

2023-2024
**ANNUAL
REPORT**



WHO WE ARE

The Canada Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Research Network (CanFASD) is a network of stakeholders from across Canada focused on addressing Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD). We are a national and charitable organization that supports research and knowledge exchange initiatives to inform evidence-based policies and practices.

CanFASD's unique partnership brings together researchers, students, practitioners, policymakers, families, and communities across Canada and internationally to address the complexities of FASD. Our research teams currently lead over 50 major projects in the areas of prevention, diagnosis, intervention, justice, and child welfare.

MISSION

CanFASD supports Canada's leadership, across all sectors and at all levels, in addressing the extraordinary complexities of FASD.

The Network does this through producing and sustaining national collaborative research, shared with all Canadians, focusing primarily on the critical areas of prevention, intervention and diagnosis.

The work of the Network leads to increasingly effective prevention strategies and practice and improved support for people affected by FASD.

VISION

All Canadians are engaged and united with awareness, evidence and knowledge and are effectively addressing the complexities of FASD.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

An important step in reconciliation is the acknowledgement of traditional treaty lands and recognition for the people of the territory.

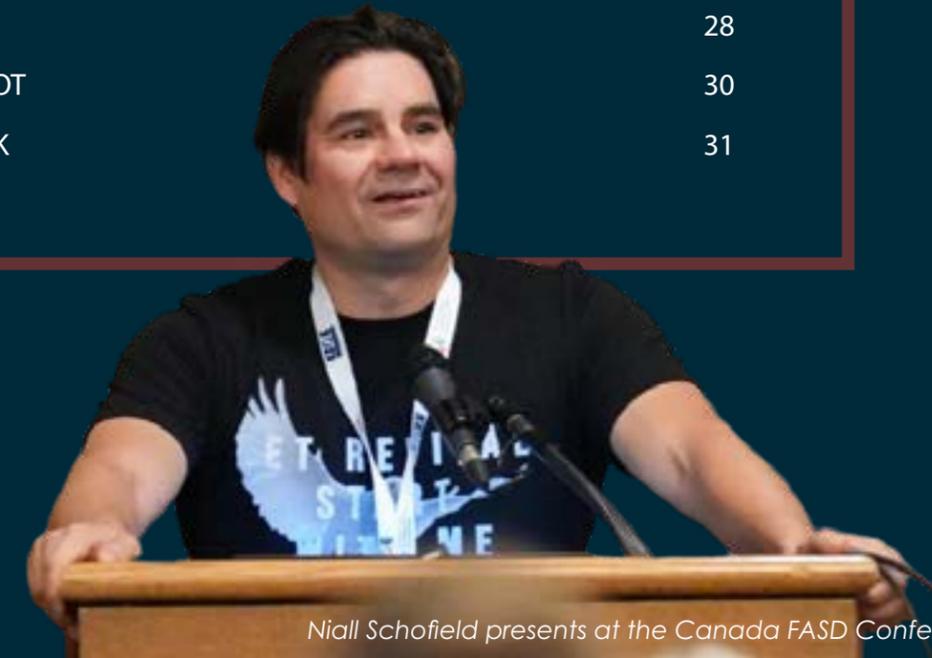
The Canada FASD Research Network recognizes the historical significance and contributions of Indigenous peoples and their cultures and understands the important role that the Indigenous community plays today and in the future.

We acknowledge that we live, work and meet on traditional territories across Canada of many of the First Nations, Metis and Inuit whose footsteps have marked these lands for centuries.

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Together.
Finding answers.
Improving outcomes.

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Niall Schofield presents at the Canada FASD Conference

FROM EVIDENCE TO ACTION

Canada FASD Conference

The first-ever Canada FASD Conference took place in Saskatoon in November 2023. The sold-out event brought together over 500 researchers, caregivers, individuals with FASD, policymakers and professionals to share what they know about FASD.

The conference's unique program connected those with lived experience of FASD with researchers and practitioners in the field. The program covered a wealth of topics that intersect with FASD, including justice, diagnosis, and prevention. The demand for the event exceeded its capacity, with tickets selling out more than 100 days before the event.

