



Fostering well-being in the lives of Latin American women during the childbirthing year to encourage healthy parenting practices in the years to come.



How has Voces Maternas empowered women to make autonomous and informed choices during the childbirthing year?

Voces

MATERNAS

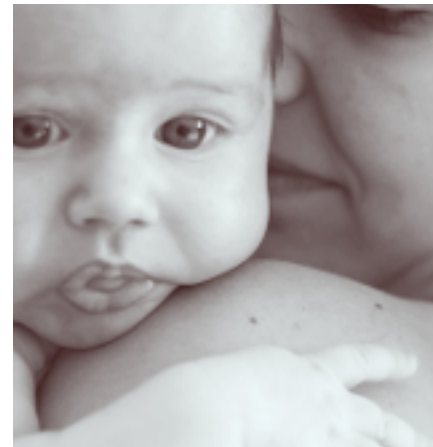
with support from the
van^{co}uver
foundation

SUPPORTING WOMEN

A STUDY OF IMMIGRANT WOMEN IN CANADA FOUND THAT LACK OF INFORMATION AND SUPPORT RESULTED IN DECREASED ACCESS AND UTILIZATION OF NECESSARY MATERNITY-CARE SERVICES¹

- 17 % of immigrant women do not receive maternity care in a language they can understand.²
- Immigrant women are more likely to lack continuity of care, lack sufficient information during labour and delivery, lack active decision-making roles, and receive little support and advice about baby and maternal care and health after birth.²
- Non-Canadian born people in Metro Vancouver with lower levels of income and education reported less social support than Canadian-born individuals.³

- Immigrant women experience higher rates of postpartum depression, less support before and after birth, and are less likely to follow recommended healthy behaviours such as taking folic acid.⁴
- A strong support team, including cultural brokers and community organizations, address these issues and improve immigrant mental health (Bridging the Cultural Divide in Health Care Settings: The essential role of cultural broker programs, 2004).⁵
- Cross cultural health brokers promote community building among mothers and families preventing isolation during postpartum and beyond. Cross cultural health brokers empower women helping them become active and informed participants in their maternity care.



Umbrella Multicultural Health Co-op

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ADELA'S STORY

Adela joined Voces Maternas when she was 24 weeks pregnant. In the group sessions she received prenatal health information in Spanish for the first time. She shared with the group that her specialist appointments left her feeling confused and her questions unanswered. She felt that her family back home was her only support and she considered leaving Canada because she was stressed and isolated without appropriate supports.

After joining Voces Maternas, the Cross Cultural Health Broker provided Adela with support during her prenatal care with the OB/GYN. With the support of Voces Maternas, Adela learned to request information to make informed decisions, participated in childbirth classes, and felt empowered to make informed decisions about her delivery.



WHAT WE DID IN VOCES MATERNAS

IN THEIR OWN
WORDS
Voces Maternas
participants



VOCES MATERNAS PROVIDES THE ONLY SPANISH LANGUAGE SUPPORT PROGRAMS OF ITS KIND IN THE LOWER MAINLAND.

- Conducted an initial community consultation with potential participants and partners to guide the project.
- Developed a curriculum for childbirth preparation classes that is tailored to the Latin American community.
- Recruited and trained community-based cross cultural health brokers with expertise in maternal and infant health, to bridge the Latin American and Canadian maternity health system.
- Recruited over 15 workshop facilitators: Sleep consultant, Counsellors, Doulas, Naturopathic Doctor, Midwives, and Pediatric Physiotherapist.
- Hosted 40 prenatal sessions, five childbirth preparation courses, 80 mom and baby meetings, 30 prenatal and mom and baby yoga classes, and three Community First Aid for Parents classes in partnership with the Canadian Red Cross.
- Connected over 30 clients to maternity care services: Umbrella's Family Practice and Pediatric clinic, New Beginnings Maternity Clinic at BC Women's Hospital, New West Community Midwives, Community Birth Program in Surrey, Primary Care OB Clinic in New Westminster, Healthiest Babies Possible Program in Vancouver and Surrey, Prenatal Outreach Program in Burnaby and New Westminster, Sanctuary Health and Baby Go Round.

Cross cultural health brokers promote community building among mothers and families preventing isolation during postpartum and beyond.

"The cross cultural health broker helped me navigate the healthcare system in Canada. [This] support helped me maintain my baby's health and mine as well."

"There is so much warmth and friendliness [at Voces Maternas] that they make you feel that you are in your country again. It really feels like home."



WHAT'S NEXT?

Other cultural groups in the community have expressed interest in offering the cross cultural health broker model of care within their communities. This shows that the cross cultural health broker model within the birthing year is well-received and can be replicated to continue supporting maternal and infant health care with sister communities.

Cross cultural health brokers empower women helping them become active and informed participants in their maternity care.

The Umbrella Multicultural Health Cooperative has experience and expertise in employing the cross cultural health broker model in Arabic, Latin American, South Asian, and African communities with a focus on a variety of community-identified health issues.

References:

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- 2 Small, R., et al. (2014). Immigrant and non-immigrant women's experiences of maternity care: a systematic and comparative review of studies in five countries. *BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth*, 14:152. doi: 10.1186/1471-2393-14-152.
- 3 Vancouver Coastal Health, Fraser Health, eHealth Strategy Office at the University of British Columbia. (2013-2016). [Graph illustration Metro Vancouver Community Resiliency]. *My Health My Community*. Retrieved from <http://www.myhealthmycommunity.org/Results/CommunityProfiles.aspx>.
- 4 Kingston, D., et al. (2011). Comparison of maternity experiences of Canadian-born and recent and non-recent immigrant women: findings from the Canadian Maternity Experiences Survey. *J Obstet Gynaecol Can*, 33(11):1105-15.
- 5 National Center for Cultural Competence, et al. (2004). *Bridging the Cultural Divide in Health Care Settings: The essential role of cultural broker programs*. Rockville, MD.