

Speaker 1 ([00:00:21](#)):

[Inaudible]

Dianne ([00:00:21](#)):

Hi, welcome to the badass breastfeeding podcast. This is your lactation consultant, Dianne.

Abby ([00:00:26](#)):

And I'm Abby, the badass breasteeder and today's episode is brought to you by Puracy. Puracy Makes high quality natural household products without all the BS (Bad stuff). And today's episode is also brought to by Boob butter. Boob Butter is the first lanolin, Shea butter and bees wax free nipple cream that comes highly recommended by nursing mommas. But we will hear more about those, but right now Dianne has our review of the week.

Dianne ([00:00:56](#)):

Yeah, I had kind of a cool review of the week this week. This one you sent to me that she sent to you and she sent us a review about a year and a half ago or so that we read on the air @mamatosunshine. And in that review, she was telling us that she was just about a month into her journey into becoming an IBCLC. So this was an update to that. And I wanted to share that because we do have a lot of people that ask about becoming IBCLCs just wanted to share an update to one of the podcast reviews. "I Wrote a review and you all read on the show last April, I was a few weeks into working towards my IBCLC. That next week I started as a WIC breastfeeding peer counselor, October of last year, I became a certified breastfeeding specialist and this September I passed audit and will be sitting for my IBCLC exam. Just wanted to share my progress. I appreciate the candid reminders of why my job is so important and how amazing our bodies are." And I just want to say congratulations to her because it's can be a daunting journey to become an IBCLC. And I'm so glad that she's doing it. And then she brought us up to date on how that's going for her and the path that she took. Because a lot of times people ask, how do I become one? How do I do this? What do I start doing? And she kind of put it out there, how she did it, got a job as a peer counselor became a breastfeeding support person, became a breastfeeding specialist and, you know, just kind of went on from there. So congratulations, good luck on the exam and being world breastfeeding month. This is a great time to highlight all those IBCLCs. So congratulations to you. Thank you for the updates. And we love to hear from everybody. So send us a review, send us an email, let us know where you are in your journey of becoming a lactation consultant or in your breastfeeding journey overall. And we can make you review the week so you can put it on iTunes, which is great for the podcast. It really helps it a lot. Or you can us an email at badassbreastfeedingpodcast@gmail.com. And this week we have a really cool episode for you. It's a really exciting, very educational and really, really amazing interview that we're going to share with you today.

Abby ([00:03:16](#)):

Yep. I got ahold of the founder of native breastfeeding week and we got to talk with her and let's get to it.

Abby ([00:03:27](#)):

Welcome to the show. Jasha Lyons, Echo-Hawk. We're so excited for you to be here today and I cannot wait to dig into this conversation and learn more. Can you tell us a little bit about native breastfeeding? Like what, like when did it start? I heard about it last year after, after it had happened, somebody was like, Hey, do you know about this? And I was like, Oh my God, no, I don't.

Jasha Lyon Echo-Hawk ([00:03:58](#)):

