MBC Doula School teaches a holistic approach to doula care. We believe that the healer is only a guide; that the women during her childbearing year is a whole person; that all modalities can be effective and useful, including allopathic ones, if they are used appropriately.

I believe in the value of self-directed learning and self-exploration. The doula skills that are taught are skills that can be applied to all caring professions, including midwifery, medicine, alternative practitioners, and of course doulas.

**Who are we?**

The director of MBC Doula School, Rivka Cymbalist has been working as a birth attendant since 1997. She trained as a certified DONA doula and a CPM. Rivka is passionate about woman-centered midwifery care, and committed to lifelong education.

She founded [Montreal Birth Companions](http://montrealbirthcompanions.homestead.com/%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank), a grassroots organization that provided free doulas for refugee and immigrant women from 2003-2016. MBC served over 100 women per year.

She has been [training doulas](http://www.livingbirth.com/Doula_Workshops.html) since 2003.

Rivka was born in Africa, and loves to travel, run, and write. She is married, has five sons, and lives with her family in Montreal and Italy.

Her recent book The Birth Conspiracy was published November 2011.

**Teachers**

All of our guest teachers are trained and certified in their fields.

**Programs**

MBC Doula School offers three distinct programs, interconnected but flexible to accommodate the students’ needs.

1. Certificate: Completion of the Level One Doula Course (forty hours) will give you basic doula training and give you the knowledge and confidence to start volunteering as a doula.
2. Diploma: Completion of three basic levels of the MBC Doula School training (120 classroom hours plus 40 hours practical) will give you the knowledge and confidence you require to practice as a doula anywhere in the world. This is also a good basis for those who wish to enter midwifery education.
3. Certified Holistic Doula Practitioner: This is a 400-hour program that gives an in-depth training for doulas wishing to practice as holistic birth attendants. This certification will give you the option for membership in the [Academy of Naturopaths and Naturotherapists of Canada](http://www.acnn.ca/en/home/) so that you will be able to provide receipts for private insurance purposes. The required component includes the 160-hour Diploma course, plus 80 hours practicum and a remaining 160 hours chosen from the Electives courses.

Graduates will be proficient in teaching prenatal classes; attending births; breastfeeding support; alternative approaches to care during the childbearing year, and more. This certification will enhance the student’s possibilities of entering midwifery school or medical school; allows them to practice with complete confidence with varied populations; provides them with the foundation to set up a private doula practice.

**I. Certificate Program**

*Doula Care Level One* **40 hours**

This course will prepare students to work as doulas. They will learn the basics of doula care: the birth process, comfort techniques for the mother, breastfeeding basics, nutrition for pregnancy, common medical interventions.

A graduate will be confident in attending a few births with another doula, and then will progress to attending births on her own.

These are the subjects covered:

1. Anatomy and Physiology for the childbearing year
2. Basics of Doula Care: how to conduct prenatal and postpartum visits; labor support techniques; assisting women during various birth experiences.
3. Introduction to Breastfeeding
4. Nutrition
5. Practical Component (shadowing – minimum 8 hours)

When you have completed this course, you will have a good working knowledge of the anatomy and physiology of female reproduction; the anatomy of childbirth; the process of labor; supporting a woman through labor in a hospital; basic breastfeeding support techniques; nutritional guidelines during pregnancy and lactation; non-judgmental and supportive communication with clients and their families.

**II. Diploma Program**

The diploma program gives students the knowledge and confidence to run a private holistic doula practice. The program is comprised of 120 hours.

The graduate will be able to offer complementary techniques to the client throughout the childbearing year that will maintain healthy and satisfying pregnancy; reduce labor pain and the request for pharmaceutical pain relief; assist in breastfeeding. The diploma graduate will also be able to assess challenges and make suggestions or refer to alternative practitioners. She will be confident to offer doula support to different transitional journeys: birth, miscarriage, abortion, and more. Part of this program includes activism, learning about reproductive justice, and volunteering.

Prerequisite: MBC Doula School Certificate or equivalent doula training.

This program is comprised of the three following modules, comprising 80 hours of class time and 40 hours practical:

*Introduction to Healing During the Childbearing Year* **24 hours**

1. Challenges During the Childbearing Year: An Overview
2. Reviewing Medical Interventions
3. Diagnostics: Doula, Doctor and Midwife

1. Overview of Healing Modalities

This course provides the student with an understanding of the basic challenges during the childbearing year: pregnancy, labor and postpartum difficulties that the mother may encounter. The student will also review the medical interventions that were presented in the Level One course, with a focus on prevention.

