



*Looking After Each Other*  
A Dignity Promotion Project

# FINAL REPORT 2025: LOOKING AFTER EACH OTHER GATHERING



**Selkirk, Manitoba**

**June 5, 2025**

# Introduction

The Looking After Each Other (LAEO) Gathering is an opportunity for Manitobans to come together to address and end stigma around Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD). This group ensures that people with lived and living experience of FASD are treated with dignity and respect. This includes learning about how to support people with FASD in culturally grounded ways.



The 2025 LAEO Gathering took place at Selkirk Friendship Centre on June 5, 2025. This event was held in partnership between the Manitoba FASD Coalition Inc. and the Interlake FASD Coalition.



Our 2025 LAEO Gathering welcomed 81 individuals from Selkirk and across Manitoba, including coalition members, service providers, people with lived and living experience, family members and caregivers, and Indigenous Elders and leaders.

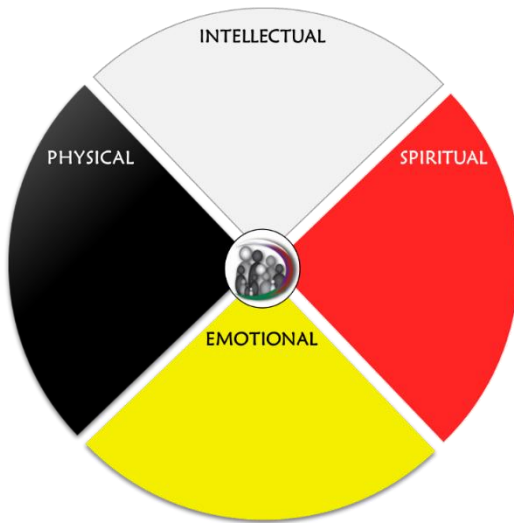
# Special Thanks

This Gathering could not have been possible without this amazing team:

- Interlake FASD Coalition- for all their hard work in planning this event, set up, take down, registration, collecting door prizes, etc.
- Interlake FASD Coalition chairs for co-MC'ing: Brett Suski, Sherisse Picklyk Dear, Jola Hnatiuk
- LAEO Gathering Planning Committee
- Lee Hurton at Manitoba FASD Coalition Inc. for coordinating registrations and all of the work behind the scenes
- Selkirk Friendship Centre for hosting us
- Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and Grandparents who attended this event, led prayers, and shared wisdom and Teachings
- Presenters
- Marlana and the drummers
- Roberta and Pamela for the jingle dress dance
- Helpers for the day- Ron, Roberta, Pamela and David
- David for taking photographs of the day
- 'Life a Little Sweeter' for the delicious catering
- Eloise Dell, Department of Families Social Work student, for writing this report



# The Medicine Wheel



Recognizing the importance of balance, harmony and interconnectedness, the Medicine Wheel can be used to think about the Gathering activities, and how they could contribute to each of our mental, spiritual, emotional and physical wellness.

The four quadrants and activities at the LAEO Gathering that support them:

- North (white)- Mind “I know”- critical thinking, learning, and clarity
- East (red)- Spirit “I see”- connections with nature, connecting with a higher power, engaging with Elders, and using traditional medicines
- South (yellow)- Emotion “I feel”- emotional well-being, healthy relationships, self-reflection, positivity
- West (black)- Body “I do”- physical well-being, movement, nutrition, rest

## Pipe Ceremony

At Selkirk Friendship Centre, medicines filled the air along with drumming and singing at the beginning of the day. One by one, people were drawn to the circle, listening and meditating to the music, each drum beat bringing peace and grounding. After the song



came to an end, an Elder asked if anyone had a song they wanted to sing. Someone in the circle suggest a song, then took out their rattle and began singing.

Calmness filled the air as everyone listened and reflected. A song that started with one voice slowly became many, as we appreciated this moment together. Shortly after the song, the pipe ceremony began followed by the water ceremony. Teachings were shared, a spirit dish was prepared, and a prayer was offered before breakfast.

# Exploring the Roots of FASD

After breakfast, we listened to our first presentation called Exploring the Roots of FASD by Sherisse Picklyk Dear. This presentation was centered on reducing stigma around FASD.



The presentation talked about how alcohol use during pregnancy can be linked to trauma, colonization and cultural exclusion. Sherisse also linked alcohol use during pregnancy to misinformation from medical professionals, family or friends, as well as a lack of supports and one being unaware of their pregnancy.

