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**PLUM BITES**

**FALL 2013**



## The BIRTH STORY Issue

*Every birth is different. Every birth is beautiful.*

The Fall rains have arrived and it's the perfect time to curl up by the fire with some great reading material. Go ahead: indulge yourself. Brew a cup of tea, (dig out that chocolate you've got stashed away), pull up a comfy chair and enjoy some of the beautiful, diverse and challenging birth stories from our very own Plum Clients.

## What's New at Plum?

### **UBC STUDENT AT PLUM**

From mid-September to the end of November 2013, we will be acting as preceptors for a 3rd year midwifery student from UBC. Nancy Tsao will help out in the clinic, and be present in prenatal appointments and at births and postpartum visits during her time learning with Plum Midwifery Clinic. Please take a moment to check out her bio and photo below.



### **2013 BREASTFEEDING CHALLENGE**

## In This Issue

[Plum Clinic News](#)

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## Best of the Web

*Every issue we bring you some of our favourite birthy news bites from around the web.*

## Midwifery Care in the news

A study published in the Cochrane Library in mid-August found that [women who receive midwifery care throughout their pregnancy and birth have better outcomes.](#)

As if those findings alone aren't cause enough to celebrate, the study also generated quite a bit of local positive press for midwifery care:

From Global News: [Midwife Study](#)

From CBC: [Midwife-led care best for babies and moms](#)

From Global News: [More expectant mothers consider midwives](#)

**Plum Babies**

In celebration of National Breastfeeding Week,  
please join in the fun and participate in...

# Breastfeeding Counts

Quintessence Global Breastfeeding Challenge

Saturday, October 5, 2013



**Comox Valley  
Community  
Health Centre**

961 England Avenue

10:30 a.m.  
Story time

11:00 a.m.  
Latch-on Count

All families are welcome to join in the fun!

Visit [www.viha.ca](http://www.viha.ca) for all times and locations island-wide



Comox Valley Doula



@vancouverhealth

Visit us on Facebook



Visit our [website](#) for photos

## June 2013

Kale, 3550g  
Sora, 2799g  
Flynn, 9 Lb 3 oz  
Maze, 7 Lb  
Pearl, 2752g  
Janae, 3515g  
Faunus, 7 Lb 8oz  
Gia, 3924g  
Lauren, 2598g  
Sophia, 7 Lb 8.5oz  
Grace, 3714g  
Jacob, 3742g  
Wyatt, 3190g  
Pippa, 4850g  
Julian, 9 Lb 3oz  
Taylor, 9 Lb 11oz  
Camille, 3402g  
Rowan, 9 Lb  
Ivy, 3126g

(wow! busy month!)

## July 2013

Thomas, 8 Lb 11oz  
Ayla, 5 Lb 4oz  
Rowen, 10 Lb 10oz  
Emrix, 7 Lb 8.5oz  
Louis, 7 Lb 12oz  
Seamus, 4760g  
Sophia, 3414g  
Ayun, 4378g  
Wallace, 8 Lb 9oz  
Brynlee, 7 Lb 9oz

## August 2013

Ruby, 9lb 14oz  
Eliana, 3190g  
Audrey, 3629g  
Briar, 9 Lb 3oz  
Dakota, 7 Lb 9oz  
Arlo, 7 Lb 1oz  
Aubrey, 8 Lb 11oz  
Ella, 6 Lb 15oz  
Nadia, 7 Lb  
Ivan, 7 Lb 4oz  
Rhea, 3884g  
Freya, 3046g

### POSTPARTUM GROUP IN CUMBERLAND

With thanks to [The Children's Health Foundation of Vancouver Island](#) and in partnership with [Cumberland Community Schools Society](#),

Plum Midwifery is now offering postpartum group care for mothers and babies up to 12 weeks postpartum.

This is a supportive place to learn, share your postpartum experiences and meet other new mothers. The overall goal is to help women feel a greater sense of empowerment and confidence in themselves and their ability to care for their new baby and their family. Childcare education content and community resources are also included within these sessions.

