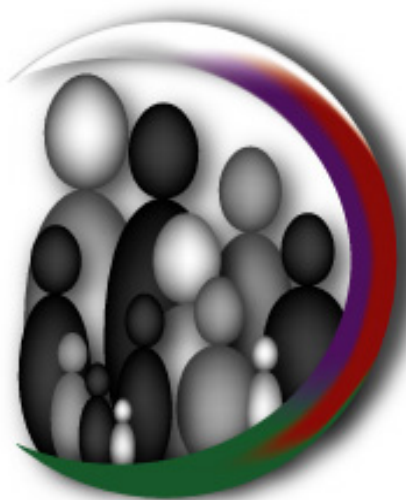


Final Report: 2018 Looking After Each Other Gathering

June 6 & 7, 2018



Looking After Each Other
A Dignity Promotion Project

On June 6th and 7th, the planning committee for the Looking After Each Other (LAEO) project hosted the 2018 Looking After Each Other Gathering at Lower Fort Garry National Historic Site. Once again, the Gathering brought together FASD coalition members, FASD service providers, program participants, and Elders and Indigenous leaders from across Manitoba. The focus for this year was to share information about FASD and the different ways in which we all offer support to people impacted by FASD.

June 5 – Setting up the Tipis

On the evening of June 5th, families and youth from programs were invited to Lower Fort Garry National Historic Site to assist Elder Wanbdi Wakita in setting up two tipis for the LAEO Annual Gathering. Most of the people in attendance did not know each other and only a few people had ever helped set up a tipi before, but by the end of the evening everyone was talking and laughing with each other and everyone had fun learning from Elder Wanbdi.

After a much deserved pizza dinner, everyone went home except for a two members of the planning committee who had the opportunity to sleep in the tipis overnight on June 5 and 6.





One of the members shared their experience of staying on the land and sleeping in the tipis throughout the Gathering:

"I had never slept in a tipi before. I didn't know that I didn't need to worry about the rain that came the instant everyone else, save Maraleigh, packed up and left that first night. Do you

know that most of the rain climbs down the poles? I didn't, but now I do. I didn't know that it would smell of smoke and hide; sleep and stories. I didn't even know sleep and stories had a smell, but they do, and the smell is a bit like sage, tobacco and sweet grass mixed with time, animals, breath, and dreaming. I didn't know material could be at once soft and gentle and so enduringly strong.

There were two tipis and, while seemingly the same from afar, the difference between the two was obvious as soon as I took a closer look. It wasn't just that one looked newer and the other more aged, but they felt that way, too: the old one used to sheltering people and their stories; the younger eager to reveal its ability to do so.

While I wasn't afraid, I didn't anticipate that sleeping outside with just one other woman in the tipi adjacent to me would feel so safe. That the sound of Debbie's drum and voice could resound so deeply or carry so far that second night.

In the morning, I realized that I had nearly forgotten the feeling of dew-covered toes and made a promise to keep the memory close. Even sitting here typing this at my desk I can feel them damp, clean, cold; tingly; ready to move."



June 6 – Day 1 of the LAEO Gathering

Day one of the Gathering took place outside on the grounds of Lower Fort Garry National Historic Park, just south of the fort's walls. Everyone arrived early and gathered around the fire to participate in a Pipe and Water Ceremony.

Pipe and Water Ceremony

Several Elders from around Manitoba brought their bundles to the Gathering and led participants through a Pipe Ceremony and a water blessing. Everyone was invited to drink the water, which had been blessed by the Grandmothers and was distributed to everyone by members of the Life's Journey drumming group.

Special Thanks

The planning committee would like to thank Troy and Ron from Life's Journey Inc. for being the LAEO Gathering firekeepers, and the Life's Journey Inc. and Mothering Project drumming groups who drummed throughout both days of the Gathering.