The diagnostic techniques used by physicians and midwives will be presented to the students, so that their understanding of these techniques can be explained to their clients. Diagnostic techniques used by the doula, which are low-tech and hands-on, will be studied and practiced extensively.

The final portion of this course is an introduction and overview of the healing modalities that may be used by a holistic doula.

*Holistic Healing During the Childbearing Year* **24 hours**

1. Healing during Pregnancy, Labor and Birth
2. Healing during the Postpartum Period
3. Practical Applications

This course gives the student a comprehensive understanding of the healing modalities used throughout the childbearing year, from pre-conception to post partum. These modalities can be used preventatively or curatively. During the course there will be opportunities for the students to formulate healing strategies for their clients, as well as discussions of the advantages and disadvantages of the different modalities in various situations.

*Practicum*  **32 hours**

1. Shadowing an experienced doula for prenatal, labor and postpartum care. (16 hours)
2. Providing doula care for a client, accompanied by a mentor. (16 hours)

During this module, the student will have the opportunity to shadow an experienced doula throughout the care of a client.

When the shadow experience is completed, the student will provide primary doula care for her own client, with a mentor present or available.

These experiences must be evaluated by the client or by the mentor doula, and extensive notes must be taken for evaluation.

**III. Certified Holistic Doula Practitioner**

This is a complete 400-hour program that gives an in-depth training for doulas who wish to become holistic birth attendants. The prerequisite is the Diploma (*Doula Care Level One*, *Introduction to Healing During the Childbearing Year*,*Holistic Healing During the Childbearing Year*, *Practicum*). Studies include the full course load from the Diploma program, 50 hours of Core Electives Courses, 80 hours of practicum and 110 hours of Electives courses.

Graduates will be proficient in teaching prenatal classes; attending births; breastfeeding support; alternative approaches to care during the childbearing year, and more. This certification will enhance the student’s possibilities of entering midwifery school or medical school; allows them to practice with complete confidence with varied populations; provides them with the foundation to set up a private doula practice.

**Core Electives**

*Postpartum Intensive* **24 hours**

This course will give the student an in-depth understanding of the postpartum period, that is, from birth to six weeks postpartum. The physical, emotional and psychological experience of mother and child will be discussed and challenges during this time will be examined. Alternative methods of maintaining postpartum health will be explored.

*Herbalism* **10 hours**

Students will devote ten hours to learning about the use of medicinal herbs during the childbearing year. We will befriend the most common herbs used for women, and we will discover and practice the ways we can identify, store, and use medicinal herbs. Uses and cautions of medicinal herbs throughout the childbearing year will also be taught.

*Massage: Prenatal, During Labor, Postpartum* **10 hours**

Massage is one of our most important tools. This course will give the student a good introduction to basic massage techniques during the childbearing year: which techniques to use when, and which not to use in certain situations. Bodywork is one of the mainstays of the doula skill set: the doula will complete this course with confidence for supporting any woman in childbirth.

*CPR* **6 hours**

Basic adult and infant CPR is important for everyone, and is a requirement for the certification.

**Electives**

*A Safe Passage workshop* **14 hours**

A Safe Passage is an Advanced Practitioner Training program designed to help caregivers gain an understanding of the special needs of women survivors of abuse and learn the skills needed to support them through their pregnancy, labor & childbirth and early postpartum.

*Active Listening* **4 hours**

Participants in this workshop are invited to reflect personally and collectively on what it means to listen, what it means to be heard. Together, we will review some of the key components of active listening, while considering its origins as well as its many strengths and limitations.

*Birth Narrative* **10 hours**

Birth represents a physiological reality in which metaphor and biology meet.  By exploring these metaphors from both directions, we can learn more about how to help women give birth and how to help anyone birth a new self, a transformation, a change. We will explore birth stories and narrative work from the mother’s and from the practitioner’s perspective.

*Introduction to Cranio-Sacral Therapy* **12 hours**

Craniosacral therapy is an extremely light touch modality that activates a persons' own resources to progress emotionally, physically and psychologically. This therapy is ideal for pregnant and birthing moms and their babies because it is gentle, calming and efficient. This course introduces the student to the main techniques and concepts of the therapy.

