On behalf of the Baby-Friendly Council of NL, I am pleased to present our Summer 2017 newsletter. This publication highlights the advancements of key actions within A GREAT START – A Provincial Breastfeeding Strategic Plan for Newfoundland and Labrador (2014-2017). This plan provides the direction for the work of our council, as well as regional and community partners. The goal is to increase breastfeeding rates in the province so that they are in line with national recommendations, and to provide the best support possible to all families.

Our council is in a time of transition. Since our last newsletter, members Lorraine Burrage (Eastern Health), Donna Nolan (Eastern Health Rural) and Linda Hiller (Labrador/Grenfell Health) have moved into retirement. All were instrumental in helping move forward the breastfeeding strategic plan for NL. As well, it is with heavy hearts, we also announce the passing of our long-time Chair, Janet Murphy-Goodridge. It was through Janet’s vision, boundless commitment, and ability to connect with others, that breastfeeding was made a public health priority within this province. Her legacy and the momentum she created will continue because of the incredible foundation she has established.

It is with great respect for my former colleagues, that I introduce myself in the role of Provincial Breastfeeding Consultant and Chair of the Baby-Friendly Council of NL. Over the past few months we have come together as a group to reconnect and to develop a work plan for 2017-2020. Key areas of focus will include:

- Implementation of the Baby-Friendly Initiative in Hospitals and Community Health facilities in NL.
- Continued research on infant feeding in NL, including better understanding of how women and families prefer to receive information and support.
- Supporting municipalities in the implementation of policies and practices that support breastfeeding and the Baby-Friendly Initiative.

This year will bring us exciting new initiatives including the launch of the film MILK in communities throughout the province, the development of a new web app for families, and the formation of an executive working group of the Baby-Friendly Council to enhance communication and strategic planning. In this newsletter you will see highlights of just some of the great work that is happening.

“Key areas of focus will include...supporting municipalities in the implementation of policies and practices that support breastfeeding...”
The Way Forward
Breastfeeding: A Provincial Priority

In November 2016 the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador released The Way Forward vision strategy, a long-term approach to fostering success and innovation in our province and a road map to a stronger future for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

This vision is provincial in focus and calls for more responsive, efficient and innovative programs and services. As part of The Way Forward, Government is committed to improving the health outcomes of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. The Government will focus on policies, practices and creating supportive environments where people live, learn, work, play, commute and access health services.

The Way Forward outlines a number of healthy living initiatives to achieve a healthier tomorrow. These commitments are further reinforced with health outcome targets including, By 2025, Newfoundland and Labrador’s breastfeeding initiation rate will increase by 7%. The current initiation rate in hospital is approximately 72.8% (NL Newborn Screening, 2015) lagging behind the national rate of 90.3% (CCHS, 2012).

The Way Forward is about building on successful initiatives and good work that is already happening in the province. It is also about collaboration and working with partners to achieve success. To reach this breastfeeding target Government will continue to work with the Baby-Friendly Council of NL in its efforts to promote and protect breastfeeding in Newfoundland and Labrador. To raise breastfeeding initiation rates we will work collectively to change the breastfeeding culture in the province, including the public’s perception of and attitudes toward breastfeeding as the normal and unequalled method to feed infants and young children.

The Baby-Friendly Council of NL, with support of Regional Health Authorities, community groups and other stakeholders, will continue to support the implementation of the Baby-Friendly initiative, increase public education and awareness of the importance of breastfeeding, and support breastfeeding research. Moving forward, we will also work together to create communities that support healthy living and specifically include actions that support municipalities to implement policies and practices to promote and protect breastfeeding.

As we strive to develop more innovative, efficient and responsive programs and services, Government calls on its partners and stakeholders to collaborate to this end. Together we can further enhance actions aimed at increasing the breastfeeding initiation rate in all parts of our province as a precursor to health for our province’s infants, children and adults.

“By 2025, Newfoundland and Labrador’s breastfeeding initiation rate will increase by 7%.”

- The Way Forward
Government of NL, 2016
Regional News

Celebrating Successes: BFI Certificate of Participation

Pam Parrill, Regional Lactation Consultant

Labrador-Grenfell Health (LGH) Regional Health Authority has recently been awarded a Certificate of Participation from the Breastfeeding Committee for Canada (BCC) and the Baby-Friendly Council of NL. The Baby-Friendly Initiative (BFI) Certificate of Participation acknowledges the work that LGH has accomplished over the past two years. The organization has established a multidisciplinary BFI working group; completed the self-assessment; implemented a region-wide education program; and developed a work plan to ensure BFI Practice Outcomes are met. LGH is dedicated to implementing the necessary steps to receiving Baby-Friendly designation. Below are pictures of staff members at the three hospitals proudly displaying the certificate.

“We have a responsibility to create an environment where care is taken to respect and protect informed choices around infant feeding.”