Yeah. But first I'd like to introduce myself in my native tongue, I'm going to speak in Pawnee and then I'm going to also speak briefly in Seminole. I'm an inter tribal person in Oklahoma. That kind of is more common. As a lot of the tribes were forcibly removed to this territory. So, (speaking in native tongue). Hello everyone. My name is Jash Lyons Echo-Hawk and I'm Seminole Pawnee Creek Omaha in Iowa. As far as the origin story of native breastfeeding week, you weren't wrong in that you just heard about it last year. It actually did start last year in 2019. So I am a fierce lactivist in my own, right. I have been a breastfeeding mother. That's how I identify my active nursing. I have three children, three biological children. We have four altogether and three of them, I was able to breastfeed. But the last two started back in 2015 and five years later I'm still nursing. The youngest one she's three today. So in my journey and experience, I would often try to seek out information sources, imagery regarding indigenous or native people, breast or chest feeding. A lot of the forums I would go to would be mostly white people or white presenting people. I didn't hear a lot of oral history or knowledge from my immediate communities regarding breast and chest feeding. And that's not to say it was an exhaustive search on my end. But of the immediate elders that I connection with, a lot of them came up in the time of the formula movement. You know, it was that kind of either forced upon or I guess the idea of keeping up with the Joneses back in the day. So, yeah, so I was kind of just wondering where, where it all was. Where's that capture. And then just in my nerdiness of trying to look up research and data wanting to know just, you know, what is the state of breast and chest feeding in our native communities and identifying these various inner tribal coalitions and indigenous coalitions across what is known as the US now. And they have a lot of great information. I actually had an incident at my job site, which actually was at a tribal headquarters with my son who was born in 2015 where I was discriminated against. So I really started looking into work policies and procedures and just like kind of sourcing one that was a really good model up in the great lakes region. I believe, I can't remember if it's the inter tribal breastfeeding coalition up there in Wisconsin. I'm not exactly sure of the correct name, but then I also looked at national breastfeeding guidelines and just thought, why are our tribes exercising more sovereignty in the sense of you could lay down so many policies or resolutions to support breast and chest feeding parents and then sexually discriminated or harassed. Because I was a breastfeeding mother and subsequently left my position. That really kind of inspired me to continue to push for visibility to try to find my community here in Oklahoma. And then just knowing that some of the brief statistics that we have here didn't reflect that there are a lot, even though I felt like anecdotally, yeah. I feel like there are native native people out here that are breast and chest feeding. So I try to work with my State's coalition of breastfeeding advocates and just couldn't get a push in the timeliness for something to occur in Oklahoma with respect to Oklahoma native breast and chest feeders for last August. So I decided to use my contact up at a national native nonprofits, because they had a native breastfeeding campaign in 2018 that I was a part of. And I didn't know if they were going to pick it up again for 2019. So we collaborated briefly and then it just kind of dropped off from there. And I'm not sure what happened or what, you know, what was going on. But I had already like set the date for native breastfeeding week. We had set like kind of like a tentative idea of what we were going to do. And then since they dropped off, it was just me on my own. Just like, okay, this page is going forward. We've got graphics, I've got permission from this artist to use this image for free. What do I do now? So I just reached in to my, you know, Rolodex, if you will, and look at people I knew in like the various parts of the US as we've come to kind of call it like the Northeast region, the Southeast region, Southwest California, coastal Northwest here in the middle of Oklahoma and then great lakes area in Minnesota. So I had people I knew who were either breast or chest feeding, lactation providers, lactation supporters, or breastfeeding or lactation consultants or counselors, and just went with like, Hey, can, y'all pick a day to post your stories. Can you find people, or can you yourself, you know, post your photos, say your tribes,

maybe tell a little bit about your journey. And then in the meantime, I just filled in with like relevant posts, relevant data relevant information. And so that happened and it took off in a way I didn't think it would. And then I believe it was really a viral post from this mother who's first nations as they're called in Canada. I think the tribe she's from, or her nation is Oji-Cree from muskrat dam had triplets that she had been breastfeeding and wanted to submit a story. So, you know, put it up, posted it. And it got immediately. I really, a lot of likes, a lot of views, a lot of follows. And then I feel like that's really, when it exponentially took off and had turned into something that I couldn't have imagined. So in this I guess I will stop there since it's the origin of what you've asked for.

Abby (00:11:06):

No, that's okay. I could listen to you all day. I'm like hanging on every word. This is very exciting. So you, so it's really in its infancy. It's August 9th to 15th.

Jasha Lyon Echo-Hawk (00:11:27):

Yeah. So we decided in the beginning that, and I say we is me and usually whoever I was talking to at the time. So I believe at that time it was the national native organization. And we did not want to interfere with world breastfeeding week or black breastfeeding week. And believe me, I did research because I was like, as I told you, before we started recording, you know, I'm not the start of a movement. I'm not the start of anything. I'm just carrying on in this way. That I know of my ancestors who came before me those, you know, that are several generations back as well as those that are just a generation back. And also, I certainly understand my role, my place in this time right now that I still am somebody who just has limited experience and knowledge. Although I do have valuable information and valuable knowledge. So I did research within the US because I didn't even think beyond the borders to be honest that the colonial borders and it's not because I was small potatoes. It just, I don't know. You just don't know what happens until you do it. So as far as the United States breastfeeding coalition, I was looking up where's the database for these tribal breastfeeding coalitions. Because I'm finding them individually on social media, but is there a catalog for those and where can I find them also? Did they do something like this before? Is this something in the interwebs history, cache data or whatever, you know, has this happened before? Because I don't want to act brand new and just like, "Columbus" this. It was all in support because yeah. This isn't about anybody being in the front of anything for me and in any of these movements really. In Oklahoma there wasn't anything for sure. And then as you know, we looked nationally, there wasn't anything going on. So yeah, just being really mindful of placement. And so I was just like, well, let's be second Sunday in August every year. So this year it just happens to be that, you know, the day of August 9th. And so it'll be August 9th through the 15th for its second annual native breastfeeding week.