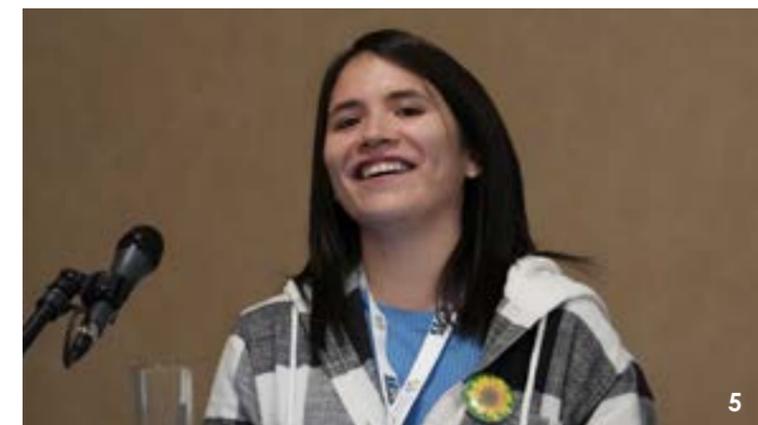
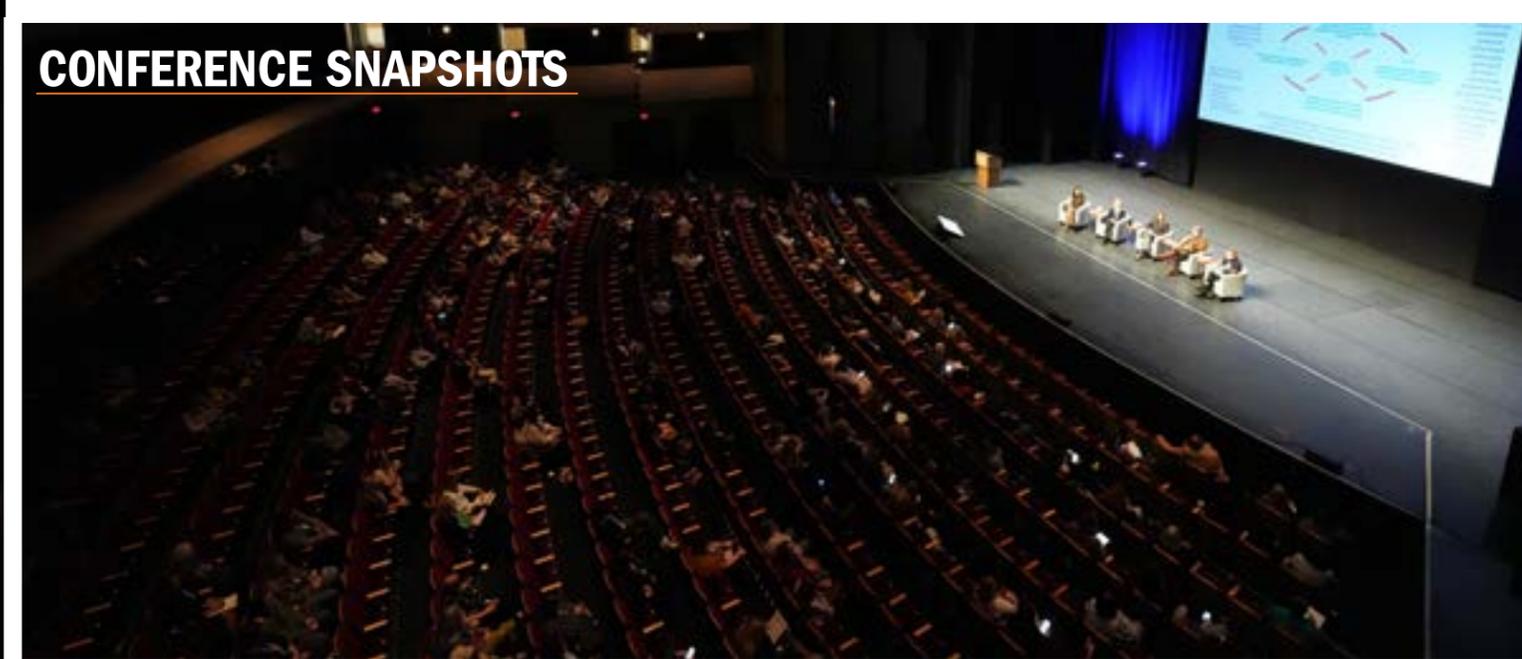
It was held in partnership with the Governments of Alberta and Saskatchewan, and the Canada Northwest FASD Partnership.

The three-day event was packed to the brim with opportunities for attendees to learn, connect, and create meaningful change for those with FASD. Program highlights include presentations from experts in the field as well as those with lived experience.

There was representation from almost all the provinces and territories of Canada. The event showcased the incredible work being done to enhance the lives of individuals with FASD and promote inclusivity in the field.



CONFERENCE SNAPSHOTS



Speakers and attendees at the Canada FASD Conference

Organizing Partners



Canada Northwest FASD Partnership



Message from the BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Olecia Walker, Board Chair

As I embark on my second year as Board Chair, I remain deeply inspired by CanFASD's remarkable achievements throughout 2023-2024. As we approach the year's end, I want to celebrate some of these milestones.

First and foremost, I want to express my deepest appreciation to the dedicated CanFASD team, whose unwavering commitment and resilience have propelled us forward in the face of every challenge. From our steadfast Research Leads and staff to the invaluable contributions of our Family Advisory Committee, Alumni Committee, and the Adults with FASD Expert Collaboration Team, each member has played an indispensable role in advancing our mission. Furthermore, CanFASD's establishment of robust partnerships, both domestically and internationally, underscores our collective commitment to positively impacting families, caregivers, individuals, practitioners, and policymakers alike. Lastly, I commend our exceptional team of leaders, whose foresight and strategic acumen continuously opens new avenues

for CanFASD's reach across provincial, national, and global borders.

I also want to acknowledge the indispensable role of our Board of Directors, whose diverse backgrounds and insights contribute significantly to CanFASD's strategic direction. This year, we are delighted to welcome Howard Sapers to our board, whose wealth of experience in correctional policy, mental health, and criminal justice will undoubtedly enrich our deliberations and strategic direction. Howard's expertise, gained from his tenure as Correctional Investigator of Canada and his leadership in comprehensive reviews, will be instrumental in guiding CanFASD's initiatives concerning criminal justice, and mental health. Together, our board is committed to steering CanFASD towards continued growth and success.

This report offers a glimpse into CanFASD's remarkable achievements throughout the past year. Two notable highlights of 2023 include the inaugural Canada FASD Conference and the

ongoing progress in developing Bill S-253, aimed at establishing a National Framework for FASD, which was initially introduced in October 2022.

The inaugural Canada FASD Conference, held at TCU Place in Saskatoon from November 7 to 9, 2023 was a resounding success and a beacon of innovation in the FASD field. Bringing together over 500 attendees, including researchers, caregivers, individuals with FASD, policymakers, and professionals, this sold-out event showcased a diverse array of presentations covering topics such as justice, diagnosis, and prevention. This ground breaking conference not only united stakeholders from across Canada and internationally but also demonstrated the transformative power of collaborative efforts in addressing the challenges of FASD. Through the dedicated teamwork of CanFASD and its partners, this monumental gathering exemplified a commitment to raising awareness and fostering innovative solutions for FASD on a global scale.

Furthermore, the advancement of Bill S-253, referred to the Standing Committee on Social Affairs, Science, and Technology in June 2023, represents a crucial step forward in CanFASD's efforts to develop a national framework. This framework will serve as a guiding roadmap in identifying and delivering

essential support to Canadians living with FASD and their families. CanFASD extends heartfelt appreciation to Senator Ravalia and Senator Duncan for their unwavering dedication and collaborative spirit in co-sponsoring this bill.