- Heather Gates, Regional Lactation Consultant

Lab West receives BFI Certificate of Participation

Happy Valley-Goose Bay (above) and St. Anthony (left) receive BFI Certificate of Participation
Q & A with Kathy Venter, RN, IBCLC

Members of the Baby-Friendly Council of NL welcomed Kathy Venter to Labrador/Grenfell Health during the month of March 2017 to provide guidance and support for moving forward the Baby-Friendly Initiative. Both Labrador West Health Centre in Labrador City as well as the Labrador Health Centre in Happy Valley-Goose Bay received feedback through a BFI pre-assessment process.

1. Tell us about your life and career.

I am a Registered Nurse and Midwife by background. I did my training in Zimbabwe many years ago, where I was born and raised. I spent early years of my life working in different countries throughout sub-Sahara Africa in maternal and child health. Twenty years ago we immigrated to Canada and I brought my knowledge and skills with me. At the present time I work as a Lactation Consultant at Sunny Brook Health Services Centre in Toronto in the breastfeeding clinic. I also am a Breastfeeding for Canada lead Baby-Friendly Initiative (BFI) assessor.

2. What is the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative and how can it benefit NL?

The Baby-Friendly Initiative, is a World Health Organization (WHO)/ UNICEF initiative developed to improve maternal and child health outcomes at both a local and population health level. This initiative was designed and implemented in response to declining breastfeeding rates worldwide and a respective increase in infant morbidity and mortality. The Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding serve as the foundation of the BFI. Research has shown that implementation of the Ten Steps has a positive, dose-responsive relationship on breastfeeding outcomes. Implementing the BFI in NL will help meet the breastfeeding targets set in both regional and provincial government strategies.

3. How can Regional Health Authorities support the Implementation of BFI?

By ensuring collaboration between public health and hospitals in moving forward the Ten Steps. You cannot implement BFI as a public health unit without your hospital partners and vise versa.

4. Where does the non-breastfed infant fit into BFI?

Being able to help, protect and support the best outcomes for infants who are not going to be breastfed is a responsibility within BFI as well. It is the ‘Baby-Friendly Initiative’ and not the ‘breastfeeding Initiative’. It is important to support families to make informed decisions. Food security, mental health, equity… are issues that we need to base our outcomes on.

5. What can the individual health care provider do to support the Baby-Friendly Initiative and breastfeeding in general?

One of the things that patients complain about the most is that in their dealings with their health care provider they get inconsistent messaging. So, if we are giving patients consistent information and advice then we can better problem-solve through breastfeeding challenges. Good evidence-based practices and models policies exist. There are many great online resources, especially if you have limited time. The Baby-Friendly Council of NL can help you access educational opportunities that will enhance your practice.
Results of this study indicate that determinants of breastfeeding cessation differ between Socioeconomically Marginalized (SEM) and Socioeconomically Privileged populations intending to breastfeed. Interventions intended on improving the SEM population’s postpartum breastfeeding experience using best practices, increasing support, and ensuring at least 1 hour of skin–skin contact may increase breastfeeding rates.

Poverty and Breastfeeding: Comparing Determinants of Early Breastfeeding Cessation Incidence in Socioeconomically Marginalized and Privileged Populations in the FiNaL Study


Systematic Review of Evidence for Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative Step 3

Wouk K; Tully KP; Labbok MH. J Hum Lact. 2017; 33(1):50-82

Results suggest that prenatal interventions, delivered alone or in combination with intrapartum and/or postpartum components, are effective at increasing breastfeeding initiation, duration, or exclusivity where they combine both education and interpersonal support and where women’s partners or family are involved.

Determinants of Nonmedically Indicated In-Hospital Supplementation of Infants Whose Birthing Parents Intended to Exclusively Breastfeed


This NL study found that elements of the hospital experience, self-efficacy, and attitudes toward infant feeding are determinants of non-medically indicated supplementation of infants whose birthing parents intended to exclusively breastfeed.

Infant Feeding in Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada: Perceptions and Experiences of Maternal Grandmothers


Findings indicate that grandmothers play a key role in the infant feeding decision-making process and should therefore be included in educational efforts aimed at promoting and supporting breastfeeding.
Preliminary findings from the Feeding Infants in Newfoundland and Labrador (FiNaL) Study, a longitudinal birth cohort study in NL, have shown that tongue-tie is a relatively common problem that may present challenges for the mother-infant breastfeeding dyad. Approximately 5% of respondents who had intended to breastfeed pointed to tongue-tie as a problem affecting their breastfeeding experience. Some of the problems noted by respondents were difficulty latching, sore nipples, pain, inadequate milk transfer, low milk supply, and poor weight gain in the infant.