Introductions

The Emcees for the Gathering, Holly Gammon (Healthy Child Manitoba) and Russ Hilsher (Visions and Voices Program), welcomed everyone and acknowledged that we were honoured to host the Gathering on Treaty 1 lands, the traditional territory of the Ojibway and Dakota people and to recognize the Oji-Cree, Cree, Dene and Métis people of Manitoba.

Next, Russ encouraged everyone to take a couple of minutes to get to know each other by introducing themselves to someone that they did not know and to say who they were and where they were from.

Holly then gave everyone a brief history of the LAEO project: a six to ten year project to promote dignity for all the individuals, women, families and communities impacted by FASD in Manitoba. Holly went on to explain how the past few Gatherings focused on relationship building. Helping people get to know others in their communities who they can work with to help their program participants understand and learn more about their culture.

She then explained that this year continues to provide opportunities for relationship building, but the primary focus for this year's Gathering is FASD: to learn from each other about the different ways we support people impacted by FASD and to learn about FASD through first-hand stories from children and adults with FASD.

Teaching on Everyone Has Gifts

Next, Russ welcomed Elder Pahan Pte San Win up to the microphone to provide a Teaching about how everyone has gifts and how we need to recognize and celebrate those gifts.



Stations

After Elder Pahan's teaching, Holly and Russ explained that there were stations set up around the Gathering site and that they would be available throughout both days of the Gathering. The majority of the stations were set up inside the grove of trees where the Sacred Fire was located and two stations were set up in the field outside of the grove. People were given some time to explore all of the stations before the next large group presentation began. The stations included:

- **Moccasin Sewing** – a table was set up with instructions and supplies to help participants sew baby moccasins. The baby moccasins are part of a project called *So They Can Go Home*, a national campaign to raise awareness about child apprehension impacting Indigenous children in Canada. All of the moccasins sewn at the Gathering were given to the Children's Advocate for children going into the CFS system across Canada.
- **This is Me booklets** – Dee Bissonnette from the FASD Youth Justice Program taught people about *This is Me* booklets. These booklets are a tool used within the FASD Youth Justice program to support youth with FASD. As youth develop their booklets, they begin to learn more about their disability, their strengths, their challenges and the strategies that work best for them.
- **Story Sticks** – Elders Debbie Cielen and Mary Maytwayashing set up a station where people could make their own story sticks. Participants decorated their story sticks with



symbols that represent important elements or events in their lives, as a way to help them tell their life story.

- **Mandala Art Project** – Marlyn Bennet, from the University of Manitoba and the LAEO Research subcommittee, set up a station where people could draw on paper eagle feathers. People were asked to draw their experiences of stigma on one half of the feather and to draw their experiences of dignity on the other half. All of the feathers were taped down onto a large piece of poster board in order to share everyone's collective experiences of stigma and dignity.



- **LAEO Timeline and FASD Resource Table** – the Common Language subcommittee created a timeline highlighting all of the accomplishments of the LAEO project over the first five years. Gathering participants were invited to look at the timeline and were asked to think about how they have promoted dignity within their own communities. If people had examples, they wrote them down on the timeline.

- **Evaluation** – a station was set up to collect feedback from Gathering participants. People were invited to share their thoughts, ideas on sticky notes and post them onto the

evaluation station.