In addition to regularly scheduled individual postpartum appointments at the group or at our Comox or Cumberland Clinic, there are a series of topical postpartum related sessions planned on a drop-in basis. Open to all mothers, not just Plum clients.

**The group meets every Wednesday from 2-4pm  
at the Masonic Hall in Cumberland. Drop-ins welcome.**

Here's what participants are saying:

*"It is so great to be surrounded by a community of intelligent, strong, fun and like minded women! I am so grateful for our time together. It's so important to me to have a place where I can share challenges and joys in the company of wonderful women. Thanks ladies." ~ M.V.*

*"I feel welcomed and supported by the other like-minded Mums in the group, as well as the facilitators. Our meetings are the highlight of my week! I always come away feeling refreshed and inspired!" ~ P.T.*

*"In short...I'm always a happier more confident mother when I leave. Thanks for all the support!" ~ C.A.*

*"The best group in town! The facilitator rocks (go Courtney!) and it feels like a safe and happy place to be yourself. The group is a place to talk, meet friends, complain, revel, and the topics evolve as the group does. Again, Plum nails the service!" ~ S.S.*

#### **MAMACENTRIC**

Amy Kelly is pleased to announce Mamacentric - a mother's group focused on self care, postpartum adjustment, life after baby. The group is for mothers of babies 3 months and older and best of all it's FREE to the public.

Sponsored proudly by Cumberland Community Schools Society, it runs from **1:00-2:30 every Tuesday starting October 8 2013**, in the Cumberland Elementary Strong Start Room.

Upcoming speakers include:

- Fiona Black from *Flourish Bodytalk*
- Angela Williard from *Harmonic Arts*
- Tiffany McFadden, registered dietitian
- Michelle Hughes from *Comox Valley Acupuncture*

Snacks and tea provided.

Please register by emailing Amy Kelly RM at [smithzoo@hotmail.com](mailto:smithzoo@hotmail.com) or contact Sue Loveless at Cumberland Community Schools Society.

#### **PRENATAL GROUP CARE**

Our prenatal group care continues to go strong in our [new location](#) at the Plum clinic in Comox.

#### **Update from Katie**

**Midwife Katie McNiven regained hospital privileges at St. Joseph's hospital in September and is again able to work in full capacity with Plum Midwifery.**

Maxwell, 7lb 14oz  
Coen, 6 Lb  
Dahlia, 3000g

**We want to feature your little one!**

[Email us a photo.](#)

#### **Plum Schedule**

##### **TUESDAYS**

**Mamacentric**  
1:00 - 2:30 pm  
Strong Start Room  
Cumberland Elementary  
2644 Ulverston Avenue  
Cumberland, BC

##### **WEDNESDAYS**

**Postpartum Group**  
2:00 - 4:00 pm  
Masonic Hall  
2687 Dunsmuir Avenue,  
Cumberland, BC  
(across from the Waverley)

##### **THURSDAYS**

**Prenatal Group Care**  
1:00 - 3:00 pm  
Plum Office  
760 Radford Rd.  
Comox, BC

Jan/Feb group starts Oct 3  
Mar/April starts Nov 14

#### **"Like" Plum?**

We invite you to come on over and check out our Facebook page. You will find Plum news, interesting articles and news stories. **We would be thrilled if you would drop us a line, share your baby photos, post questions and help us make it a vibrant space for everyone who "likes" us.**

[Like us on Facebook](#) 

I am thrilled to announce that on September 12th, 2013, the Board of Directors of SJGH in Comox reconsidered its January 2013 decision, and approved my application for hospital locum privileges as a registered midwife!



This decision comes after 7.5 months of discussions between myself and SJGH, and after an astounding and heart-warming display of community support. The monetary donations and fundraising initiatives that contributed financial support to my legal fund allowed me to continue to work and live in my home community during this difficult time. I am truly grateful for all the words of support and encouragement that kept me motivated, and demonstrated a strong support for access to midwifery care in the Comox Valley.