Speaker 6 (00:14:01):

All right. Well, going to do it up big this year because we got to just make it grow even bigger. If you don't mind. I would like to back up a little bit, say several hundred. You have said a couple of times in our conversation, you've said "the region now known as the Northwest" and you said "Columbus this." I don't know how much people know because growing up in America as a white person going to public schools, there's a lot of things you're not told. So when you say "the area known as the Northeast or Northwest," you're saying that because that wasn't its original name. Is that right? So when Christopher Columbus and all of the, you know, settlers came here, this was not what we were told, just empty land or, you know, there were a few indigenous peoples that were like, Hey, welcome. Oh, you know, come on in. It's good to see you. You know? So there was actually a lot of an entire continent filled of

indigenous peoples who had named this country and different regions because they were living here. Am I getting this right so far?

Jasha Lyon Echo-Hawk ([00:15:24](#)):

Somewhat.

Speaker 5 ([00:15:26](#)):

Okay. Tell me more.

Jasha Lyon Echo-Hawk ([00:15:28](#)):

So I guess just to kind of ground our conversation and that's why I wanted to introduce myself in my language. I'm inter tribal because I am a descendant of five tribes in terms of this certificate degree of Indian blood as a federal recognition that the United States has imposed on native nations in the US I am enrolled Seminole nation of Oklahoma. It's really hard I think for people who especially are non native non-indigenous of this particular land to see themselves in history as part of this hurtful truth, this hard truth of the fact that this land is and was back then indigenous land, like we're all occupying somebody's space, even myself, I'm occupying somebody's indigenous land, even though I'm native in Oklahoma, this wasn't originally my land. And even though my ancestors fought in treaties to take some land here in lieu of our original homelands and the part like the panhandle of Florida, some parts of Georgia that are areas known as the Southeast you know, that was an exchange to have land here in Oklahoma, but there are already tribes here already indigenous communities here. So yeah, the whole area here and I say colonial borders, because they are us Canada, Mexico, we are current, like we're still here. We're descendants of ancestors who did the things they needed to do to ensure that these prayers that they had on their future remain. And I'm one of those answered prayers. So yeah, all this land is indigenous land and everybody's occupying some indigenous space. There are many tribes who did pass on because of genocide because of disease because of warfare or those policies too that were implemented to eradicate native people because they wanted the land. And that's, that's something that is missed, especially when you are a product of the US public school system that our history books are not full of context. I mean, they're not the truth in the sense that they don't completely weave the history. So it's treated like a paragraph or you might get a couple pages on like, and it's in terms of war and our allyship with the soldiers for US, or maybe we were allied with the British, or maybe we're allied with the French and then that's discussed. And it's even like slavery. You know, the history of slavery is not taught in a sense. So people are very misguided in this way. That makes it seem like you're anti patriotic. If you talk about the truth, if you acknowledge how lands happened, how even just treaties. And so I don't know who your listeners are, but just in the national conversation right now, there was a large Supreme court ruling that came down concerning some of reservation or Indian territory jurisdiction in Oklahoma. And that the Creek nation never ceded that land. And like, we know that from the treaties, we know that from the fact that they didn't sign it over to the US but the current governments do not, did not recognize that at the time and author or exceeded their jurisdiction and into Creek nations jurisdiction. And this caused a criminal case to get appealed up to the Supreme court, arguing that the person that the state prosecuted they did it in the wrong jurisdiction, meaning it shouldn't have been a state case. It should have been a federal case because the crime was committed on Indian land by a native person. And so, and I'm not saying this person's name because it was a very bad, bad crime, and this person does not deserve the recognition although it was their case that initiated this major win in terms of tribal sovereignty and land jurisdiction. So that got kicked up to the Supreme court. And now there's this conversation of treaties. And to me, that should also be part of the education or the history classes within the United States, we should know what is a treaty, why a treaty, what, who are the treaties with