As we pause to contemplate these achievements, my heart is overflowing with gratitude for the unwavering dedication and collaborative spirit exhibited by every member of CanFASD. Together, we are forging a path forward, making significant strides in raising awareness and tackling the complex challenges associated with FASD. As we gaze towards the future, I am filled with unwavering confidence that through our ongoing efforts and strategic partnerships, we will continue to propel our mission forward, empowering and supporting not only those directly impacted by FASD but also their caregivers, families, policymakers, and communities, extending our reach both within Canada and beyond. As our biennial conference becomes a cornerstone event, it promises to bring together experts, stakeholders, and advocates, fostering collaboration, sharing insights, and driving transformative change in the field of FASD research, support, and advocacy.

Sincerely,

Olecia Walker

BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Olecia Walker



Darren Joslin



Alan Bocking



Wenda Bradley



Carol Anne
Cheechoo



Howard Sapers



David Brown



Christian Whalen



Shana Mohr

Message from the SENIOR RESEARCH LEAD

Dr. Jocelynn L. Cook

When people ask me what I do, or when I have to write down my “profession” on a form, I am always proud to say “Scientist”, and I say it with a smile, or I write it with a flourish. I feel like I have been so many things along the way – daughter, sister, friend, lifeguard, swimming instructor, laboratory teaching assistant, faculty member, public servant, student, graduate student, post-doc, mother...but none of these have truly defined me the way that “scientist” has. It’s not a profession, it’s my soul.

I was introduced to the field of FASD when I was doing lab rotations in my first year of graduate school. Dr. Carrie Randall was investigating the effects of prenatal alcohol on fetal growth and development and I was FASCINATED about the impact of maternal physiology/exposure on long term outcomes for offspring. Although we were a basic science laboratory, I was always reminded about the “so what” aspect of the work that we were doing....“So, what is the impact on children; so what is the impact on the lifespan; so what is the impact on pregnancy; so what is the impact on families...” I was so fortunate to have “grown up” as a scientist among so many of the pioneers in the field, and I am proud to still be involved in work that continues to advance our understanding of alcohol and pregnancy and FASD.

The CanFASD Research Leads were meeting recently and we were brainstorming, and laughing, and sharing our ideas and frustrations. We ended up talking about how we really feel like family – full of different personalities – but truly a family. So many of us have worked together for so many years and we have become much more than colleagues. When the Canada Northwest FASD Partnership was born, I was engaged as a researcher and new faculty member. When CanFASD was born, I was leading the

development of the diagnostic guidelines for FASD at The Public Health Agency of Canada. Eventually, I was presented with the opportunity to work at CanFASD as the Executive Director and it was an incredible time, as we developed the National FASD Database and updated the FASD Diagnostic Guidelines.

I took on the role as the inaugural Chief Scientific Officer at the Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada in order to expand the reach of our work in the field of women’s health, and to bring experience in substance use during pregnancy, social determinants and trauma-informed care, and clinical practice guideline development to an organization that provides training and education to women’s health providers. I only accepted the position because I was able to continue my research in the field of FASD and to

remain the principal investigator of the National database. In my role as Data Lead and now as Senior Research Lead, I have worked hard to bring awareness and support for the field of FASD into my networks and communities in Canada and internationally, as have my Research Lead colleagues.

All of us have been spending time on reporting, innovating, applying for proposals, meeting with partners, collaborators and governments, and advocating for the field of FASD, individuals with FASD and their families. We continue to seek opportunities to apply for funding that would allow us to bring together our areas of expertise and teams across sectors and disciplines in one umbrella project. We have talked about the continuum of preconception through to pregnancy, post-partum and then to interventions. We have also explored how we can turn FASD diagnosis on its head, by incorporating and focusing on strengths rather than deficits, and we want to be able to have accurate and reliable statistics about alcohol during pregnancy and FASD. There have also been exciting developments with international collaborations that have almost all of the Research Leads engaged: trauma, justice, and intervention are three collectives that are developing.

A highlight for all of us this year was CanFASD’s conference in November. It was an incredible opportunity for CanFASD to highlight its incredible work and for the research leads and their teams to share their work, to renew old relationships and to foster new ones. Our researchers truly shone...and we had so much fun being together in person again! Thank you to CanFASD for this incredible event! Highlights of the incredible work by CanFASD’s research leads this year are outlined below.

Prevention

Canada continues to struggle with an opioid crisis and the emergence of more powerful synthetic drugs. We also have a crisis with respect to mental health and women and children – especially those with social, economic, of health issues – are disproportionately affected. We also know that alcohol use during pregnancy is not declining and we continue to live with the effects of prenatal alcohol exposure and FASD. Alcohol use during pregnancy is more complex

than ever, and alcohol’s neurobehavioural impacts continue to be explored. We have come so far but we still have work to do!

Dr. Nancy Poole and I worked together to develop online information and resources geared toward perinatal care providers and the public related to trauma-informed care; what it is, why it is important, and how healthcare providers in the sensitive field of sexual and reproductive health, can make small changes in their clinical environment and their practices that are trauma-informed. The relationship between alcohol use during pregnancy and trauma has been well-established and we hope that we can continue to raise awareness and capacity so that perinatal services and supports are more accessible and more effective.

Dr. Poole has also been busy with her prevention team, and The Prevention Blog continues to provide exciting thoughts and information. She continues to provide information and expertise about supportive alcohol policy as it relates to FASD prevention and has recently co-authored a study protocol about mental health outcomes of children whose mothers use substances and have other health and social challenges, when specialized mental health programming for children is integrated in wraparound services for mothers. Finally, the prevention team published the annual annotated bibliography of articles published on prevention in 2023, and CanFASD also released their top articles of 2023!

