

# Indigenous Approaches to Postpartum Mental Health

Assessing opportunities for community-based growth and solutions

“Well, I think for Black and Brown people, or for Indigenous women at least, there are social implications. Because our hierarchy in needs is community-driven versus individually-driven. So, when we're not feeling our best or able to smile and tell jokes or hang in places that we did before, that tends to add to that depression.”

## CAUSES & CONSEQUENCES of postpartum depression & anxiety



### Identified Causes

Most consultants thought PPD was caused by a combination of factors ("many layers")

#### BIOPHYSICAL

Pre-existing depression and/or anxiety; Fluctuation in hormones after birth; Poor sleep and diet; Chemical imbalance; Stress

#### CULTURAL

Interruptions to passing of traditional or cultural knowledge surrounding pregnancy and childbirth

#### SOCIAL

Lack of support for mothers, including community involvement, family support, practical help with baby, and fear of reaching out for help; Traumatic birth experience

#### INDIVIDUAL

Change in identity (becoming a mother); Unrealistic expectations; Loss of friends; Mother's experience with childhood trauma or domestic violence; Stress due to financial worries or lack of resources

### Named Consequences

#### AFFECTS RELATIONSHIPS

Affects ability to form bonds with baby, maintain relationships with other children or a partner, and can lead to self isolation

#### IMPACTS FUTURE CHOICES

Impacts decisions to work, attend or enroll in school, or have future children

#### LOWERS SELF ESTEEM

Can lead to feelings of failure, shame and guilt for not bonding with baby, or feelings of being lost

#### LEADS TO SELF NEGLECT

Affects ability to seek help or keep regular appointments and can lead to self-harm or suicide

## Postpartum mental health and its connection to historical trauma

Interruption in transfer of traditional knowledge around birth, when traditional knowledge is protective

Hormones trigger memories and women are more vulnerable to fluctuations in hormones

Disruption to community; lack of examples of healthy breastfeeding, parenting, and healthy foods

Fear of reaching out for help due to threat of child removal

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\*Withered plant icon by Yazmin Alanis