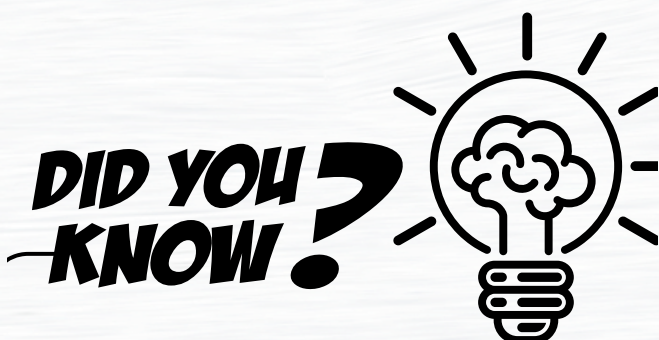




Here is what you will find in our 11th Edition ...

- A message from Darlene Carifelle, Metis Settlements Provincial Service Network Coordinator
- Northwest Peace FASD update
- NWR FASD Society Mackenzie Network update
- Breaking Down FASD
- FASD & Relationships
- Did You Know
- Understanding and practicing empathy
- CANFASD Opportunities



FASD is one of the leading neurodevelopment disabilities in Canada. Affecting 4% of the population—more than autism, cerebral palsy, and Down syndrome combined.

INTERESTING FACT

Subscribe to our mailing list!
www.metissettlementsfasd.ca

Message from Darlene the Network Coordinator

Tansi,

I hope this message finds you well as we step into the month of February. As caregivers of individuals with FASD or those who have FASD, your dedication and love make a world of difference every day. Your commitment to providing support and understanding creates a positive impact on the lives of those you care for.

February is not just about chilly weather and Valentine's Day; it's also a time to celebrate the love and care you bring into the lives of your loved ones. Here are a few tips and reminders to brighten your journey:

- 1. Celebrate Small Wins:** Take a moment to acknowledge and celebrate the small victories. Whether it's a new skill learned or a positive interaction, these moments are worth cherishing.
- 2. Self-Care Matters:** Remember, you're important too. Take some time for self-care. Whether it's a quiet cup of tea, a short walk, or a moment of reflection, caring for yourself enhances your ability to care for others.
- 3. Community Support:** Reach out to local support groups and communities. Sharing experiences and tips with fellow caregivers can provide a sense of understanding and connection.
- 4. Stay Informed:** Knowledge is empowering. Stay informed about FASD, new resources, and available support networks. The more we know, the better we can support our loved ones.
- 5. Express Yourself:** It's okay to share your feelings. Whether it's joy, frustration, or anything in between, expressing your emotions is a healthy way to navigate the challenges of caregiving.

Remember, you're not alone on this journey. The Metis Settlements Provincial Service Network is here to support you every step of the way. If you have any questions or need assistance, don't hesitate to reach out.

Thank you for the incredible work you do everyday.

With Respect,

Darlene Carifelle

*Metis Settlements Provincial
Service Network Coordinator*
dcarifelle@msgc.ca





Northwest Peace FASD

- Northwest FASD Society** (City of Grande Prairie)
- Peavine
- East Prairie
- Gift Lake

Description of FASD Mentor Roles (PCAP Program & FASD Supports)

The Parent-Child Assistance Program (PCAP) offers holistic support to women of childbearing years. Support is offered before, during and after pregnancy for those experiencing difficulties with substance use and other barriers. PCAP mentors build healthy relationships with the participants by meeting them where they are at in their lives and supporting them achieve their goals. PCAP mentors can support with accessing medical care, meeting basic needs, advocating with children services/mental health/addictions services, and connection to the community.

The FASD Support Mentor provides support for individuals suspected or diagnosed with FASD of all ages and their families/ caregivers which includes coordination of services, advocacy, and mentoring. This support can help individuals gain access to support, assist with government forms/applications, life skills and connection to their community. Children may gain support through the school system and caregivers gain knowledge of creative ways to support their children in FASD-informed ways.

FASD Mentor, Gift Lake Metis Settlement: Marge Cunningham

The FASD Mentor is a combination of FASD supports and PCAP Mentor Program. Offering services to individuals and families within the Gift Lake Metis Settlement.

Email: marge@giftlakemetis.ca

FASD Mentor, Peavine Metis Settlement: Valerie Donison

The FASD Mentor is a combination of FASD support and PCAP Mentor Program. Offering services to individuals and families within the Peavine Metis Settlement.