Dr. Badry has also been busy and her efforts led to authorship on recent publication on the Strong Born campaign in Australia, and she also published a chapter, Disrupted life narratives of children in care with neurodevelopmental disabilities: Whose story is it?, in “Neuroethics and Neurodevelopment” which has been identified for inclusion in a special collection for RELX’s Sustainable Development Goals Resource Centre.

Intervention

Dr. McLaughlin and Dr. Pei continue to lead the work on COMPASS and are putting the final touches on the design of the tool which remains strongly aligned with Toward Healthy Outcomes. Dr. Pei has



worked hard to develop and release Toward Healthy Outcomes 2.0 and there has been a lot of uptake. Her MILE program has also expanded. Branding has been updated and implementation across Alberta has been more successful than was anticipated. Dr. McLaughlin and Dr. Pei continue to work with CanFASD on the housing projects and the work continues to progress with dynamic teams - in both cases looking towards pilots/application to integrate into practice that will have significant impact. Finally, work related to longitudinal mental health and imaging is progressing, and Dr. Pei has been involved in a publication of novel data related to Limbic brain subregions associated with mental health symptoms in youth with and without prenatal alcohol exposure.

Screening, Diagnosis and the National Database

Dr. McLachlan led a large team with CanFASD members Dr. Pei, Dr. Tremblay, Dr. Mela, Dr. Flannigan and Kathy Unsworth on a project focused on increasing capacity to identify and support individuals with FASD and complex neurodevelopmental needs in British Columbia. As part of this work, they developed The FASD Screening and Identification Conceptual Framework in order to demonstrate the indicators and needs to be considered for implementing evidence-based FASD screening, including selecting existing tools and/or validating existing tools, developing new instruments, and providing needed resources and training for success. The broader scope is to improve tools and practices to better support individuals with FASD in the BC justice system, and the results from this project have the potential to impact screening and interventions across the country.

The National database continues to grow, thanks to our participating clinics and families and has ~5,000 records to date! With numbers comes power, and the ability to ask the data questions whose results can give us answers that we can use to effect real change! We have learned about sex differences in brain impairments, age-differences in mental health issues and patterns related to

experiences of individuals with FASD. We have learned that poly-substance exposure is prevalent in our population of individuals with FASD, which highlights how complex the population is and how carefully we have to think about prevention and support.

Dr. Mela has been exploring the relationship between prenatal alcohol, nicotine and cannabis and the impact on mental health outcomes in individuals with FASD, and continues to be an advocate for FASD in his work with the Canadian Medical Protective Association and in the forensic community. His medication algorithm continues to be sought-after and has been an incredible resource to the field. Dr. Hanlon-Dearman continues to lead the way with the paediatric population, providing her expertise with asking clinical questions and directing our data analysis and interpretation to answer questions that are important to kids and their families. We are thankful for her advocacy with her fellow paediatricians as she works with community members and researchers to develop FASD-informed resources for substance use treatment and housing to enhance service delivery in these areas.

Finally, we are grateful to our newest Research Lead, Dr Tremblay, as she provides guidance to all of us with respect to cultural awareness, cultural humility and working together with communities. Her leadership in the “Weaving, Beading and Braiding” events about how to engage in research with Indigenous communities has helped us all to be thoughtful as we work together across our networks and our communities. Thank you to all of you, for all that you do for FASD – and there is so much more to come!

Sincerely,

Dr. Jocelynn Cook

MANAGEMENT & RESEARCH Team



Dr. Jacqueline Pei
Senior Research Lead & Intervention Research Lead



Dr. Jocelynn Cook
National Database Research Lead



Dr. Kaitlyn McLachlan
Justice Research Lead



Dr. Nancy Poole
Prevention Research Lead



Dr. Dorothy Badry
Child Welfare Research Lead



Dr. Ana Hanlon-Dearman
Diagnostics Research Co-Lead



Dr. Mansfield Mela
Diagnostics Research Co-Lead



Dr. Melissa Tremblay
Indigenous Advisor



Audrey McFarlane
Executive Director



Kathy Unsworth
Managing Director



Dr. Kelly Coons-Harding
Director of Research Administration



Dr. Katherine Flannigan
Research Associate



Lindsay Wolfson
Research Associate



Andrew Wrath
Research Assistant



Kirsten Morrison
Research Assistant



Victoria Bailey
Communications Manager



Edward Swatschek
Manager of Corporate Services & Administration



Samantha Csuahany
Development Director



Rochelle Blaak-Herron
Administrative Assistant



Fiona Binns
Communications Coordinator

Update from the

FAMILY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Family Advisory Committee of the CanFASD Research Network was created in 2014 with the two-fold mandate of advising CanFASD Research Network on research priorities for families impacted by FASD and assisting in translating results of research to ensure they are accessible to families. Within this mandate, the FAC has been engaged in a number many different activities over the past year.

We continue to use our connections with FASD researchers to collaborate on a number of ongoing research studies examining a variety of areas of interest for individuals with living experience (individuals with FASD and caregivers) including:

- the perceived effects of the cannabis use in adults with FASD;
- Caregiver Approaches, Resiliencies, and Experiences raising individuals with FASD (the CARE study);

- protective factors and outcomes for justice involved youth; and other justice-related research projects;
- substance use in individuals with FASD;
- and addressing housing insecurity for individuals with FASD.

We also represent the voice of caregivers on a variety of regional committees and are active voices in FASD awareness and appreciation particularly during FASD Awareness Month in September.