I am expecting my first baby later this fall, and as I settle into preparations and "nesting" for the new and exciting journey of parenting, it means so much to have this issue resolved, and to look forward to continuing to live and work in this wonderful community beyond my year of maternity leave.

To my dedicated coworkers (and their families!), who went above and beyond to continue to provide continuity of care to our clients, working many hours beyond their regular schedules over the past 7 months... Thank you.

To the women and families who are our clients, for their patience, understanding, and support... Thank you!

To the hard-working, ever-enthusiastic individuals and groups who fundraised and organized to bring us to where we are today, having achieved an amicable agreement between both parties, and leaving only minimal legal fees not covered by fundraising: Arzeena Hamir, Tasha Archer, Shawna Robertson, Moss Dance, Rhiannon Webb, Emma Kwasnica, [Advocates for Birth Choice in the Comox Valley](#), Natalie DeGoey, Kalina Christoff, Rory Robinson, and Amber White... Thank you!

To all of the individuals who donated funds via the fundraising website, and each and every person who offered words of support, and helped to spread the word...Thank you!

I look forward to enjoying these last weeks before my maternity leave begins working unhindered in my community, able to provide care to my clients wherever they chose to birth, and to returning to work again here when my maternity leave is complete.

Blessings, thanks, and love to you all,

*Katie*

### **Nancy Tsao - UBC Midwifery Student**

***From mid-September to the end of November 2013, we will be acting as preceptors for a 3rd year midwifery student from UBC.***

***The student will help out in the clinic, and be present in prenatal appointments and at births and postpartum visits during her time learning with Plum Midwifery Clinic.***

I am extremely honoured and grateful to have the midwives at Plum Midwifery and all the families in their care to be my teachers and mentors in my journey to become a midwife. Thank you all for allowing me to be part of your pregnancy and birth.



Ever since I was a child, I have been fascinated by birth. I still have the vivid memories of waiting by the curtain for my mother to finish her ultrasound exam and later walking her to the hospital while she was in labour and about to give birth to my little brother.

I am always in awe at the strength and power a woman shows during pregnancy, labour and birth and feel privileged to accompany and care for a woman through this very special time of her life.

Before I started with the UBC Midwifery Program, I had worked as a birth doula for new immigrants and Mandarin-speaking families. Due to my interest in working with children, I had also volunteered for the Big Sisters of BC Lower Mainland as a mentor to two young girls over a period of six years.

I grew up in Taiwan and came to Canada with my family when I was 15 years old. I speak Mandarin and understand some Cantonese. In my spare time, I enjoy knitting, reading and taking long walks.

*Nancy*

### **Louis's Birth**

My birth story begins just over 3 years ago with my first child's arrival. He was in a posterior position and after a long labour, I relinquished my plans to have a home birth and went to the hospital in the hopes that an epidural would help him turn (after which I could regain natural childbirth). It didn't end up going that way - I had an emergency caesarean. My baby wasn't in distress at any point. I did not want the surgery but felt I had no other options. For me, that's when my preparation for a VBAC began. I knew right then and there that I wanted another try at it. I wanted the opportunity for me, for my body, to call the shots. But first, I had to spend a lot of time acknowledging my feelings of disappointment, disempowerment and anger resulting from this first experience of childbirth.

While pregnant with my second child, I was hurled into a mess of competing emotions: optimism and excitement alongside fear, distrust and pessimism. I had to wrap my head around the protocol for VBACs set by my community's obstetrical team. Even though I was receiving care from a midwife, I was not allowed to have a home birth. I was strongly encouraged by the OBs to follow certain medical procedures that I felt were restrictive and unnecessary. I was angry about both my previous experience *and* about the controls applied to my upcoming birth experience. Intuitively, I knew that anger would not serve me well, but it's a challenging thing to release. I needed to clarify the events of my first birth and to feel that my concerns about those events were heard by the people who needed to hear them. And thankfully, all this took place. I practiced envisioning myself having a successful vaginal birth. I had a lot of support from my family, friends and midwives. I'm so grateful for the community of people around me who understand the huge significance of a woman's birthing experiences.