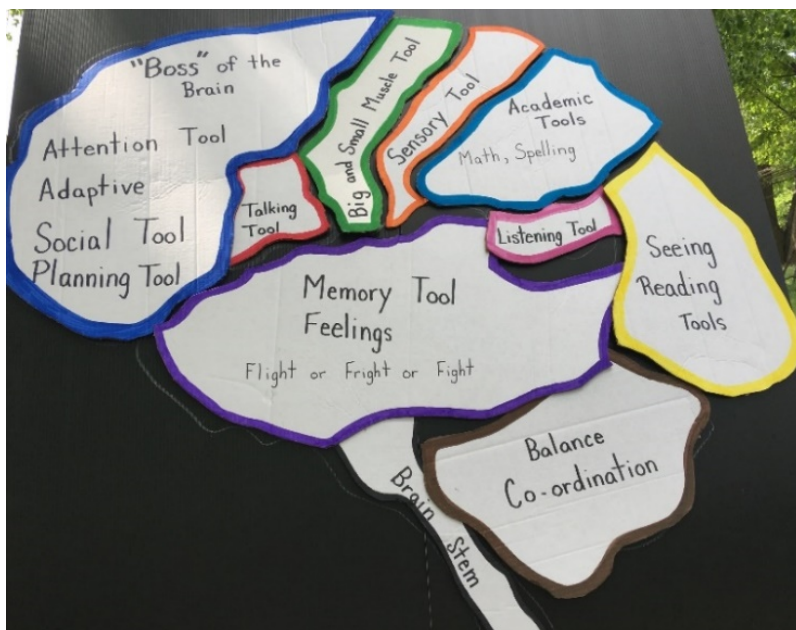
- **Grandmother Teachings** – three grandmothers, Debbie Parker, Karen Swain and Carol Moar, set up a station inside one of the tipis outside of the grove. Gathering participants were invited to come inside the tipi to listen to different grandmother Teachings.
- **Drumming** – the Life's Journey Inc. drumming group led a drumming station in the field next to the grove. People were invited to drum with the group and learn some of the songs that the drumming group plays.
- **Indigenous Games** – Elder Vern Dano set up a station in the field outside of the grove where people could participate in a movement break and learn how to play different Indigenous games.

What is FASD

Students and staff from the FASD classrooms at David Livingstone School in Winnipeg School Division were invited to the Gathering to teach everyone about FASD. The students began their presentation with a song called “My Brain Tools” (Appendix A), which taught everyone about all of the brain domains (brain tools) associated with FASD and how the domains impact learning at school. A special thanks to Jeffrey Hatcher from New Directions Inc. who played the guitar while the students sang their song.

The students also had a visual of the brain that they used during the song to help people learn about the areas of the brain responsible for each domain (tool). As they sang about each brain tool, one of the students would place the part of the brain associated with the brain tool onto the visual. By the end of the song, each part of the brain was placed onto the visual. Gathering participants had the opportunity to look at the visual of the brain throughout the Gathering in order to learn more about how students with FASD learn best in school.

Next, the students took turns speaking about each brain domain in greater detail. Each student spoke about one domain. They explained what the domain is responsible for



within the brain, their areas of strength and the challenges they have within that brain domain and the strategies they use to accommodate those challenges (Appendix B).

After their presentation, the students handed out copies of the book *Living and Learning with FASD: Jilly's Story*, which was written by students in the FASD classrooms at David

*“My Attention Tool is really cool
(clap, clap)”*

*My Attention tool is really cool
(clap, clap)*

*My Attention Tool is really cool,
it helps me do my job at school,*

My Attention Tool is really cool”

- *“My Brain Tools”, FASD
Classrooms at David
Livingstone School*

Livingstone School. *Jilly's Story* is about a girl named Jilly who speaks openly and honestly about what it is like to have FASD. She speaks about her struggles, but more importantly, her successes in order to help people develop a better understanding of FASD.

The students also stayed after their presentation was over and invited people to come talk with them if they had any other questions about FASD or the brain domains.

Stations

People had some time before lunch to explore the stations again. The Life's Journey drumming group played their drums when it was time to call everyone inside for lunch.



Afternoon

After lunch, the Mothering Project's drumming group played to bring everyone back together for the afternoon. Holly began the afternoon by thanking all of the planning committee members for their hard work over the past year: Elders Velma Orvis, Wally Swain, Don Robinson, Mary Maytwayashing, Pahan Pte san Win, Debbie Cielen, Vern Dano and Wally Chartrand, and our other awesome planning committee members: Karen Swain, Sue Mozdzen, Noella Gentes, Debbie Parker, Maraleigh Short, Jewel Reimer, Dorothy Schwab, Shannon Foster, Wahlea Croxen, Twyla Gilroy, Melanie Muehling, Ken Lamoureux and Kathy Andrew.