A highlight of the past year has been the Canada FASD National Conference held in Saskatoon in November. Connect, Inspire and Innovate was the theme of the conference. Members of the FAC and our Adult FASD Expert Collaboration Team (AFECT) demonstrated our connections with FASD researchers by collaborating on many presentations. The topics covered ranged from person experience of living with FASD to neurodiversity, taking a rights-based approach to FASD, strengths of individuals with FASD, housing options and FASD and mental health. It was inspiring to listen to the diversity of voices represented at the conference. There was an excitement generated by all being in the same space sharing the same passion about working



Members of the FAC (left to right) Melissa Dobson (Alberta), Alicia Munn (New Brunswick), Marsha Wilson (British Columbia), Tammy Roberts (Northwest Territories), Dorothy Reid (British Columbia), Joyce Fast (Manitoba). Missing are: Danette Wright (Alberta), Pamela Belanger (Saskatchewan) and Noah Noah (Nunavut).



“working together to achieve better outcomes for individuals with FASD and their loved ones”

Family Advisory Committee
CanFASD Research Network

together to achieve better outcomes for individuals with FASD and their loved ones. We look forward to more innovative solutions and strategies being presented at the next national conference in Toronto in 2025.

There has been a transition in the membership of the FAC over the past year. We have said a fond farewell to Wanda Beland (Alberta) and Simon Laplante (Manitoba) and have welcomed new members, Danette Wright (Alberta), Joyce Fast (Manitoba), Melissa Dobson (Alberta) and are currently recruiting members from Yukon, British Columbia and Northwest Territories.

The members of the Family Advisory Committee appreciate the support we receive from CanFASD Research Network staff and Research Leads. We enjoy the openness and collaborative spirit as we work together to improve outcomes. We encourage everyone who reads this report to join us in helping to achieve this shared goal.

Sincerely,
The Family Advisory Committee

(Left) FAC Co-Chair, Dorothy Reid speaking at the Canada FASD Conference

Update from the

ADULT FASD EXPERT COLLABORATION TEAM

This past year has been one where the members of the AFECT (Adult FASD Expert Collaboration Team) have continued to connect with each other, members of the research community, families, service providers and politicians. Through these exchanges, they have been able to ignite new passion, interest, and curiosity amongst many stakeholders.

The team has continued to meet monthly and hone their skills as committee members, while regularly contributing to the salient work done by CanFASD researchers. Each of the five AFECT members provides critical and unique input by teaching us about the importance of responding to the needs, wants, challenges and successes of those with lived experience. Their efforts inspire us all and contribute to a changed future!

As I wrote this report, I reviewed new issue papers, research projects and breakthroughs in FASD on the CanFASD website. This past year, AFECT members have contributed to a great number of these endeavors with the highlight being their tremendous involvement at the Canada FASD Conference in November 2023 in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.

AFECT members met in person for the first time in this post-COVID era and impressed audiences as they lead numerous workshops and panel discussions. They appreciated being invited to participate throughout the conference and look forward to the next Canada FASD Conference in 2025 when they can celebrate their innovative efforts as self-advocates.

I lift my hands in gratitude to the AFECT team and their supporters for their many hours of volunteer work this past year. We are looking forward to our continued journey together in 2024.

Respectfully,

Marsha Wilson, M.A.

AFECT Co-Chair and FAC member

“Their efforts inspire us all and contribute to a changed future!”

Marsha Wilson, AFECT Co-Chair



Members of the AFECT (left to right) Lauren Richardson, Joseph Munn, Jessica McMurphy, Niall Schofield, Sandra Noel and Maria Beland.



RESEARCH in Action

From 2023-2024 CanFASD had:

37
published
articles

117
presentations
& interviews

59
research
projects

18
technical
reports

8
book
chapters

30
trainees

Caregiver Experiences Survey

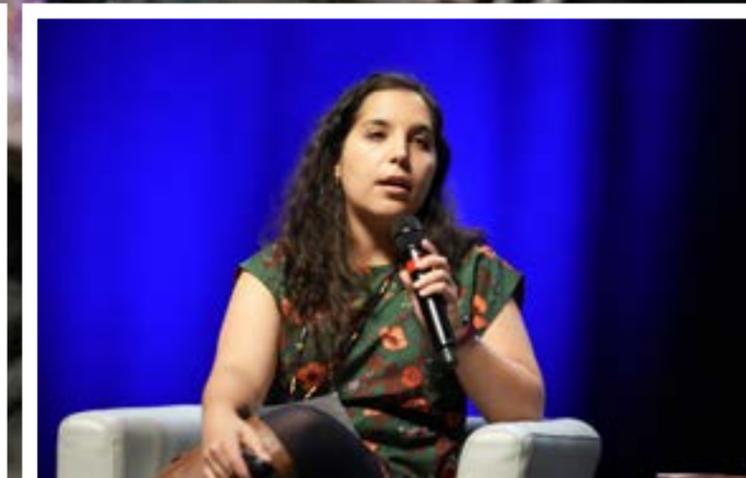
On September 9, 2021, we launched an online survey to capture experiences from caregivers of people with FASD from all over the world. The Caregiver Approaches, Resiliencies, and Experiences (CARE) study was developed collaboratively by the Family Advisory Committee and CanFASD researchers, inspired by knowledge gaps identified by the caregiver community.

The CARE study is meant to formally document caregivers' contexts, family functioning, and needs, as well as the strengths, resiliencies, and successes that come with raising individuals with FASD. With this information, our hope is to guide new research, build grants, develop resources, and tailor services to best support caregivers and families.

The survey is ongoing and longitudinal, and we are actively recruiting caregivers to participate. To date, we have collected stories from nearly 250 caregivers from across Canada, the United States, Australia, New Zealand, Central America, and Europe.

As a continued effort to keep CARE study participants informed, we send out biannual reports in the spring and fall each year to those who are interested in hearing research updates. This past year, we shared emerging findings regarding trends in alcohol and substance use among both caregivers and their loved ones with FASD, as well as an update related to caregivers' expressed hopes, worries, and needs for the future. In addition to these feedback reports, we have also presented data from the CARE study at various conferences, webinars, and meetings to help translate this important information to those who may use it to impact practice, policy, and every day life for people with FASD and their families.

We are so grateful to every caregiver who has shared their story with us, as the experiences of caregivers and others with lived and living FASD expertise continue to inspire our work at CanFASD.