Email: valerie.donison@peavinemetis.com

FASD Mentor, East Prairie Metis Settlement: Donna Grier

The FASD Mentor is a combination of FASD support and PCAP Mentor Program. Offering services to individuals and families within the East Prairie Metis Settlement.

Email: donna@epms.ca

Northwest Peace FASD Network, Grande Prairie Office Contacts:

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Jen Duperron-Trydal, Wrap 2.0 Instructional Coach: jen@nwfasd.ca

Leanne Aspen, Prevention Facilitator: leanne@nwfasd.ca

Michelle Perron, Diagnostic Coordinator: michelle@nwfasd.ca

Administration Contacts:

Gwen Vekved, Executive Director: gwen@nwfasd.ca

Gail Andrews, Operations Manager: gail@nwfasd.ca

Dawn Peppard, Administrative Support: dawn@nwfasd.ca



The NWR FASD Society Mackenzie Network Paddle Prairie

Community often creates an atmosphere of support, mentoring, fellowship, laughter, help, empathy and compassion. When was the last time you felt totally relaxed in a community function? When was the last time you felt understood, accepted and a part of that community? When did you last feel heard and valued for who you are?

Community can make or break many families and individuals. When a family has a crisis situation or are grieving often the heart of the community can be seen coming forward to support the family, with visits, food or help physical and monetary. Once the situation has "resolved" the community members go back to their lives doing what they need to until the next event draws them to support another individual or family. People know these communities will be there for support when they need them.

For families who are caring for someone who has a disability, the same support would benefit the family and community. However, the level of support or the crisis intervention needed may not be within the community's capacity to provide and often times stretches the family beyond its limits, mentally, physically and financially.

So how do we provide community support to families who have children or adults with a disability? For our families, we would be speaking specifically about the disability of FASD – Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder. This is a medical diagnosis that identifies brain differences that impact a person's ability to perform certain duties or activities, making navigating life difficult and the reaction is often seen as behaviour issues.

So how do we as a community support families who are living with an individual impacted with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder.

First we need to learn about FASD as a disability. How does the brain work or not work that is causing the behaviours? How can we help the individual to understand what we are saying in a way that is non-threatening? FASD is a complex disability with complex reactions or behaviours when the disability is not recognized and people start thinking that they are doing the behaviours on purpose.

It is important to become FASD informed communities, which will lead to all disability informed, so we can better understand and support our families in the community that need our compassion, support and empathy for a lifetime. FASD is not curable, but knowledge and informed support make all the difference!

Wanda Beland
NWR FASD Society Mackenzie Network – Paddle Prairie, Alberta
780-926-3375 (T)

WHAT IS FASD?

Let's Break It Down

FASD stands for **Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder**. It is a lifelong disability that affects the brain and body of people who were exposed to alcohol in the womb. Each person with FASD has both strengths and challenges and will need special support to help them succeed in many different parts of their daily lives.

When a pregnant person drinks alcohol, it can go through the placenta and affect the baby's development. The harm caused by drinking during pregnancy depends on different factors like how much, how often, and when the person drinks, as well as other things like genetics and nutrition.

There isn't a known safe amount of alcohol for pregnant people, and drinking during pregnancy can lead to Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD). FASD can cause problems with how the brain develops, and sometimes it also affects the way the face looks, along with other issues like congenital anomalies and poor growth. It's a big deal because it's one of the main preventable reasons for birth defects and developmental challenges.

FASD is more common than you might think—it's found in over 1% of people in 76 countries. It's especially high in individuals living in situations like foster care or dealing with the justice and mental health systems. The effects of FASD on society and the economy are significant, but unfortunately, it often doesn't get enough attention, and many people with FASD don't get diagnosed early.

Looking ahead, it's important that future research on FASD includes input from people who actually have it. We need to understand it better, agree on how to diagnose it, and figure out the best ways to treat it. We also need to reduce the stigma around it, make sure everyone has access to good services, improve the lives of those with FASD, and work on preventing it in the next generations. **So, it's not just a health issue but also a social and economic one that we need to tackle together.**



Individuals with FASD face unique challenges in forming and maintaining relationships.