And so, on a mid-summer's early morning, with optimism and pessimism still duking it out in my brain, this is the story of my little one's natural, vaginal birth.

At around 1am, I woke up having to pee. Walking to the bathroom, I realized that liquid was already coming out. I peed then just sat on the toilet for a while. What else could it be? My water must have broken. I felt a tingle of excitement.

Contractions kicked in at 2am. They were around every 5-6 minutes apart right off the bat. Fairly mild. I just rested in bed until 3 am then woke up my partner. The contractions were becoming increasingly hard and were 4 minutes apart when I called the midwife's pager. She called back and we chatted. She suggested I go for a walk. I sauntered around the neighbourhood excitedly anticipating every contraction. Alone on the quiet streets, gliding with happiness through the streetlight shine. It was a good walk.

Upon returning home, I drank some water. It didn't occur to me to eat anything. I think I got in the shower pretty quickly thereafter and rode the waves of contractions with hot water on my back, neck and head. I told my partner to call our friend, who would be looking after our older son. The pain had increased a lot. I remember waiting... waiting for my son to be out of the house. I desperately wanted to avoid him seeing me in pain; seeing my inability to communicate.

I had my eyes closed a lot from then on. It was hard to make eye contact with my partner. I'd already drawn inside... was intensely in the present, alone.

My next recollection is hearing the door open and our friend's voice. It was around 6am. My partner came into the bathroom a bit later and told me that our son had left willingly and happily with our friend. The relief! I felt so much better after that, knowing that he was okay. Now things really kicked into gear.

I think I got out of the shower and went to the bedroom for a while. Then I threw up a few times. Back in the shower, we started running

out of hot water. I told my partner it was time to go to the hospital. I'd come to a place of peace about this (not having a home birth) and at that point I absolutely *needed* to be in a hot shower! He called our midwife. I don't know how far apart the contractions were, but it wasn't long and they were pretty strong. I threw on a dress and found my slippers. I was out at the gate in our front yard before my partner had realized I was really ready to go. It seemed to take him forever to get ready! It was grey-dawn morning light, an effervescent feeling in the air, and thankfully quiet.

The drive was short. I got out at the hospital and thought I had to puke again, but didn't. I wanted to try to walk into the emergency room. We got a wheelchair shortly after getting inside. Up to the labour and delivery ward... a kind nurse took us to a nice big room with a long bathroom, the shower at the far end beside the toilet. I got directly into the shower. I kept my eyes closed most of the time in there. I can still feel the difficulty of finding a comfortable position while sitting on the shower floor. It was a stand-up shower, not a lot of room for me to sit, legs bent in alternating directions, to my left and to my right underneath me. I wanted the lights off.

Our midwife arrived! I heard a smile in her voice and loved it. Another wave of relief. Then I got out of the shower for a while to sit on the toilet. I remember our other good friend arriving. She glided in - calm and quiet. We talked a bit in between my contractions.

I began to need complete darkness in the room. My midwife tried taping some paper over the small window in the bathroom door. There was something about her doing this... working with tape that didn't really stick well, trying to help me be as comfortable as possible when I knew she had professional demands on her to chart my progress etc. I was reminded that this is a woman who does her job because she loves the process and the client. She could have suggested that my partner or friend do this, but she didn't. It made me feel so well cared-for.

The next few hours run together. A blur of rounded softness in dim light. Being so intensely in the present moment is hard to translate into the written word. Shower, toilet, shower... and back again. I recall the effort it took to stand in the shower (in order to keep moving baby down). I can feel the urgency with which I gathered strength to move from the bathroom to the bed. I remember asking my partner to move closer toward me while holding me upright as I laboured on the toilet. I also recall realizing how solid my friend was beside me. I think I had my hands in hers and my partners. Was I hurting their hands when I squeezed? Thoughts came and went quickly.