that we have been occupying these spaces, and this is how we got to occupy these spaces. So when you push out that history then you do get a lot of disinformation and misinformation, ignorance, and then yeah. You create institutions that will favor white supremacy, racism, bigotry, prejudice. And then you can see those ramifications or consequences in systems like the healthcare system in research, like breast and chest feeding rates. I have a cousin who is a researcher based in what is called the Seattle area and she's Pawnee and Athabaskan but she continually pushes for us to be reflected in all the data of anything that you're researching because there are several researchers on this like old school thought of while you're not statistically significant. Like you're so few of the population, like why would we research this? And so it's like we need to research everybody, but in terms of like these public health disparities, especially in this time of COVID19, you see the underlying conditions be like people who are diabetic or people who have asthma or something like that these preexisting conditions. And in some of our communities, a lot of the black and Brown communities, the black community and the native community, for sure, we have higher rates of diabetes and that's not because we're just prone to diabetes. There's a lot of like systemic issues that happen. But you know, if you're not taking the time to research, why, because we're deemed insignificant then a viral pandemic comes along and has the potential to once again trigger this historical trauma of disease, sweeping our communities. So that's the bit that I can offer in kind of grounding our situation and understanding that what is called this area, that's what we call it and what it's largely known as, but that's not its original name.

Abby ([00:23:11](#)):

Well, thank you so much for sharing. And we're going to be right back with more after a word from our sponsors. This week's episode is brought to you by boob butter. Do your nipples feel like they're burning? Put the burnout with boob butter. Boob butter is the first lanolin, Shea butter and bees wax free nipple cream and comes highly recommended by nursing mamas. They can't get enough of it because it's not sticky or thick and it's easy to apply. And most importantly, it hydrates and softens your nipples, making them breastfeeding, making breastfeeding more successful, and less painful for you. It's safe for babies and doesn't need to be washed off before nursing. The special recipe uses cupuasú butter as a vegan alternative to lanolin to deeply hydrate and leaves, nipples feeling supple, soft, and intact. Now you can be CMO chief milking officer without worrying about the painful cracks and dryness. Let boob butter help make bonding and connecting with your baby possible by keeping the unwanted soreness away, head to boobandbaby.com and save 10% with code BADASS10. And this week's episode is also brought to you by Puracy. Puracy makes high quality natural household products without all the BS, bad stuff. What do those smelly and highly toxic household cleaners and soaps have going for them, they work. And if you have ever tried to use other more natural products to clean your house and clothes, you know, that effectiveness is the trade off. Puracy has succeeded in creating plant-based safe and effective products that actually outperform those chemical cleaners. They've harnessed the power of Himalayan pink, salt, sustainable coconuts, pure olive oil and essential oils and consult with doctors, chemists and pediatricians to formulate products such as their natural stain remover, natural multi-surface multi-surface cleaner and gel hand sanitizer. They are 100% made in the USA and Dianne and I use them in our houses and love them. Millions of people have kicked their heart harsh household cleaners to the curb and become loyal customers of Puracy leaving 25,000 and more five star reviews in their tracks, head to puracy.com/badass for 10% off your purchase. And you can head to badassbreastfeedingpodcast.com and you will find all of our episodes. And under this episode, you will find show notes about our sponsors and their promo codes further links about things that are talked about in this episode. And you can find our breastfeeding resources and you will find information about scheduling your lactation consultation with Dianne. And I would also like to mention that our podcast not has transcripts. So you can click the little CC on badassbreastfeedingpodcast.com on the particular

episode that you're looking for and you will find transcripts. So let's get back to our interview about native breastfeeding week.

Abby ([00:26:53](#)):

Looking at breastfeeding statistics we hear about different groups. I mean, native indigenous peoples are not like you were saying, they're not even represented. There's Latino, there's white obviously, and how do we even know? It's not even acknowledged that these people still exist, that you still exist. I saw on your page, I just saw a post that you wrote that just struck me so much. It was a picture of a native person breastfeeding, and you said this is beautiful but native people are contemporary. And I just thought, Oh my gosh, it is so true. When you think of native or indigenous peoples, you think of the past.