Here are key points to remember:

- **Communication Challenges:** Individuals with FASD may struggle with communication skills, both verbal and non-verbal. Caregivers can work on developing alternative communication methods, such as visual cues or simplified language, to enhance understanding and connection.
- **Social Skills Development:** FASD can affect the development of social skills, making it challenging for individuals to navigate social situations. Provide structured social opportunities, offer guidance on social cues, and promote positive peer interactions.
- **Establishing Trust:** Building trust is essential for any relationship, but individuals with FASD may find this particularly challenging due to past experiences or difficulties understanding social cues. Creating a consistent and supportive environment can help foster trust over time.
- **Setting Realistic Expectations:** Caregivers and individuals with FASD should work together to set realistic expectations for relationships. Recognizing and embracing each other's strengths and limitations can contribute to healthier and more understanding connections.
- **Educating Others:** Caregivers can play a vital role in educating friends, family, teachers, and peers about FASD. Increasing awareness helps create a supportive network that understands the unique needs of individuals with FASD and fosters more inclusive relationships.

- **Adapting Parenting and Teaching Styles:** Caregivers, educators, and other support figures should adapt their parenting or teaching styles to accommodate the specific needs of individuals with FASD. Consistent routines, clear expectations, and positive reinforcement can contribute to a more stable environment.
- **Seeking Professional Support:** Seek professional support, such as counseling or therapy, to address relationship challenges. Professionals can provide guidance on managing behavioral issues, improving communication, and strengthening family dynamics.
- **Balancing Independence and Support:** Individuals with FASD may require varying levels of support in relationships. Caregivers should strive to strike a balance between providing necessary assistance and fostering independence, empowering individuals to develop and maintain connections.
- **Emphasizing Positivity and Encouragement:** Celebrate successes, no matter how small, and provide positive reinforcement. Building a positive and supportive environment helps individuals with FASD feel valued and encouraged in their relationships.
- **Promoting Inclusive Friendships:** Encourage the development of inclusive friendships where individuals with FASD feel accepted and understood. Facilitate social activities that cater to their interests and strengths, helping to create a sense of belonging.

REMEMBER! →

Every individual with FASD is unique, and strategies that work for one person may not necessarily work for another.



DID YOU KNOW?

- Individuals with FASD are at an increased risk of developing secondary disabilities, such as mental health issues, substance abuse problems, and involvement with the criminal justice system.
- FASD can have severe neurological effects, leading to cognitive impairments, executive functioning difficulties, and challenges in areas such as memory, attention, and problem-solving.
- Despite being a preventable condition, preventing FASD remains challenging due to various factors, including lack of awareness, inadequate support systems, and the stigma associated with alcohol use during pregnancy.
- Individuals with FASD may face significant stigma and social isolation, both within their communities and in educational or work settings, contributing to mental health challenges.
- FASD is often underdiagnosed or misdiagnosed as other developmental or behavioral disorders. This can lead to delays in providing appropriate support and interventions.



Individuals with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) often excel in short-term projects, but may struggle with maintaining effort for extended periods due to their brains working twice as hard.

So, think of them more as sprinters, not long-distance runners.
Sprinting skills are valuable!

