



## Center for Health Equity, Education, & Research

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: **Chippewa Cree Tribe Increases Support for Breastfeeding**

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(Box Elder, Montana) – On August 10, 2017 the Chippewa Cree Tribal Council of the Rocky Boy’s Reservation signed a proclamation declaring August 2017 as Chippewa Cree Breastfeeding Month and encouraging “all citizens across the Rocky Boy’s Reservation to recognize the importance of breastfeeding in Rocky Boy as a priority for public health.” Breastfeeding Month is one aspect of the Tribe’s increasing support for breastfeeding.



**Mike Geboe Presenting Breastfeeding Month to the Chippewa Cree Tribal Council**

In celebration of Breastfeeding Month, 3 events took place on or near Rocky Boy’s Reservation, including 2 clinical competency breastfeeding trainings geared towards American Indian populations and a “Wellness at Birth” event. The trainings were designed by CHEER Consultant Camie Goldhammer, LICSW, MSW, IBCLC and held at Stone Child College on Rocky Boy’s Reservation and Northern Montana Hospital in Havre, MT. The “Wellness at Birth” event, held on August 29<sup>th</sup> at the Office of Victim Services on Rocky Boy’s Reservation, included a presentation by CHEER Consultant Mike Geboe on the need for breastfeeding protections in the workplace, a prayer and smudging by a Tribe elder, and a personal discussion among attendees.

“I was pleased with the Wellness at Birth event,” commented Geboe, who said the engaged attendees shared experiences ranging from personal challenges with breastfeeding to how breastfeeding was traditionally practiced within the Tribe generations ago, before formula was available. Earlier on the same day, Geboe spoke on local radio station KHEW to publicize the event and build awareness.

The Tribe’s Policy and Procedure Review Team is currently reviewing options to provide breastfeeding protections in the workplace, such as break times and accommodations to breastfeed or pump. A policy would create protections across the Tribe, Stone Child College, and the Rocky Boy Health Board.

Geboe has been talking with key stakeholders from the Tribe, College, Clinic, Head Start, WIC, and Rocky Boy Public Health, who have all been supportive of the need for breastfeeding initiatives. Geboe and the Chippewa Cree Wellness Coalition have also started the Chippewa Cree Breastfeeding Taskforce. Members include WIC, Public Health, and Wellness Coalition supervisors, staff and members. In addition, Northern Montana Hospital in Havre, the main delivering hospital for Rocky Boy’s Reservation, is on the pathway to become Baby-Friendly™, an official designation for hospitals that fully support breastfeeding.





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“I’m excited about what we’re doing and where we’re going,” said Geboe. “We’re putting things into motion. There’s a lot of support. The biggest issue here is health disparities. It’s really pronounced and our population is small. One of the ways to address this is when babies are first born. Breast milk is food, medicine, everything.”

Chairman of the Chippewa Cree Tribe Harlan Baker wrote a letter in support of breastfeeding to the Chippewa Cree Wellness Coalition on August 10, 2017. In it he says: “On

Behalf of the Chippewa Cree Tribe, I am writing in support of Breastfeeding for members of the Chippewa Cree Tribe. We recognize the importance of health for our babies, infants, adults and elders. We understand that the impact of breastfeeding effects the life of our people, the workforce, and cuts costs with healthcare. We believe that Pi-mah-tis-o-wi-n (trans. ‘Life’) is a priority and breastfeeding fosters mother-child bonding, good health, and is an investment in our future.”

On September 25, 2017 from 5-6 pm, Geboe will be hosting an event titled, “Breastfeeding Initiative—Pregnant Mothers and Healthy Babies” at the Office of Victim Services on Rocky Boy’s Reservation. The event is sponsored by the Chippewa Cree Breastfeeding Taskforce and the Chippewa Cree Wellness Coalition. At this event, Geboe will be presenting the benefits of breastfeeding and there will be time for personal sharing and discussion. The public and especially expectant mothers are invited to attend.



The Wellness at Birth Event on August 29, 2017

