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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: CHEER Launches Indigenous Breastfeeding Counselor Training

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Kimberly Moore-Salas demonstrates football hold at IBC training in Barrow, Alaska

(Barrow, Alaska) – On September 18-22, 2017 CHEER launched its first Indigenous Breastfeeding Counselor (IBC) training in Barrow, Alaska. The training, designed by CHEER Consultant Camie Goldhammer, LICSW, MSW, IBCLC, is a 5-day, 45-hour course that provides foundational lactation education geared towards Native practitioners and the communities they serve. Camie (Sisseton-Wahpeton Tribe) and colleague Kimberly Moore-Salas, IBCLC (Diné Tribe) taught the inaugural course to women from Barrow and surrounding villages at Top of the World Hotel in Barrow.

“I truly believe this will be my life's work,” shares Camie. “I am so thankful to CHEER Director Anne Merewood and the CHEER team for believing in me.”

The IBC course is the first of its kind. “The course is Native designed, is Native taught, and is specifically for those that self-identify as Indigenous,” reads the IBC Facebook page. “The IBC is unique in that it centers Native families and provides Counselors with what they need to serve their communities.”

In addition to standard lactation topics, the IBC course covers specifically Indigenous topics such as traditional Native parenting; the impact of historical trauma on Native breastfeeding; the importance of breastfeeding for Native resiliency; and racial equity and the modern-day field of lactation. Students actively participate in talking circle discussions, role-plays, constructive listening exercises, and hands-on skills training.

The IBC course is a part of CHEER's American Indian/Alaska Native Communities and Hospitals Advancing Maternity Practices (AI/AN CHAMPS) program, which promotes breastfeeding support and the Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI) within Native communities. AI/AN CHAMPS has worked in Alaska, Arizona, Montana, New Mexico and Oklahoma. They successfully helped all 13 federal Indian Health Service (IHS) and 4 out of 5 Tribal birthing facilities in the lower 48 states become Baby-Friendly,™ an official designation for hospitals that fully support breastfeeding. There are 7 Tribal birthing facilities in Alaska, and AI/AN CHAMPS is working with the 3 facilities on the BFHI pathway. AI/AN CHAMPS is also currently active in increasing community-based breastfeeding support in the Blackfeet and Chippewa Cree Tribes of Montana. AI/AN CHAMPS and the IBC course are funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.



Course participants practice counseling skills at IBC training in Barrow, Alaska

If you are interested in having an IBC training in your community, please contact CHEER at CHEERequity@gmail.com