*Cranio-Sacral Two* **12 hours**

This course focuses on the uses of craniosacral therapy during pregnancy and labor, using the techniques to optimize healthy pregnancies and to reduce complications and interventions during labor.

*Cranio-Sacral Three*  **6 hours**

This courses focuses on the mother and baby during the postpartum period. The student will learn how to use craniosacral therapy for the newborn and for the postpartum woman.

*Homeopathy for Birth Workers One* **3 hours**

Homeopathy is one of the gentlest healing techniques we know. In this course, a trained homeopath will present an introduction to some simple remedies and regimes for use during pregnancy, labor, and postpartum.The student will learn how homeopathy works, what simple remedies to safely recommend, and when to refer out to a homeopath.

*Homeopathy for Birth Workers Two* ***7* hours**

This course will provide a deeper understanding of homeopathy and its use during the childbearing year. The students will move from a use of simple remedies to be able to identify specific remedies to use in each situation.

*Informatics for Birth Workers*  **16 hours**

Birth workers now more than ever need access to information for their clients. How much of the information that we can find is evidence-based? Where can we find reliable sources?

This course will also examine the ways that social media has affected our work as birth workers, and explores some rules to follow when using these media.

*Issues in Reproduction***20 hours**

This course looks at the complicated political realities of childbirth and parenting, with a view to exploring our held beliefs about how, where and with whom we give birth, and what choices we make as mothers.

*Language and Birth* **16 hours**

This is a two-day workshop during which the student will learn about the ways we use language as birth workers: how does language heal? How does it wound? What are some specialized vocabularies we need to know? How is language used as an instrument of power?

*Mentorship Training* **6 hours**

At the heart of the volunteer program is a buddy system that allows doulas to share their experience with a student shadow. This course provides a basic foundation for this experience.

*Placental Encapsulation*  **8 hours**

This workshop teaches students how to prepare the placenta: it is cleaned, dehydrated and processed into capsule or tincture form for the postpartum mother or to keep for future ailments of mother or baby.Health benefits for mother, baby and the family will be examined.

*Rebozo* **8 hours**

“Rebozo” is a Mexican word that describes a long shawl that traditional midwives use to assist the laboring woman. It can be used in many ways and for many reasons. This workshop is an introduction to basic Rebozo techniques: assisting a normal labor, correcting baby’s position, comforting the mother, use during the pushing phase among others.

*Singing Birth* **20 hours**

The main goal of the workshop is to stimulate and facilitate the participants’ awareness of the body and the voice in order to be able to guide them consciously during childbirth. This is a powerful technique that every Birth Keeper should learn.

*The Doula Business* **10 hours**

For students who plan to open a private practice, this course offers an introduction to basic business techniques. We will explore the concept of abundance and scarcity, as well as examining the more practical aspects of running a business.

*The Placenta, Umbilical Cord, Amniotic Sac* **8 hours**

These important organs are part of the fetus’ home for nine months. The students will learn about anatomy, function, and abnormalities of these organs. This course gives an insight into function, optimum care, and healing strategies.

*Working with Families* **8 hours**

Working as a doula means working with families. How can we provide non-judgemental, tolerant, yet appropriate care to the different types of families we encounter? What kinds of families are we prepared to work with? Where do out boundaries lie?

*Working with marginalized populations* **8 hours**

This workshop explores the needs of marginalized women, and teaches students about working with different populations, and working with women from different cultures, countries and life experiences and choices. Role-play, reading, birth stories will be used to expand knowledge and understanding.

*Yoga Techniques for Doulas One* **8 hours**

This introduction teaches student the yoga postures that are good for a pregnant body; breathing techniques that are calming through a long labor; and ideas for meditations that can be used in preparation for childbirth.

*Yoga Techniques for Doulas Two* **8 hours**

This course teaches student the yoga postures that are good for labor and postpartum, breathing techniques that are calming through a long labor, and ideas for meditations that can be used. The techniques taught will be the more advanced techniques the doula can use during labor and postpartum.

**Advanced Practicum 80 hours**

MBC Doula School Certified Doula Practicum: providing primary doula care under the supervision of a mentor.

The doula will take detailed notes of the first meeting with the client; all of the prenatal sessions; labor and birth; and the postpartum visit(s). She will present an evaluation form signed by the client, and an oral description of the experience to her mentor. 80 hours is the minimum: five clients would be optimum.