Jasha Lyon Echo-Hawk ([00:27:59](#)):

Right. And that's part of if you were to go back and research, even just images and that like historical context behind that is to present this idea that we're no longer here. We are people of black and white, of the past of this rudimentary way of life. That way of life is over. And that's not the case. And that is, you know, the reason for a native breastfeeding week. I'm just going to quote myself because it resonated a lot of people on this webinar that it was a part of with the United States breastfeeding coalition. I was quoted, "native breast and chest feeding is an act of defiance to the colonial systems and their imposed norms, as well as the resilience of culture and body sovereignty. And, and really, you know, it's just to be like, yeah, we're still here and we're still doing this, we've been doing this. And like, you can point your research and try to promote it because now you're like, Oh yeah, breastfeeding or chest feeding is good. It decreases diabetes or obesity and it increases so much good. But to hold space for our native black patient providers and supporters, and to lift up the visibility of indigenous milk experiences while we are continually healing and still decolonizing our experiences decolonizing in the sense of what we've been told what to do, even though they're the oral knowledge. Like, even if we haven't heard it like firsthand, I am somebody who's a firm believer in that lives in our DNA and that like, we have that ancestral memory and we need to call things back, like they're not lost in the ether. They're there just waiting to be sung again, they're just waiting to be spoken into existence again. And then we can move as we need to move. And so, yeah, that's why I mentioned that I'm not the start of anything. I just know for my particular area, my community I've just wanted this in this way, because I am a parent and I want my little ones to also recognize that this is just how we do it. This is just who we are. This is how we've always been and will continue to be. And making sure that other little ones around me are also seeing the same thing to have generations that know nothing else, where I was a generation that it was kind of this is what we did.

Abby ([00:30:59](#)):

I imagine that your culture, that's so rich in tradition and everything that it's the genocide, the separating of families, the moving, the relocating that has destroyed so much of the breastfeeding. Being able to pass down the breastfeeding knowledge and the traditions.

Jasha Lyon Echo-Hawk ([00:31:24](#)):

Right. Yeah. In terms of just like you said, you have to look at the history to get to where you are to assess the state of affairs as they are right now. And colonization had done a number on native people, but it definitely hasn't erased us in terms of this practice, of the way we feed our children. I was able to find like little bits of data here and there, but you have to really be somebody who's like intentional, like

really research and that's not just like super accessible, but the reality is that a lot of this did get lost in the transitions. And that is a really light way of saying this, but in the transitions of forced removals and relocation to areas or territories that were not ours, losing people along the way, losing your history in terms of elders or people who were not like physically capable to make these marches to foreign areas and to be placed in communities that were not ours or places that were deemed least desirable. And so then how do we feed ourselves? Where's our economy now? So many of my ancestors were starved like physically, spiritually, and culturally and were either provided cancer causing rations. And in terms of what is called today as commodities or through food distribution programs on tribes. They're better now, but in the beginning, it was like a shock to our physiology if you will, in that where we were being fed flour and lard and beef, that wasn't traditional for a lot of our tribal communities or tribal nations. And now today you get fry bread, Indian tacos, and that's not necessarily tradition, it's ration food like we had to make do. So we did. So you can mix water with flour, you got lard, you fry it up and it's bread. It's something because I'm starving. That does add to layers of trauma in the blood where we ended up with different health disparities and then a lack of investment in our particular communities. I think native people are very similar to Asian Americans in that we are perceived as these homogenous groups. Like when I say "native" people don't understand that, I'm going to say 500 plus native nations in the US right now. And that's not even the extent of how many there were. So like with Asian Americans, Asia is a huge continent, right? And so there's a lot of people under this title of Asian American, but just like us, their statistics and their data is often just like ours in that they're very small percentage of the population in the US so sometimes some of their communities don't get the much needed research. And with any marginalized group, the lack of imagery of current or contemporary, factual, actual imagery, imagery that we create, that we narrate that we you know, cultivate and put out is hardly seen. I do think though there is definitely been a big push in the native community. With the Washington football team to finally change their name. I don't think they were moved because it was the right thing to do. I think more, it was a business like, Oh yeah, we forgot to do something we're losing tons of dollars or whatever. The team name, which has been called on by many activists for its removal forever. And there have been many lawsuits against the particular team. And I think against Dan Snyder to get the name removed. And so finally, because that does add to this composite image of us in this past and the Savage past. And so in this week, we're able to put forward our own images to put forward in our success and our brilliance and our resilience and we can also call to our barriers or challenges. I don't know if you've been able to take a look at some of the other images, but, you know, even in this time of the pandemic, my family and I were at one of the marches or rallies surrounding the murder of George Floyd and also calling attention to other black people who have been murdered at the hands of the police in Oklahoma. And we were masked up and my youngest wanted to nurse so I did, as we do my husband took a photo of it because you know, it's timely. And so that's again, a contemporary image of us, as we are, where we are in this current time of the pandemic of racial uprisings. And there you go, you know?