OUTREACH and Communications

Creating effective and engaging communication and outreach initiatives is a priority for CanFASD. Accurate, timely, and consistent information to our stakeholders, the public, and decision-makers is essential to increasing awareness of and support for FASD across Canada. We want to make sure our audience has the evidence and information they need in a format they can best understand.

Our most popular tools for public engagement include our online webinar series, our website hosting a variety of resources, and our social media accounts where we engage and connect with our community. Throughout the year, we run annual initiatives, including the FASD Awareness Month campaign in September and our CanFASD Holiday Art Competition in November. These initiatives will continue over the coming year, with additional campaigns added as the opportunity arises.

Our increased focus on outreach and communications has translated to a greater awareness of FASD in the community, with more Canadians taking our online courses, increased traffic to our website, increased following on our social media sites, and broader dissemination of our research and resources.

WEBSITE

as of March 2024, CanFASD had:

62,636
visitors

211,266
pageviews

SOCIAL MEDIA

as of March 2024, CanFASD had over:

8,238
followers

258,466
impressions

WEBINARS

as of March 2024, CanFASD had:

8
public webinars

395
attendees

FASD MONTH

Every year during the month of September, organizations and communities across Canada and around the globe celebrate FASD Awareness Month. The goal of this event is to improve awareness and understanding of FASD and celebrate the strengths and successes of individuals with FASD.

This year, we continued with the Canada Rocks Red campaign, where monuments and landmarks across Canada lit their buildings up red to help us raise awareness of FASD. In total, 46 locations in nine provinces participated, including the CN Tower in Toronto and the High-Level Bridge in Edmonton. We also had some international participation with monuments lighting up in Australia and Ireland.

The 2023 theme for FASD Awareness Month was *Uniting our Strengths: Finding Solutions Together*. This was chosen following expert recommendations to counter the negative narrative that surrounds FASD with detailed descriptions of effective solutions. This theme builds on last years' theme, which focused on sharing strengths and abilities, and looked at ways communities can work together to build real solutions. The intention behind this theme was to encourage community members to talk about the innovative ways they are addressing FASD.

31
locations

10
provinces



Victoria City Hall, British Columbia lit up red

INDIGENOUS

Relations

Message from Dr. Melissa Tremblay — Indigenous Advisor

It has been an incredible honor to work with the CanFASD team in my role as Indigenous Liaison. Over the last year, we have taken small and intentional steps toward our commitments to Indigenous partnership, reconciliatory research, and action.

Part of my contribution to CanFASD has involved adding a lens of cultural safety and responsivity to ongoing projects led by other Research Leads. I have enjoyed the privilege of working alongside Drs. Kaitlyn McLachlan and Jacquie Pei on a project intended to increase capacity for identifying and supporting individuals with FASD in criminal-legal contexts. I have also been pleased to infuse a cultural safety perspective into a project exploring substance use treatment in FASD populations, led by CanFASD colleagues. As a branch of this project, we have been examining the alignment between principles of Indigenous substance use treatment and FASD-informed substance use treatment through a qualitative literature review and interviews with service providers. Our research team presented this work at the 2023 Canada FASD Conference. At the conference, we also dedicated a session to listening to Indigenous peoples' perspectives on FASD assessment, diagnosis, and support. We are grateful to our brilliant Indigenous colleagues for participating in this session by offering their wisdom, and to those allies who listened with humility and respect. This session provided us with an important reminder to prioritize the cultural safety of Indigenous peoples in these spaces so that Indigenous voices and perspectives are meaningfully and authentically amplified.

Weaving Indigenous perspectives into the fabric of FASD research has been a way to take up CanFASD's commitment to reconciliatory research. As part of this work, we continue to critically reflect on the history of research itself as tool for colonization, along with our responsibility to uphold humility, reciprocity, and self-determination in our research relationships. We will have the opportunity to action these values through funding recently awarded from the University of Calgary One Child Every Child Strategic Catalyst Grant. Over the next three years, this funding will allow us to co-create, together with community partners, a Canadian FASD Indigenous Framework for assessment, diagnosis, and support that is strength-based and centres Indigenous knowledges and cultures.

This past year also saw the third annual Weaving, Beading and Braiding (WBB) gathering, a joint initiative of CanFASD and the FASD Research Australia Center for Research Excellence. I had the joy of co-hosting WBB with the inspiring Nicole Hewlett, providing opportunities for Indigenous peoples from Australia and Canada to share their stories and experiences in a safe and relational forum to collaboratively advance FASD knowledge and understanding. Given that Indigenous peoples in Australia are dealing with the recent defeat of the Indigenous Voice referendum, we have chosen to pause WBB in its current form while we carefully consider how to move forward in respectful ways that honor the realities and voices of Indigenous peoples across both countries.

Our commitment to Indigenous partnership, research, and action is supported by the Indigenous Commitment Committee of the CanFASD Board of Directors. I have been fortunate to serve as a member of this Committee over the last several months. I have a strong sense of hope that, through our work, we can honor our collective responsibilities toward enacting research as a tool for leveraging cultural strengths and reshaping narratives around Indigenous peoples in the world of FASD research.



“...through our work, we can honor our collective responsibilities toward enacting research as a tool for leveraging cultural strengths and reshaping narratives around Indigenous peoples...”

Dr. Melissa Tremblay, Indigenous Advisor



Elder Judy Pelly at the Canada FASD Conference

WORKFORCE Development

Individuals with FASD deserve to have concrete, individualized supports that reduce the risk of mental and physical health challenges, substance use, child welfare involvement, and interaction with the criminal justice system, and that provide opportunities for improved health and wellbeing, stable employment, safe housing, healthy relationships, and meaningful contributions within their communities. To do this requires an FASD-informed health workforce which includes FASD-specific education and training to provide insight into the manifestations of FASD in their specific context. We offer several online learning courses to improve professional and community understanding of FASD. Several of our courses are available in both English and French. These courses are evidence-based and reflect current research and data in the field.