At one point I asked my midwife something (I cant' remember what) and she offered to check my progress. I was in the shower and had to slither down further, almost on my back. I was at 8 cms. This was my first check. It felt good knowing I was already so far along.

For quite some time before this the pain had been pretty intense. I remember feeling surprised at how I wasn't moaning like I had during my previous labour. It felt better to breathe through the contractions this time. At one point I plugged the drain somehow with my leg or foot. I later changed positions (not having realized I'd covered the drain hole) and then all of a sudden the water pulled down the drain making a loud suction sound. Everyone around me laughed.

I tried focusing my attention on what a friend had recently told me: Throughout her labour, she thought about what her baby would be experiencing and 'coached' it through the process. During contractions I smiled in my mind and guided my baby downward. With my attention fixed on making baby's exit as easy as possible, I sent encouragement and strength. This focus helped immensely. I continued to speak to my little one (silently, inside) until the end.

I don't remember when, perhaps right after being checked, maybe later, it became clear that my cervix was swollen. My midwife waited until I had a contraction and then tried to move the cervix out of the way. It was very painful. She tried a couple times while I was in the shower and then I needed a break.

After moving to the bed, where I couldn't avoid the light... or perhaps it was after I transitioned to pushing, my eyes were open a lot more. I felt more aware of my surroundings. My friend on my left, my partner on my right. I needed them to hold my legs for me. My midwife had to try to move my cervix through another few contractions before it was fully out of the way. This was on the bed. My back - arched forward - throwing me around some invisible center point. I pushed and I imagined my baby.

I didn't want my midwife to go anywhere. It was so much easier to push when she was right there and touching the place I should push into. She wiped poop off the bed every once and a while and

walked 7 feet to the garbage can. I missed her during those moments.

The contractions during pushing were so different from the previous ones. They threw my body into a wave. I was strangely helpless to them while also adding strength to them. Every once and a while I became conscious of the sounds I was making. The yells ending in a shallow, breathless swoon. The pain continued well past the end of the contractions and pissed me off. I wanted a break. I was surprised by how painful the pushing was.

Then, like a gift, like a shot of joy, my midwife told me that if I wanted, I could reach my hand down and touch my baby's head. I did. I felt such extreme happiness. A smile crossed my face. Such an unlikely thing at that point in time! The weightlessness of relief confirmed that it was really happening: I was going to push my baby out.

I remember my midwife getting my attention. My eyes were open. She told me to give one huge push (or something to that effect) and then added that after the head came out, if she told me to just breathe, exhale quickly and rapidly (she demonstrated) I should stop pushing. It didn't matter in the end. I felt the 'ring of fire' but didn't care. One more push and out came the head. It was a double ripple, soft muscle explosion. Dampened and round... dark and warm. Another push and I felt a sliding, slippery feeling. It was amazing. Everything changed. My baby was out.

I saw my midwife move her hands in a swift arc. She lifted baby onto my chest. I was stunned. I don't remember hearing anything, like sound had been muted. My emotions were lagging behind my body... and even my mind, still jumbled and ragged from the pain, raced. Thoughts like a dotted line, skipped by... "Shouldn't I be feeling something other than shock?" I thought. Then, at some point I asked if everything was okay. The baby hadn't cried yet. The nurse (I think) suggested a suction and helped to hold baby to my left. A brief suction of the nostrils and mouth, and then a beautiful cry.

I vividly recall the feeling of my baby's back. Just one of my hands was all it took to support the curve, the grace, the weight of this new person. A puffy-wrinkled face - a sweet frown-cry. A long moment in time. I was so impressed with all the vernix -- somehow proud and excited to massage it into my baby's skin.