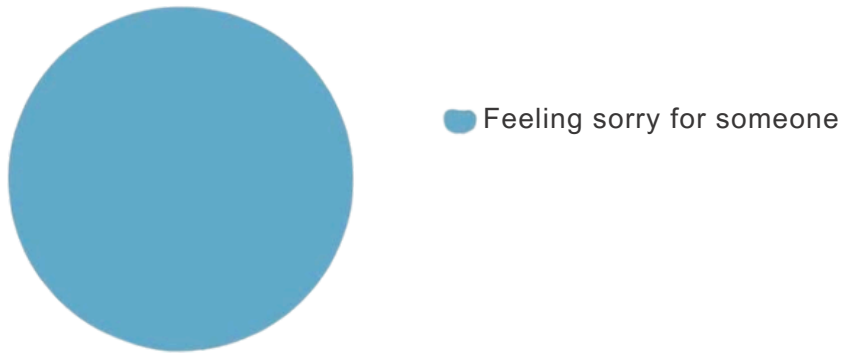
GET ADDITIONAL RESOURCES & SUPPORT

 www.metissettlementsfasd.ca

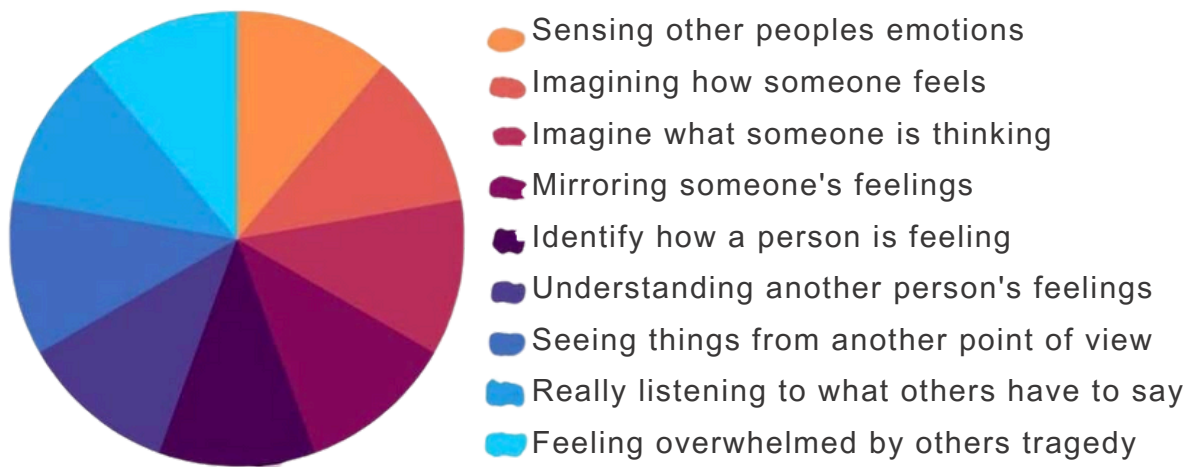
Understanding AND Practicing Empathy Is A Key Element In Supporting Individuals Affected By FASD.



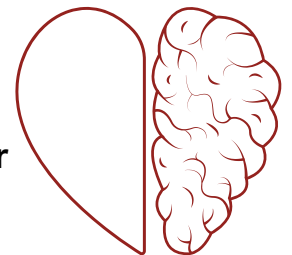
WHAT PEOPLE THINK EMPATHY IS



WHAT EMPATHY ACTUALLY IS



Empathy enables us to connect on a deeper level with those facing the challenges associated with FASD, allowing us to appreciate their unique experiences. By putting ourselves in their shoes, we gain insight into the complexities they navigate daily.



This understanding fosters a compassionate approach to caregiving, creating an environment where individuals with FASD feel heard and valued. Through empathy, we can bridge the gaps in communication and cultivate a supportive community that empowers those affected by FASD to thrive.



Did you know? CanFASD developed a standard definition of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)



Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) is a diagnostic term used to describe impacts on the brain and body of individuals prenatally exposed to alcohol.

This definition can help to:

- Reduce stigma
- Increase consistency in practice
- Improve knowledge and understanding of FASD
- Change the perspective of FASD to focus on strengths.

Understanding FASD as a Lifelong Disability

Individuals with FASD face daily challenges, and require assistance with motor skills, physical health, learning, memory, attention, communication, emotional regulation, and social skills to reach their full potential.

It's important to note that each person with FASD has unique strengths and challenges.

Opportunities

The Canada FASD Research Network offers many online learning courses for individuals seeking more learning opportunities at home.

www.canfasd.ca

Basic FASD Learning

This course is intended _for everyone_** that will come into contact with individuals with FASD including all sectors of work, families, individuals with FASD, spouses, and the general public

Sector/Special Interest FASD Training

Advanced training courses for:

- All administrators, teachers, educational assistants, ECE's, office admin, Board personnel and bus drivers
- Front-line service providers in many fields including mental health, addictions, corrections, shelters, literacy and adult education programs.
- Professionals in the Justice systems
- Professionals in the Solicitor General systems

The Prevention Conversation

A training program for front-line health and social services professionals, to provide them with the knowledge, skills, and confidence when engaging with their clients/patients.



See more online training opportunities
at www.canfasd.ca



**Did you know that 1.5 million
Canadians have FASD?**

Learn more about this disability through
online courses.

<https://estore.canfasd.ca/foundations-in-fasd>



**CanFASD
Online Learning**

www.canfasd.ca

**Online courses to improve your
understanding of fetal alcohol
spectrum disorder (FASD).**

- ✓ Sector-specific courses
- ✓ Evidence-based information
- ✓ Work at your own pace
- ✓ One-year access to course materials
- ✓ Certificate upon completion



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