To explore ankyloglossia (tongue-tie) and its potential impact on infant nutrition, a Research Planning and Knowledge Exchange Workshop was held in St. John’s, NL in the fall of 2016. Dr. Tiffany Lee (Assistant Professor at the School of Pharmacy) and Dr. Laurie Twells (Associate Professor at the School of Pharmacy & Faculty of Medicine) received funding from the Canadian Institute of Health Research (CIHR) for this event. Researchers, clinicians, and policymakers gathered to discuss the status of research and education on tongue tie and infant feeding in NL, to learn from a number of experts on the latest in tongue tie diagnosis and management, and to generate new research ideas. A public engagement forum, funded by CIHR and Memorial University’s Office of Public Engagement was also held with nearly 50 people in attendance. For more information on these events, please refer to the following link: http://bit.ly/2sMGhJQ.

Two key initiatives have emerged from the Research Planning and Knowledge Exchange Workshop. First, an interdisciplinary (clinical) working group was formed within Eastern Health to enhance the referral processes related to the diagnosis and management of tongue tie. Secondly, an Ankyloglossia and Infant Nutrition Research Interest Group, chaired by Dr. Tiffany Lee, was formed under the hospice of the Breastfeeding Research Working Group. The research group has been active in identifying research priorities and potential funding opportunities, as well as establishing relationships with key collaborators.

Stay tuned for more information on what is happening in clinical practice, as well as in the research field on this topic.
Becoming an accredited La Leche League Leader: A very rewarding experience

When I became a La Leche League Leader three years ago I knew that I wanted to help move the amazing peer-to-peer support of LLL “past the overpass”. LLL Group meetings in St. John’s had been instrumental in my breastfeeding experience with my first child and I knew that so many places throughout NL could benefit from the same type of support.

Becoming an accredited LLL Leader is a very rewarding experience with great opportunities to learn about breastfeeding and peer support. The whole process usually takes more than a year, start to finish, and often begins with a parent who has availed of LLL services and who wants to give back. For the many wonderful breastfeeding parents in areas without existing LLL support, the path to accreditation can be more challenging because of the distance and unfamiliarity with what LLL does.

Last year I was given an opportunity to learn from a UK Leader who has done Leadership accreditation by distance, via Facebook for many years. I immediately thought this would be wonderful for Newfoundland & Labrador! We already have a fantastic culture of online peer support here with parents from all over the province supporting each other via Facebook.

This past winter I began the first Facebook group to explore LLL Leadership. Participants from all over the province participated to learn about LLL and to explore what it would mean to become a Leader. From that group we have two new applicants working to become Leaders. They will soon be supporting breastfeeding families in their area.

I look forward to starting a new group soon with new interested parents. I have learned lots from this first implementation! Soon I hope to see LLL Groups supporting families all across the province.

To inquire about becoming a LLL Leader in your area please contact: llc.meaghan@gmail.com

“… I hope to see LLL Groups supporting families all across the province.”
Local Women: Recreating a Breastfeeding Culture

Through funding from the International Grenfell Association, images of local breastfeeding women and families were placed in local stadiums in the Grenfell area.

"I am grateful to have had the opportunity to work closely with municipalities, small businesses and many community partners on this project to encourage women to talk about how they will feed their babies."

Linda Hillier, Registered Dietitian

You are invited!

In celebration of Canada’s Breastfeeding Week Oct 1-7, 2017, communities across NL invite you to attend the showing of “Milk”, a documentary exploring globally the different feeding and birthing practices and what impact they have.

Locations: Corner Brook, Stephenville, St. Anthony, Gander, Labrador City, Goose Bay, St. John’s

Events are open to the public. For more information regarding details for each site, please go to www.babyfriendlynl.ca

The Baby-Friendly Council of NL, established in 1992, is an interdisciplinary committee with representatives from all regions in the province strongly committed to increasing the initiation and duration of breastfeeding. The Perinatal Program, NL (PPNL) is the lead agency supporting the ongoing work of the Council, of which the Provincial Breastfeeding Consultant is chair, and is supported by the Department of Seniors, Wellness and Social Development. The Baby-Friendly Council of NL, in affiliation with the Breastfeeding Committee for Canada, is the designated provincial body to support the implementation of the Baby-Friendly Initiative (BFI) in NL. The BFI is a global campaign of the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF). This campaign recognizes that implementing best practices in health and community services is crucial to the success of programs that protect, promote and support breastfeeding. Various contracts are awarded to the Baby-Friendly Council from the Department of Seniors, Wellness and Social Development that are administered through and managed by the PPNL.

For more information contact:
Janine Woodrow RD, PhD
Provincial Breastfeeding Consultant, Baby-Friendly Council of NL - Chair
Perinatal Program, NL
The Janeway Children’s Health and Rehabilitation Centre
St. John’s, NL, Canada A1B 3V6
info@babyfriendlynl.ca