And back to my chest. My midwife put a warm blanket over us. Having seen the shining new face, my mind stopped running. I was back in the present moment. Everything was okay. We then lifted baby up and moved back the blanket... a boy! Back on me again, he immediately started rooting and 'crawling' to the breast. I smelled my new son's head and kissed him. It was a time warp.

The nurses were only in the room for a few minutes and after they left, my super duper VBAC team and I soaked in the afterglow. We'd done it!

While my little guy was nursing, my partner cut the chord. I delivered the placenta a little while later then my midwife stitched me up.



After that I was thirsty and starving. I wanted apple juice. It tasted delicious. My midwife made me some toast. Again, delicious. Everything was delicious in those hours. Even the air tasted sweet. The satisfaction of a long awaited success - the sweetest feeling to know that my body *can* do it.

In the mid-afternoon we left the hospital. It was time to go home and settle into the new family. I still feel so fortunate that everything fell into place that day. All the people I needed were there for me. My baby was in a good position and didn't experience distress. It was a mixture of good fortune and good support. A beautiful experience.

*Kate*

## **Pearl's Birth**



Pearl came into this world in an unexpected and beautiful way. She was 11 days early and caught us by surprise in more than one way...

At 4:45am, I woke up to turn and find a new position for sleeping. As I turned, some warm liquid leaked out onto the bed. I didn't think much of it - I have been doing a probiotic cure which produced more discharge than usual. But the liquid just kept leaking, so I woke up Andy to get me something to dry off with as I held my hand to trap the fluids. He brought me a bit of toilet paper, but as the water kept flowing, I asked him to grab me a towel; I was starting to understand what was happening.

My contractions began just after 5am and were initially 10 minutes apart, then tapering off to 20 and 30 minutes as the morning approached. Andy fell asleep slightly frazzled but in denial of what was happening. I lay there unable to sleep, listening to my body and trying to calm my mind; the contractions were not very painful but definitely uncomfortable and "real". With each one, I visualized an image of a goddess holding a ball of light in her hands (this image is depicted in a painting I have in the "birthing room" of our house) - as each contraction came on, I pictured it lifting away like the weightless ball of light she was holding, and floating away like dandelion seeds or soap bubbles. Between contractions, I notified my brother that I was in labour and the woman who I was borrowing my birthing pool from.

When morning came, I finally made Andy understand that I was in fact in labour and that the baby would arrive that day. He quickly organized a list of tasks to accomplish and went into town to buy some food for me to have during labour. I used my alone time to turn inward and try to comprehend these new sensations I have never felt before. Since the contractions were still only half hour apart, I had time to prepare the house and doing some last chores

before my doula, Lisa, arrived.

Lisa and I went for a walk and I waddled slowly feeling the sun on my face, and noticing small details in the greenery around us, the smells in the air; everything felt really real and alive. We turned back quickly - I didn't feel safe walking too far away from our house and Andy. We sat on the grass for a while near the giant sequoia tree and Lisa massaged my feet.

Back home, I took a shower to prepare for the evening and waited for Katie, the midwife, to arrive. The house was ready for the birthing, and we decided to get my contractions going through movement and dance in order to speed up the baby's arrival: my 18 hour cut-off time (as recommended for Strep Group B positive women) was at 11pm that night.

At around 8pm, almost immediately after Katie left, my contractions became much stronger, requiring all my focus and breath. Still, I haven't quite come up with a "coping technique" (I never took any prenatal classes and read little on the subject), but as the contractions kept coming, I understood the following: I did not want to be touched during a contraction as my belly was very sensitive and any touch was very distracting and overstimulating; Lisa's words of encouragement were very soothing and reassuring; and Andy or Lisa massaging me between contractions made me feel less tense. I kept moving around the house, slowly, but as the contractions became closer together (Lisa was keeping the score; I was completely unaware of the passage of time...) all I could do is drop to my knees or all fours and breathe. This became my coping technique and I got Lisa to carry a couple of cushions around to make me more comfortable. At the same time, I kept feeling the urge to go to the bathroom (which I did 2 or 3 times that morning!); this was a sensation that was quite distracting.