Abby ([00:37:56](#)):

Yeah. And social media is such a, to use a cliché, such a curse and a blessing, but this is something where social media and people being exposed to this can really benefit right now. The ability to get these images out and you took that photo and now you can put that out to the world and we can get these into as many people's newsfeeds and eyeballs as much as possible.

Jasha Lyon Echo-Hawk ([00:38:33](#)):

Yeah. It's a double edged sword for sure. And that's something as this page is growing that I've been trying to reconcile is, well, I don't necessarily want to block people, but we haven't had too much negativity from what I can tell are like creepy traffic, but I don't know everybody that comes to the page

and likes the page and wants the view. When we say decolonize breast and chest feeding, there has been the social shaming of people, especially people with breasts out in public, feeding their kids without a cover, how dare you, that's because you're sexualizing this act of feeding and it's a natural way to do it. And this is why people feel like they aren't supported or why they want to hide, or even maybe why they wouldn't want to do it because that's dirty, you know? And then it becomes, depending on the people, which a lot of times are women who identify as breastfeeders, it becomes very misogynistic. So, you know, we do get permission with the images that we share, especially of the individual stories. People will inbox us a post, and we'll ask if we can reshare in a story or can we repost your image and tribal affiliation. Most often they are not tribal members. I mean they're people of indigenous or tribal descent. So to me if you feel in control of your narrative and that's how you want to share, then we're going to do that. We're going to uplift you and celebrate you and your journey, knowing that this is revolutionary. This is an act that we need to see.

Abby ([00:40:56](#)):

And so, I don't know if we've made this clear during this conversation, but breastfeeding rates within native and indigenous, it's such a general term that we're grouping together so many different cultures and peoples, but to say the word, the breastfeeding rates are low or some of the lowest, is that right?

Jasha Lyon Echo-Hawk ([00:41:26](#)):

Yes, the second lowest for like all the above, for exclusivity, for duration for initiation. So from the limited data relative to other racial, ethnic groups those rates are much lower now. However, interesting comment from somebody from black breastfeeding week, one of the founders of black breastfeeding week on the same webinar for the United States breastfeeding coalition that was had back in June mentioning that this comparison just isn't realistic in terms of like, yes, this, this is true. And that we do have some, some very low rates in those terms, but then sometimes this terminology, or even the idea of what that means in our specific communities can seem like out of place or not culturally relevant. And so for example, like exclusive breastfeeding, as far as the United States is concerned, and probably, I guess the world is that of one lactating parent to their biological child. And that's that like monogamous relationship. However several generations ago we would have native lactating people who would not just nurse their children, but other children as well. Like that was a communal thing to do milk sharing. And I think maybe the larger public might know that as wet nursing. And for me, like when I hear wet nursing because of the historical trauma attached to it, I don't really like that term, but milk sharing to me seems more culturally relevant, culturally specific, not just to natives, but to other communities. So speaking in terms of just giving only milk to native babies or babies in general at the beginning of life and as long as possible. And until they're eating table foods, that's what I definitely can get behind. How it happens, it'll vary. So like part of our collective, the beginning of last year was a parent who did foster and who did do milk donations to feed their foster child who is now their adopted child. And they're Penobscot from up in the Northeast area. I always say this, I don't know the state terms for everybody who just understands geography that way, Northeast part of the United States. And I felt that their journey need to be celebrated too. Because not all lactation providers are the parents. And not all parents are the ones who have actually birthed these children.

Abby ([00:45:23](#)):

So you're saying that breastfeeding doesn't always look the way that we think about it, maybe in the mainstream is like one parent breastfeeding your child that they gave birth to, it can look a bunch of different ways, but that's not reflected in the statistics.

