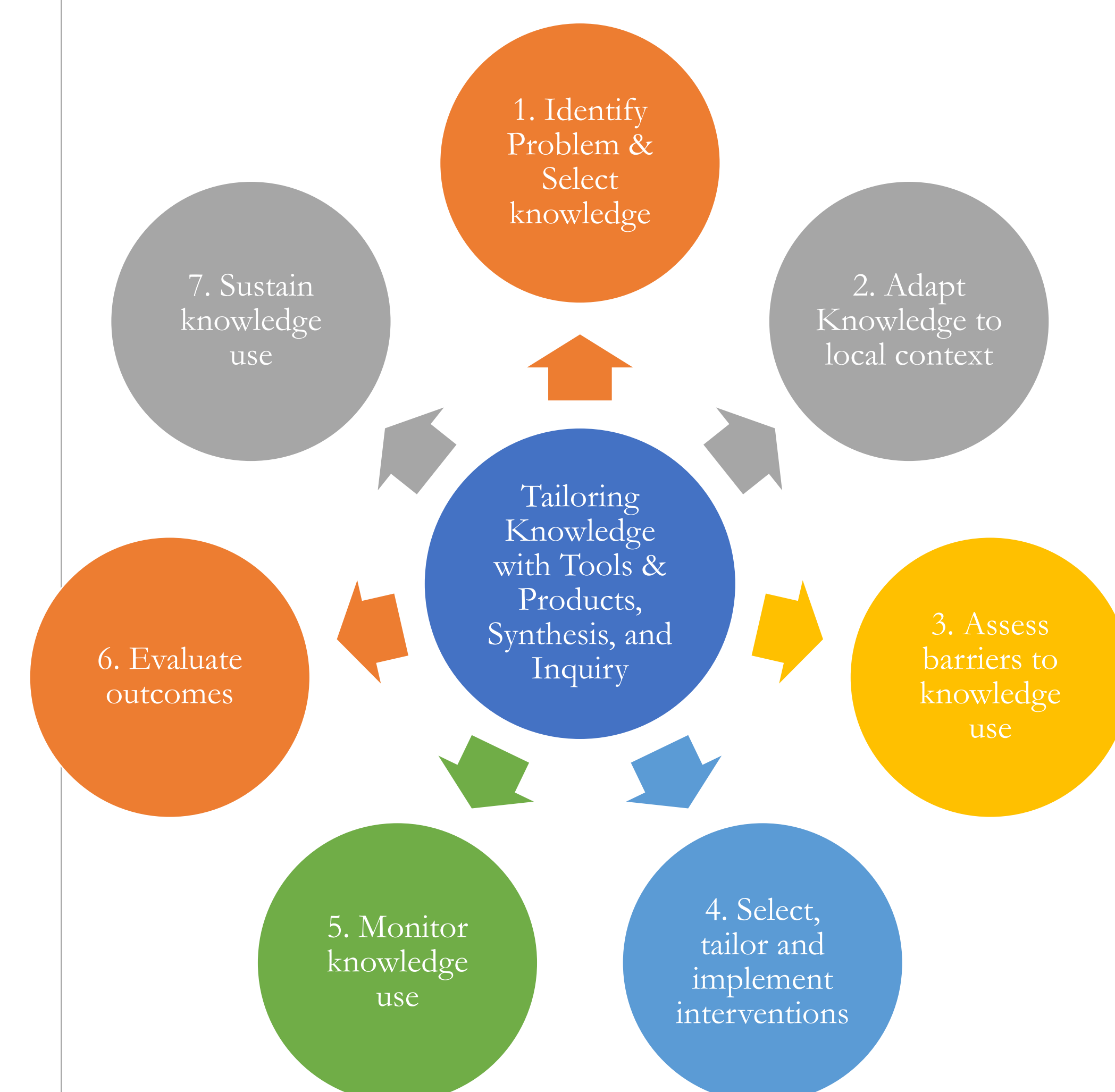
- Native American (NA) mothers have low breastfeeding rates due to a lack of cultural breastfeeding knowledge and support in NA communities.^{1,2}
- Breastfeeding knowledge was passed down generationally by grandmothers and women within one's community;¹ this was disrupted due to colonization, forced assimilation, historical trauma, boarding school experiences,³ and the introduction of infant formula.⁴
- No culturally-specific breastfeeding interventions for NA mothers exist in the literature.