The rest of the day and evening became completely surreal... I cannot recount exactly how things happened but the "active" part of my labour lasted only 2.5 hours. Someone phoned Emma and when she arrived I was already on the bed in the birthing room, not able to walk except to go to the bathroom when the urge hit me. I was also feeling nauseous which made the contractions very unpleasant; I felt overstimulated and unable to focus on any of the different sensations. All I could do was push with my hands against the walls or Lisa or Andy.

Then the vision of the goddess came back to me - she spoke (in my voice) to me and told me what I was feeling was good and that all I was feeling was for "Pearl" and her arrival. Prior to that moment, I did not have any real intuition about the baby's gender and Pearl was not one of the names we were considering. But I listened to the voice - it changed my perspective from seeing the contractions as something that was *happening to me* to something that I was actively participating in, something I was creating or channeling, in order to reach the special goal of bringing our daughter into this world.

I cannot say how much time had passed, but with most of the contractions I could only hang on tight until they passed, while trying to control my nausea, urge to go to the bathroom, and the

unstoppable shivers that were shaking my body after each contraction. I felt hot and cold at the same time and required a wet face cloth as well as blankets to keep me warm. Finally, I got up to rush to the bathroom once again (without any result, again) but suddenly I just felt the urge to push and asked to be brought to the pool immediately.

The warm water, the absence of blankets that I kept getting tangled in, felt incredible - my back pain was gone and I felt more relaxed. Lisa and Andy were right there as I leaned chest-first into the wall of the pool. I signaled the onset of each contraction to Lisa and they both kept encouraging me. At this point, everything became intense, and my moans and whimpering became groans and roars, which only got louder (to everyone's surprise and amusement, I think!). I was in squatting and kneeling positions as I started pushing, and after some time I felt my body open, there was definitely a shift of some sort which I communicated to the midwives. They encouraged me to feel for the baby's head as I kept pushing, and after some time, I could feel a bulge emerge! At this point, I started feeling a burning and stretching sensation in my vagina (which I have previously read about) but the urge to push was so intense there was no turning back. The midwives asked me to hold back the pushing and pant, which I tried to do (maybe successfully?).

As I looked down, I saw the bulge yet it didn't look like anything I could recognize, and I didn't feel hair or a face, as I anticipated. Someone then said something about a "breech" and asked me to stand up, which seemed like an impossible request at the time. But Andy and Lisa got in the pool and picked me up by my armpits as I continued pushing and roaring. Suddenly there was a feeling of relief as something slipped out of me - it was the bum of the baby! I pushed more to feel another release - the shoulders, perhaps, I could not tell. I thought it was all over, but Emma said to push more, and out came Pearl's head with a big gush (followed by a few whimpers)!

We were all tangled in the pool and I almost fell over, but they managed to lower me down into the water along with Andy, and Pearl was placed directly onto my chest, all calm, looking around at us with big eyes full of wisdom. It was 10:28pm.



The rest of the night was like a beautiful dream. We could not focus on anything other than Pearl.

## Sonia

### Seamus's Birth

Three days past my estimated due date on the morning of July 23<sup>rd</sup>, my husband Carl was already at work when our 3 year old son Oscar came and crawled into bed with me for some snuggles like he always does. When we decided to get up for the day, I headed to the washroom and realized my water had broke. Oscar was wondering why I was peeing on the floor! My excitement was evident when I told him that his baby brother was on his way!

I paged the midwives to let them know my water had broken, and texted my sister, Shawna, in Victoria to tell her to come, as she and Carl were my support people for labour. Carl came home and we puttered around the house, preparing for our home - birth. I went about my day waiting for contractions to start and decided late morning that I'd better have a nap in case it was an all night event.