Jasha Lyon Echo-Hawk ([00:45:39](#)):

Correct. Yeah, yeah, yeah. And this week is to provide a face to the data the community that we've cultivated or maybe not cultivated, but the idea of what we hope our native breastfeeding week community is to put a face to the data. Sharing the contributions, the importance, the adversity and celebration of those native breast and chest feeding families, those lactation providers, supporters advocates lactation consultants you know, all of the above the diaspora. And I want to offer this story real quick that hopefully we'll get to highlight during our second annual week. It's going be amazing. We're forthcoming with our details. I was able to get a strong commitment from a lot of people who were involved in my initial ask last year then we have some new ones that are OGs in the world of breastfeeding and chest feeding. But so the story that was shared with me was, and it still just kind of chokes me up, so bear with me. So this DNA or Navajo family, they're participants of this indigenous breastfeeding counselor training that we have in our circles. You could be a lactation counselor or a peer counselor. There is an indigenous breastfeeding counselor course that was offered to indigenous communities specifically native communities in the US and I think they've also been asked to come to Canada. But anyway, they were sharing that one of their people or their siblings had participated in this training and they participated because not that they were parents or they ever thought about being parents. They never lactated, but their sibling, their sister had a baby and they live away from their Navajo community. They were like living their life somewhere else, working and just being who they were, single people without dependents. Then when their sister got pregnant, they were like, wait a minute, we've got to come together and figure out how to take care of this baby. Not because they thought the sister couldn't take care of it, but because it triggered this communal, this family response that is very ancestral in so many ways. So they left where they were living, quit their jobs and relocated to be with their sister where they were in Navajo community. When they did that, they wanted to know all the things they could to support this sister in all the ways they could. So I think they learned to become like doulas as well as these breastfeeding counselors, because they were like, our baby is not going to be formula fed. This baby has to be fed human milk. And so they wanted to make sure that this sister, this new parent to be, would have all the community supports and the financial supports to be able to be successful in their journey. And so they worked and found other jobs and didn't want the sister to work. They wanted the sister to just have their time with their baby in their journey, in that early time. I'm not sure how long ago that was or what's become of this family. We're hoping to find out during the second annual week, but you can look at the data and you don't know that story.

Abby ([00:49:49](#)):

Right. I mean, that's so true. You can look at the data and you don't hear those kinds of things. And I don't think we understand as mainstream society, we don't understand the culture that way, we don't understand the traditions in that community, the sense of being native cultures.

Jasha Lyon Echo-Hawk ([00:50:19](#)):

I can't say that every native community is like that, but it's just thinking about how you can indigenize or re indigenize they're healing. This is what they're doing, they're healing, and it's not just an immediate, like I'm healing. My sister's healing, my family's healing. Like you're truly healing those ancestors that came before, as well as healing the future, that little baby that was yet to be is already getting set up in this good way. Looking at the mainstream society and our policies for, we don't have paid leave for when people become parents. If you happen to work at a company, if you have a key to work, you have a job that can support leave and that will pay for you to be on leave, that's not systemic, that's very individual. It's not at this higher level of policy and supporting, you know, every parent, not just those few who happened to have this really, you know, good employer maybe. This is an individual act in

terms of that family. And it was the way that they felt called to do. They didn't necessarily like work within their tribal community to be like, how can the tribe do this and do that? Although I don't know if that's something that they would think to do either, but yeah, it was just supporting culturally specific response to, to nursing, to feeding your child, to supporting the family, the native family. But I do believe though at a larger level our country as it's called the US could do a lot better, could do so much more.

Abby ([00:52:28](#)):

Just bringing sort of awareness to the fact that these are, like you said, people that are here now, not in the past living now. And native breastfeeding week is something that can absolutely do that.

Jasha Lyon Echo-Hawk ([00:52:52](#)):

I feel like all of us are involved in our tribal communities, but like specifically to health initiatives or to economic initiatives or some of us are like of our tribal communities and some are like more urban natives who aren't necessarily to their specific tribal community, but they live amongst an urban native population. So we are people that take note and understand that a lot of times we're the only one in those spaces of policy or researchers or even amongst the like lactation professional community some of us are the few and far between like in terms of IBCLCs I think there's only 12. I think I was told there's only 12 that are native of like the thousands that are out there.

Speaker 6 ([00:54:03](#)):

Wait a minute, you meet the number 12, one two? Oh my God.