Purpose & Aims

- The purpose of this quality improvement project is to adapt, deliver, and evaluate an Indigenous Breastfeeding Counselor (IBC) course and aims to:
 - 1) increase Indigenous participants' perceived confidence in knowledge identified from prior course evaluations, and
 - 2) evaluate satisfaction with the IBC course.

Translational Frameworks

- The Knowledge-to-Action⁵ Cycle Using Indigenous Approaches⁶ is a culturally relevant framework.
- Each of the seven phases (see right) correlate to Indigenous systems already in place, welcome different points-of-view, and acknowledge and respect existing Indigenous knowledge systems.



Intervention



- The culturally-specific IBC course decolonizes how Indigenous breastfeeding counselors are trained and evaluated and filled knowledge gaps identified in prior course surveys
- The session on “Communication and Counseling Using Indigenous Knowledge” was delivered via Zoom in one 2-hour session and began with a traditional Anishinaabe prayer by a local community cultural advisor/ fluent Ojibwe speaker.

Methods

Design & Setting: One-group, presurvey and double-postsurvey design (3-timepoints) set in Minnesota

Participants: N=7, Ojibwe women (71.4%), 35+ years old (78.8%), working as Doula/Birthworkers and Lactation Counselors (78.8%), with <5 years of experience (44.4%)

Measures: 10-item breastfeeding knowledge scale (5-point Likert) and 6-item course evaluation survey with open-ended questions

Analysis: Descriptive statistics, Kruskal Wallis H, Content analysis

Aim 2: Evaluation Results

Items:	Md (IQR)
1. Content of the training was appropriate and informative	5 (0)
2. The training was well organized	5 (0)
3. Trainers were knowledgeable and effective	5 (0)
4. I learned new information	5 (1)
5. I learned information that will help me in my work	5 (.25)
Q6. How likely are you to apply what you learned today in your practice	5 (.25)

- When asked “what was the most beneficial aspect of this course?” participants shared two themes, connection with others, hearing stories about breastfeeding, and traditional parenting practices.
- Participants suggested the course could be improved by offering smaller groups in person and offering a longer duration resulting in more culturally specific information.
- When asked “what will you do with the information learned from this training?” participants reported the following themes: support for family and community by sharing knowledge, and to continue in birth work with Indigenous people.

Aim 1: Knowledge Test Results

Below shows results for aim 1, perception of confidence in knowledge by pre-, post-intervention, and retention survey timepoints (N=7).

Items:	Pre Md (IQR)	Post Md (IQR)	Retention Md (IQR)
I feel confident I understand/can...			
1. The role of elders in helping lactating women and their role within the community	4 (1)	5 (0)	5 (4)
2. The significance of birth as a ceremony	5 (1)	5 (1)	5 (3.25)
3. The significance of breastfeeding as a ceremony	5 (1)	5 (0)	5 (2.50)
4. The essentials of Anishinaabe breastfeeding practices	4 (2)	5 (1)	5 (1.75)
5. The historical implications of Indigenous breastfeeding	4 (1)	5 (0)	4 (1.75)
6. I can assess and counsel lactating Indigenous women using storytelling	4 (0)	5 (1)	5 (1.50)
7. I can counsel lactating Indigenous women using Anishinaabe traditional breastfeeding practices	4 (0)	5 (1)	4.5 (3.25)
8. I can counsel lactating Indigenous women regarding a Traditional Anishinaabe maternal diet	4 (3)	5 (1)	4 (3.25)
9. I understand the role of extended family and community in supporting lactating Indigenous women	5 (1)	5 (0)	5 (1)
10. I can provide culturally relevant lactation care	4 (1)	5 (1)	4.5 (2.5)

*p<.05

Discussion & Conclusion

- Findings showed that the intervention improved confidence in knowledge, indicating the course may increase cultural transmission of Indigenous breastfeeding knowledge and practices.
- Future studies are needed to determine whether this training increases Indigenous breastfeeding rates among Native American mothers.

Acknowledgement & References

MIIGWECH (THANK YOU)

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REFERENCES

1. Houghtaling et al. (2018);
2. Goldhammer & Moore-Salas (2018);
3. Warne & Wescott (2019);
4. Dodgson & Struthers (2003);
5. Adapted from Graham et al. (2006);
6. Smylie et al. (2014).