As of March 31, 2024 CanFASD had:

14
online
courses

29,573
unique
learners

25,396
course
registrations

MENTAL HEALTH TOOLKIT

In October 2023, CanFASD launched the FASD and Mental Health Resource and Practice Guide for frontline mental health counsellors/therapists, prevention mentors, crisis workers, community mental health providers and those who work directly with individuals with FASD. The resource is designed to increase the capacity of mental health professionals and service providers to offer support to individuals with FASD. It outlines and provides resources to better understand FASD throughout people's lifespan.

The content of the resource guide is organized into eight sections, each providing an overview of the topic, questions for reflection, downloadable handouts, and additional resources. This project was developed by CanFASD with consultation from an excellent advisory committee of academics, clinicians, researchers, frontline mental health service providers, and individuals with lived experience. Their valuable perspectives guided the content and development of this resource, and we hope that it will allow for professional development, growth, and knowledge regarding supporting people with FASD.

As of March 31, 2024
the toolkit had:

3,625
page views

1,588
returning
users

406
document
downloads

FASD ART CONTEST

Each year, CanFASD hosts an art contest for Canadians with FASD to celebrate and encourage the creative strengths and talents of individuals with FASD. The 2023 winner was Mikayla Braganca, a 17-year-old from Ontario with dreams of becoming an interior designer. Her painting was inspired by her love for ice skating and the cabin in the woods she thinks of when dreaming of the holiday season.



“After I graduate my dream is to get my Bachelors degree of design in order to become an interior designer internationally I will be one of the best, I want to design homes in Venice, Italy by the canal.”

Mikayla Braganca



Pictured (left to right) Joseph Munn, Alicia Munn, Dr. Kelly Coons-Harding, Lauren Richardson, Dorothy Reid, Niall Schofield, Jessica McMurphy, Dr. Katherine Flannigan and Lisa Brownstone.

FASD and Human Rights

Human rights are a universal standard for ensuring that all people are provided with the opportunity to live with dignity and freedom from fear of harassment or discrimination. Since 2021, our CanFASD team of researchers and individuals with living experience have been working to incorporate rights-based approaches to FASD in our work.

Over the past several years we have developed several resources on FASD and human rights, including our issue paper on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and a Plain Language Guide that helps individuals and families to better understand the UNCRPD and rights-based language. These resources are meant to help everyone learn how to talk about, and advocate for, human rights related to people with disabilities, including those with FASD.

Over the past year, we have continued to bring FASD into the conversation about human rights for people with disabilities. As a collaborative and interdisciplinary group of researchers, clinicians, and individuals with in-body and in-home living experience of FASD, we presented at the International Summer Course on the Rights of the Child in June 2023. Here we discussed aspects of the UNCRPD and how they apply to FASD, as well as strategies that have been incorporated at CanFASD to enhance the voices and leverage the strengths of self-advocates with FASD for effective and accessible research and support.

We also presented on rights for people with FASD at the inaugural Canada FASD Conference in Saskatoon in November 2023. This experience was a positive and empowering one for everyone involved! Our Executive Director, Audrey McFarlane, and Director of Research Administration, Kelly Harding, also participated as part of the Canadian Civil Society Parallel Report Group which enables civil society to take an active role in holding governments accountable for their legal requirements to support the rights of people with disabilities.

We still have lots of work to do to ensure that the rights of individuals with FASD are fully realized and enacted, but we will all continue to advocate for the rights of individuals with FASD and advance the need for a human-rights based approach to research, policy, and practice for individuals with FASD.

Claudette Bradshaw FASD Innovation Award

The Claudette Bradshaw FASD Innovation Award recognizes the work of individuals and organizations who are using innovative approaches to improve the lives of individuals with FASD. The award is named in honour of the late Honorable Claudette Bradshaw to recognize her dedication and impact to the fields of FASD, early childhood education, and homelessness. It is intended to encourage innovation in the development of FASD programs and practices.

2023 Recipient

The Manitoba FASD Centre and FASD Justice Team are the recipients of the Claudette Bradshaw FASD Innovation Award 2023 for their pilot program supporting adults with FASD in the justice system.

The Adult FASD Justice Pilot Program gives young adults (18-25) involved in the justice system in Manitoba access to FASD diagnostic and assessment services. Offenders diagnosed with FASD can access follow-up supports and services to help them with their specific needs and challenges. Additionally, people with FASD can be tried before the FASD Docket, where the courts take the impacts of FASD into consideration during the sentencing process. The project is a continuation of the youth justice system program, which provides similar supports and services to youth aged 12-17 in the system.

The impact of this program

The project team says, "We see everyday the difference that this program makes. When individuals and their circle of care receive and come to understand their FASD Diagnosis then they start to better understand themselves. They come to better appreciate the things that they are really good at..."

"They also begin to learn that their challenges are, at times, out of their control. That they may require adaptations, modifications or supports to be successful in some areas of their lives."

Members of the team presented about this project at the Canada FASD Conference.



CANADA FASD CONFERENCE

Keynote Speeches

Connect, Inspire, Innovate: From Evidence to Action highlighted CanFASD's approach to connect people, inspire ideas, and innovate to policy action. It used the topic of emotional regulation to show the many research projects in Canada, the collaborative nature of the work and the importance of research to practice and policy.

The Collaborative action in FASD prevention panel brought together diverse perspectives on FASD prevention research, policy, and practice. This included the values that drive the panellists' work areas and promising trends in the field.

CanFASD's Executive Director, Audrey McFarlane, gave an overview of the history of FASD in Canada and where we still need to go in 'View From The Mountain Path': A Review.

Connect, Inspire, Innovate

While conference attendees were appreciative of the opportunity to connect with individuals from all over the world, many individuals expressed gratitude for the opportunity to connect and collaborate with people in-person. Many attendees were inspired by the research and projects that are being conducted in Canada and worldwide, and expressed excitement for the work that is to come.