Later, my sister and I decided to go for lunch and, since I live in Cumberland, thought we could walk somewhere local in hopes of starting contractions. It worked. When we arrived at the restaurant at around 1PM, I had my first contraction!

Emma called later to ask how things were. At around 5PM, she came and checked me and I was 4 cm. We decided that she could go home again and I would call her when I felt like I needed her. It was very hot that day and my house felt a little full and busy. My contractions slowed and eventually came to a halt. I decided to go for a walk again, but the heat made things difficult. So I made my

home more private and laid on my bed with my son and sister and watched Barney (Oscar's favourite show), and my contractions started again. Oscar went to bed for the night and it wasn't long before my contractions were becoming long and hard. I felt things were moving along well, so I called Emma back at about 8PM.

When Emma arrived, My husband and I were working through the contractions together at the kitchen counter. Carl would squeeze my hips while I did squats - as Emma had suggested earlier- getting the baby to move further down into my pelvis. I was 6 cm now. I later moved into the birth pool when I felt that the house had cooled off enough for me to enjoy the warmth of the water.



I was feeling a lot of the contractions in my back, so Emma suggested that I squat in the pool, which was easy to do, since the water helps to feel weightless. I laboured this way for a while; with Carl tending to the water temperature of the pool, and Shawna feeding me ice chips and cooling my face and neck down with a cold cloth. During contractions, Shawna would rub my shoulders and arms gently in an outward motion while I focused on my low, slow moaning and breathing. I envisioned myself on a wave riding to shore, never letting the water take me under. I made sure to keep my jaw, shoulders and hands as relaxed as possible. Any time I felt discouraged, I acknowledged the feeling and shoved it away. I was determined to stay positive and fearless.

At one point in the evening, I felt very shaky and my hands and face had a tingling sensation. We all thought it was that I needed to focus more on slowing my breathing down, but in hindsight, I believe it was transition. Shortly after this Emma noticed that I had made a grunting sound during a contraction and said "you're not pushing, are you?" I said that I wasn't sure, that there was a lot of pressure. She checked me and said "oh my word!"....and paused. I wasn't sure what she was going to say! She said "you are at 9 cm!"

Excited energy in the room rose as everyone knew this baby was coming soon! Emma called Midwife Katie to assist in the remainder of the birth. While waiting for Katie to arrive, Emma and I worked on a lip on my cervix. She pushed on it while I pushed against it. Finally it was gone and I could start pushing my baby out.

My previous birth had a very long pushing stage, so I decided to only push with the strong urges this time so that I could save my

energy. I began to feel a burning sensation inside, so I reached down and felt with a finger. I said "I can feel his head!" This encouraged me to push more and it wasn't long before his head was crowning right into my hands! I provided my own counter pressure while his head emerged. I was hoping to catch my baby myself, but I needed a bit of help to get the rest of his head out, so Emma came to my side. She unravelled a loop of cord that was around his neck and then assisted me in getting his shoulders out, which took another 3 or 4 pushes. I roared my baby Earth-side and had him in my arms at 11:03 PM.



I began to cry. Soon, my baby was crying with me. We stayed in the pool falling in love for a while. He latched for the first time, my sister cut his cord, and we woke up Oscar to meet his little brother, Seamus. He was thrilled and said "it's so exciting!"

Once out of the pool, Emma took all the measurements. I was shocked to find out that my new son Seamus was a whopping 10 pounds, 8 ounces with a head size of 38cm!! I had always trusted my body to birth my baby, however, this convinced me even further that women's bodies really are made well enough to do it. How empowering and exhilarating!



After some celebratory champagne, apple juice for Oscar, and a Guinness for myself, I showered and crawled into my bed with my new baby latched to my breast and my husband by my side. Oscar slept peacefully in his room that night and came running into our room in the morning, excited to see his new baby brother again.

*Pamela*

**Thank you to our clients. You are why we love what we do--even at 3:00 in the morning.**

Sincerely,

Joanne, Emma, Katie, Cat & Amy.

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