

## The Coming of the Blessing® Summary Report

March of Dimes is dedicated to improving the health of babies by preventing birth defects, premature birth and infant mortality. We achieve our mission through community services, education, advocacy, and research.

### The Initiative

*The Coming of the Blessing*® is a March of Dimes initiative for American Indian and Alaska Native families.

We provide prenatal education, training and resources that encourage women to include traditional beliefs, lessons from their ancestors and their partners in their circle of support during pregnancy. This circle of support can help women make healthy choices for themselves and their babies.

This initiative was created by the March of Dimes American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) Women's Committee. The committee is chaired by Denise Aragon, an educator working with the Shoshone & Arapahoe Tribes Early Head Start program on the Wind River Reservation in Wyoming. Committee members represent 11 different tribes from 11 states. The women believe that we can give babies a fighting chance by honoring the strong culture and traditions of Native people.



Designated as a PROMISING PRACTICE by Indian Health Service

### Training for Prenatal Educators

Since 2009, training has been provided for 135 health professionals and community health workers to offer culturally-relevant prenatal education for American Indian/Alaska Native families.



Training was provided for tribal partners in these states:

Alaska, Arizona, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wisconsin, Wyoming

### Our Donors

Funding for *The Coming of the Blessing*® is provided by the **March of Dimes Prematurity Campaign** and these tribal partners:  
**Governor Bill Anoatubby**  
 The Chickasaw Nation of Oklahoma  
**Chief Gregory Pyle**  
 The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma  
**Forest County Potawatomi Foundation**  
 Wisconsin  
**Kodiak Area Native Association**  
 Alaska

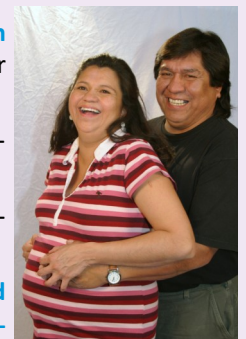
### Awards & Recognition

- 2009 National Perinatal Association Transcultural Award** for enhancing awareness of diversity in the United States.
- 2010 National Indian Health Board Regional Impact Award** for demonstrating a positive impact on the health of Native families through *The Coming of the Blessing*®.
- 2010 National Indian Health Board Local Impact Award** presented to Denise Aragon, Chair of AI/AN Women's Committee, for work on the Wind River Reservation in Wyoming.

### Professional Presentations

Results of *The Coming of the Blessing*® pilot project have been presented at these professional conferences:

- National Indian Health Board (NIHB) Consumer Conference**—September 2008
- American Public Health Association (APHA) Annual Conference**—October 2008
- Office of Minority Health Summit**—February 2009
- Indigenous Child Health Conference**—March 2009
- Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs (AMCHP) Annual Conference**—March 2010.
- CityMatCH Annual Conference**—September 2011



# We imagine a day when all Native babies are born healthy!

- Approximately 40,000 American Indian/Alaska Native babies are born in the United States each year.
- More than 14% or 5,600 American Indian/Alaska Native babies are born prematurely—the leading cause of death for newborns.
- Premature birth can have serious and life-long health consequences including cerebral palsy, hearing, vision and breathing problems.
- Please contact us at [comingoftheblessing.com](http://comingoftheblessing.com) to access resources, to get more information or to make a donation!

## Our Tribal Partners

Stipends have been awarded to the following tribal partners to provide and evaluate prenatal education for Native families through *The Coming of the Blessing*®:

- **Four Bear's Tribe** in North Dakota
- **Oglala Sioux Tribe** in South Dakota
- **Stockbridge-Munsee Tribe** in Wisconsin
- **Sokaogan Chippewa Tribe** in Wisconsin
- **Lac Courte Oreilles Tribe** in Wisconsin
- **Shoshone & Arapaho Tribes** in Wyoming
- **Crownpoint Medical Facility** in New Mexico



The CenteringPregnancy® model of group prenatal care for American Indian/Alaska Native women has been supported through the following tribal partners:

- **Blackfeet Tribe** in Montana
- **Oglala Sioux Tribe** in South Dakota
- **Chief Andrew Isaac Health Center** in Alaska



## WE ARE MAKING A DIFFERENCE!

*The Coming of the Blessing*® booklet was pilot tested in 14 states in 2008 with feedback collected from healthcare providers and families.

181 women from 40 nations responded.

90% of the women told us the booklet helped them change a behavior to be healthier during pregnancy.

The preterm birth rate for AI/AN women is 14% but for our participants this rate was reduced to 7%.

The rate of early prenatal care for AI/AN women is 66% but for our participants this rate was increased to 76%.

## Publicity & Exhibits

*The Coming of the Blessing*® has been promoted on these radio programs:

- **Radio Bilingue**—La Paz / Flip Side Show
- **Native America Calling**
- **American Indian Living** - Life Talk with Dr. David De Rose

We developed a **table top exhibit** for *The Coming of the Blessing*® that is displayed at a variety of American Indian/Alaska Native conferences and events.

We created a **photo exhibit** that tells the stories of 10 American Indian/Alaska Native families whose paths were changed forever by the birth of a premature baby.

## Publications & Resources

Members of the March of Dimes American Indian/Alaska Native Women's Committee have contributed to the following resources and publications:

- An **appendix** in the March of Dimes prenatal education curriculum called *Becoming a Mom* that helps educators adapt the information when working with AI/AN families.
- An **article** on *The Coming of the Blessing*® that will be published in the Journal of Family & Community Health in July 2011.
- A **chapter** on perinatal health care issues of AI/AN women that will be included in the 3rd edition of *Transcultural Aspects of Perinatal Health Care* published by the National Perinatal Association.



### The Pregnancy and Newborn Health Education Center

Whether you're pregnant, thinking about getting pregnant or parenting a newborn, you're likely to have questions. The March of Dimes Pregnancy and Newborn Health Education Center can help. E-mail your question to [askus@marchofdimes.com](mailto:askus@marchofdimes.com), or visit us online at:

[marchofdimes.com](http://marchofdimes.com)

[comingoftheblessing.com](http://comingoftheblessing.com)