Jasha Lyon Echo-Hawk ([00:54:08](#)):

Yeah. Right. It's like as far as those governing bodies, why is that what are you going to do to assess that? Is that something that you're you're concerned about? I think it is concerning, especially in terms of just health equity in general. A lot of us are already, like you said, lack of service. We're not just people who lactate or have lactated or support lactation, but we also are like fierce advocates for everyone to have this. Because sometimes more often it seems like to be able to nurse your kid or to chest feed your kid is a privilege because there are the lack of community support, the social supports, the policy supports the environmental supports it. So I'll go back to the, to the person who breastfed their triplets. I asked them because they would continue to send their pictures and just say, it's been six months it's been nine months, it's been a year. They ended up nursing their triplets for, I think they said 18 months. And and it wasn't that they just, you know, that they just did it. Like they did do that. However, they were able to be on leave from their job and they had a lot of support to do that. It's not just like you have triplets, you can do it. You know, I can imagine, especially especially as the world has shifted now where we're kind of having to sit with ourselves, but before, you know, when it was so much faster, maybe I don't know. Sometimes it feels like it's faster now. I can't believe it's almost August. We're making sure to not romanticize this act either that this is something you do or you get pretty pictures taken and like, don't get me wrong. The images, especially the curated ones that are very beautiful, like the ones with the photographers. They're very, very beautiful, but we want to be real too that like not all of us can do this because we still have many of us that live in this generational poverty because of what's happened to our communities and that can go like unspoken. Even in this in this presentation of the images of native people on our page we have to, we have to continue to call out those systems to acknowledge. I guess in terms of the scarce research that's out there is that if we support the American Indian, Alaska native mothers, because this is what the research is based on. If we

support them in their breast and chest feeding journeys at six months, they're more likely to nurse for a year. And I think, I feel like anecdotally, if they hit a year, then they just continue to go. And so like this idea of extended breastfeeding is the main stream or even the colonizer term when you think of breastfeeding past the age of one. But for us that was a cultural norm. Like your, your children stop when they stop in the times that we lived in. So just supporting these food practices, these feeding practices, this traditional parenting means that we succeed, you succeed our, our community succeed. That's less people, you know, in the public health system, that's less people, especially at this time we'll be facing adverse health implications and could potentially, you know, be successful. People would maybe they're the inventors of a vaccine for COVID-19. There's so much more potential realized, like when we do support, like our most marginalized communities, you never know who you're going to get to come for that community that will be for the greater good of humankind. And we have to do something about donor milk in terms of making it more accessible because people see formula supplementation as like the substitute in lieu of, of breast or chest milk there's formula, but, you know, that's also not environmentally conscious. And I know that's something in terms of World breastfeeding week that's happening this year is learning about the environmental effects. I guess anything else I could add is that, you know, we're going to have programming coming up for our second annual year that will include support circles that will include sunrise, elder honorings for those that came before, we will have a tee shirt coming out. So that will act as a fundraiser to support our efforts as we have seen and heard that our efforts need to be funded in the way that we're able to hold space in this pivotal way where we're able to develop the database for these connections of indigenous breast and chest feeders and contribute in part to the larger of the larger conversation happening at the world level in terms of native breast and chest feeding, because we, we struck a cord across colonial borders. So we want to definitely make sure that we are able to have the capacity that we need to continue to find ways to uplift and support and create access fight for access for our native breast and chest feeders.

Speaker 6 ([01:02:05](#)):

Well, that's fantastic. And I can't thank you enough for sharing that with us and native breastfeeding week 2020 is August 9th through August 15th. And you can follow a native breastfeeding week on Instagram @nativebreastfeedingweek. And it's also native breastfeeding week on Facebook. So I'll be directing lots of traffic over there, but follow along. Cause you can see all of these beautiful images and all of the information that needs to get out there. And I'm just so excited that you took this time to share this with us. And I really, really appreciate you taking time out of the day of your birthing day.

Jasha Lyon Echo-Hawk ([01:02:56](#)):

It's it's perfect because she may be, she may be the last one. And so I'm just relishing in this.

Abby ([01:03:05](#)):

Hat's so sweet. Well, I'm happy native breastfeeding week. And thank you for all of the things that you do.

Speaker 1 ([01:03:28](#)):

[Inaudible].