Attendees also expressed their excitement for the continued opportunity to connect and collaborate with the people they met and interacted with during their time at the conference. With continued efforts to support and advocate, the strength of the FASD community was found to

be inspirational. As the conference captured a sense of belonging for attendees, many are looking forward to maintaining connections made during the conference and working towards implementing innovative FASD-tailored approaches for the betterment of individuals with FASD, caregivers, and service providers.

Thank you to everyone who attended the Canada FASD Conference for making it such a success. We are thrilled with the amount of positive feedback we have received about it. We already have over 100 people signed up for the 2025 conference and we are excited to start planning it!

"Best conference I've ever been to, and I mean that! The inclusive and supportive environment was second to none."

Conference Attendee



Myles Himmelriech at the Canada FASD Conference



"This was truly career changing for me - I walked away with such a focus and a passion to bring my Territory to a place where those living with FASD have the right supports and are treated with respect and dignity."

Conference Attendee

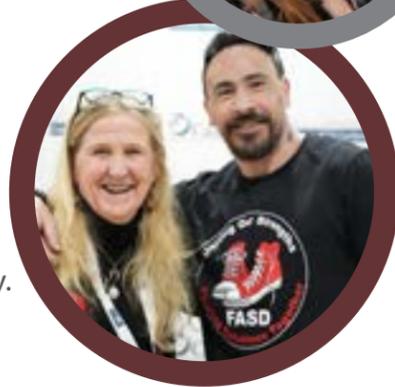


557 attendees	177 presenters	57 sessions	219 on waiting list	94% from Canada
39% service providers	31% professionals	22% with living experience	13% researchers	4% students

Individual Membership

In 2021, CanFASD expanded our membership options with the addition of our individual membership program. This membership gives individuals the opportunity to become more involved with the CanFASD network. Citizens in both CanFASD member and non-member provinces and territories benefit equally from this new program. We now have over 230 dedicated members from across Canada who are invested in creating change for FASD.

A major benefit for CanFASD members is the ability to share their vision for the direction of future FASD research. Each year we send out a survey to our members to better understand community needs and areas of priority for FASD research. Of CanFASD's current research priority areas, the majority of responding members believe adult supports and mental health are essential areas for research focus. Diagnosis and intervention are also seen as a priority.



Pictured (left to right) Myles Himmelriech and Jessica McMurphy

We also asked our members to share some of their personal and professional successes. Here's what they said:

If I have the privilege to work with a student with FASD, the child is happy to be in school because I can accommodate his symptoms, so he is not overwhelmed or frustrated.

CanFASD Member

The more I understand about FASD the better caregiver I am and the better I can choose supports for my family member.

CanFASD Member

Over the last 43 years our knowledge of FASD in Canada has grown almost exponentially. I have helped with that, and it feels good but we still have a long, long way to go.

CanFASD Member

Jurisdictional Membership

CanFASD offers jurisdictional membership opportunities for provincial and territorial governments in Canada. This membership is a unique opportunity for governments in Canada to benefit from the expertise of a national network devoted to FASD. The membership connects governments with a trusted agency to turn to for answers to important policy questions.

Provinces and territories that become members of CanFASD are significantly advanced in their response to FASD. They benefit from increased research capacity, advice and assistance in evidence-based policy and program development, and collaboration with other member jurisdictions. Membership for governments also offers the potential to reduce longer-term costs associated with FASD diagnosis, prevention, and intervention.



Members: Alberta, British Columbia, Northwest Territories, Yukon, Nunavut, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and New Brunswick

Non-Members: Ontario, Quebec, Newfoundland and Labrador, Prince Edward Island, and Nova Scotia



FINANCIAL

Snapshot

CANADA FETAL ALCOHOL SPECTRUM DISORDER RESEARCH NETWORK
Balance Sheet
March 31, 2024 with comparative figures for March 31, 2023

	2023	2024
Assets		
Current assets:		
Cash	\$ 63,461.71	\$ 246,344.18
Investments	260,660.60	162,831.78
Accounts receivable	327,520.71	232,049.27
HST/GST receivable	15,206.25	36,546.67
Prepaid expenses	27,154.33	15,690.36
	694,103.60	693,462.26
Capital assets	8,484.69	7,311.07
Intangible assets	48,750.00	118,688.75
	751,338.29	819,462.08
Liabilities and Net Assets:		
Current Liabilities:		
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	\$ 66,436.01	\$ 59,103.85
Deferred capital contributions	51,043.38	122,251.98
Deferred contributions	41,209.26	207,330.86
	158,688.65	388,686.69
Net assets		430,775.39
	\$ 751,338.29	\$ 819,462.08

SUPPORT Our Work

CanFASD is pleased to present the remarkable achievements highlighted in this report. These successes were made possible by the unwavering support of our community of donors and participants in various fundraising campaigns.

Individual donors have been instrumental in our fundraising success, enabling us to make significant strides in funding FASD research.

The success of campaigns like Giving Tuesday underscores the power of collective action in driving positive change. Through the collective efforts of our supporters, we've raised vital funds and expanded our impact, contributing to advancements in the field of FASD research and advocacy.

Looking ahead, we are committed to leveraging this momentum to further support FASD research and initiatives. With the continued support of our community of donors, we aim to continue making meaningful contributions to the understanding and support of individuals and families affected by FASD.

Your support has been invaluable in our journey towards creating a brighter future for those affected by FASD. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all our donors and participants for their dedication to our cause and their role in driving positive change.

We've made great strides to move FASD forward in Canada. Imagine how much further we could go with your support.



Pictured (left to right) Alicia Munn, Lauren Richardson, Dr. Katherine Flannigan, Joseph Munn, Jessica McMurphy, Niall Schofield, Sandra Noel, Maria Beland and Marsha Wilson.



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