Sherisse highlighted that society and social media also play a role in alcohol use during pregnancy, as drinking has become increasingly normalized.

# A Caregiver's Perspective on Raising Children with FASD

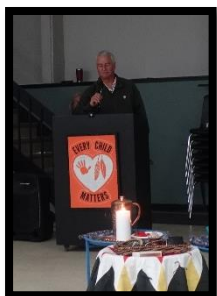
After Sherisse's presentation, Jola shared her perspective as a caregiver to children with FASD. Jola emphasized that every person with FASD is unique, having different gifts and challenges. She encouraged everyone to learn more about FASD, and the different brain domains that can be impacted.

Jola shared how important supports were in her journey. Having doctors, diagnosis and programs were very beneficial to her family.

Jola also called for caregivers who have children with FASD to acknowledge the FASD diagnosis. Informing children about FASD and putting in place supports can prevent feelings of frustration about their different ways of learning.



## NOON



After Jola's presentation, Knowledge Keeper Robert Maytwayashing blessed everyone's lunch with a song, sharing the importance of respecting our land and the Earth as a whole. A spirit dish was prepared by the Gathering helpers.

The CEO of the Interlake-Eastern Regional Health Authority, Marion Ellis, brought greetings to the Gathering. Marion was glad to see these events happening in the community and was pleased to know we are spreading awareness about FASD. She emphasized how important it is to come together as a community to care for and support each other.



Following Marion's speech, everyone was served lunch. A local caterer, Life a Little Sweeter, served us a delicious meal.



## Roberta's Story

After a lovely lunch, Roberta told her story as a person with living experience of FASD. Roberta talked about her experience in Child and Family Services (CFS) and how it impacted her life. Roberta also talked about her experiences at school and challenges she has faced.



Roberta shared that she is thankful to have supports from an organization she is now a part of. She is connecting with her culture and making positive connections.

After telling her story, Roberta and her friend Pamela performed a Jingle Dress dance.



## Breakout Session: Truth and Reconciliation

Joanna White facilitated an open discussion about Truth and Reconciliation, and what it means when applied to FASD.

This was a valuable experience filled with meaningful conversation, and personal reflection was encouraged throughout the session. The circle had diverse work and lived experience; it was insightful to listen to participants share about the ways they think about Truth and Reconciliation and FASD in their work and life.



# Breakout Session: “Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About an Indigenous Person but Were Too Afraid to Ask”

Robert Maytwayashing shared the importance of valuing each person’s gifts, that everyone is equal, and reminded us that we are spirit. He also discussed the important role that women have and their connection with water. Robert shared that women produce life and should be seen with honour and dignity.

Robert also had an open discussion about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, as well as the Canadian constitution, inviting us to reflect on further changes that need to be made to advance decolonization and reconciliation.



## Breakout Session: The Story of Star Woman

Marlana Muir shared a Cree teaching about Star Woman, Acakos Iskwew, who descended from the stars to live on earth. This teaching spoke to the origin of the use of an eight-pointed star for star blankets, with one point representing Star Woman, for her descendants to remember her once she left the earth and returned to be with the spirits again.

Marlana also shared about how when women become mothers or aunties, they learn about raising children from the children themselves. As we are learning, we must be kind and patient with ourselves. Marlana also shared about her own experiences raising children and having walking out ceremonies. Marlana closed the session with a beautiful Michif song.



## Closing our Gathering

Nearing the end of our Gathering, Marlana and her Women's Cultural Drumming and Singing group shared some beautiful music with us. Marlana explained how the drum group has become a wonderful and supportive community for one another.

It was a gift to have children from a daycare down the street from the Friendship Centre join the Gathering to listen to Marlana and her group play, even singing along at times.



# LAEO Gathering Evaluation

## Statistics

- 55% of attendees strongly agreed that the Gathering met or exceeded their expectations.
- 55% of attendees strongly agreed that they could apply the knowledge and teachings learned at the Gathering in their daily life and practice.
- 95% of attendees would recommend the presentations and teachings to others.



## Comments

- “The Roots of FASD was very powerful and I wish more of society would realize how ‘invasive’ alcohol is”.
- “I enjoyed hearing from the caregiver and the young person with lived experience. Those who are living it day to day have so much wisdom to share”.
- “I really enjoyed the day. I appreciated the combination of education, experiences and cultural teachings”.
- “Excellent day, love networking, learning and sharing with the FASD community”.