Medicine Teachings

To begin the afternoon, Elder Stella Blackbird and Elder Audrey Bone provided a Medicine Teaching. Their Teaching started with two videos that were shown inside the multipurpose room. The first video, titled *Sharing Our Histories: The Keeseekowewin Ojibway*, shared the history of the Keeseekowewin Ojibway First Nation and the area's ecology. The video can be found on the Parks Canada website: www.pc.gc.ca/en/pn-np/mb/riding/decouvrir-discover/autochtones-indigenous/video/communiquer-sharing

"I learned about the medicines and our cultural values. We lost so much and thankful that it is coming back."

- Gathering participant

The second video, titled *Makwa Mee Nuun*, shares the story of three generations of Anishinabe medicine women (Stella Blackbird, Audrey Bone and America Hotain) who pick medicines inside Riding Mountain National Park and actively work towards reconciliation with Parks Canada. The video can be found on the National Screen Institute's website: www.nsi-canada.ca/2013/07/makwa-mee-nuun/

After watching the videos, everyone moved back outside where Stella and Audrey continued their Medicine Teaching. They discussed the different types of medicines they pick, their healing properties and the ways in which each medicine can help people.



After Stella and Audrey finished their Teaching, everyone was invited to come up to the front to see the different medicines that they brought to the Gathering. People were very excited to take a closer look at the medicines and ask questions about them. People also had the opportunity to take some of the medicines home with them.

Stations

For the rest of the afternoon, people had the opportunity to continue exploring the different stations set up around the site and to network with other Gathering participants. At the end of the day, Marlyn Bennet displayed the finished art project. All of the feathers that people created over the course of day one were taped onto poster board. Marlyn placed the finished project on the table so people could stop by over the remainder of the Gathering to take a look at it and reflect on how others expressed their ideas and experiences on dignity promotion.



June 7 – Day 2 of the LAEO Gathering

Due to rain, the second day of the Gathering began inside. Everyone was asked to sit in assigned groups based on geographic regions within Manitoba: Southeast, Southwest, Northeast and Northwest. People from Winnipeg were allowed to choose which group they wanted to join.

Holly and Russ began the day by welcoming everyone back and by thanking all of the organizations who provided support in order to make the Gathering happen. The Manitoba FASD Coalition Inc. for providing a large portion of funding for the Gathering. The University of Manitoba researchers who provided a generous contribution from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) Grant. The STAR (Success Through Advocacy & Role-modeling) program for helping with the cost of lunches. As well as all of the organizations and individuals that donated gifts for giveaways, volunteered their time to help out with various activities and all the little details to make the event a wonderful two days.

Geographic Discussions

Next, Holly reminded everyone that the LAEO project is intended to be a 6 to 10 year project and that we are now going into the 5th year. Holly explained that everyone was placed into community groupings in order to begin a discussion about moving future Gatherings outside of the Winnipeg area. Holly asked each group to begin discussing the possibility of hosting a Gathering within their region.

Participants were given approximately 60 minutes to discuss the idea of hosting a Gathering in their region. Each group discussed the following questions:

- Is your region ready to host a Gathering?



- If so, who are the people who might be interested in working towards a Gathering in your region?
- Who would you partner with/include on the planning committee?
- Is there a specific area/community where you would want to host a Gathering?
- How would you begin? Do you need to build relationships first?
- Where might you seek additional funding?

“It’s important to talk about shared responsibility. People feel they are in isolation and don’t realize there are others that are also working with the same family. How do we support each other?”

- Gathering participant

All of the groups were engaged in the discussions and shared excellent feedback. Members of the planning committee were responsible for leading the group discussions and took notes. The planning committee collected all of the notes from each group in order to review them after the Gathering.

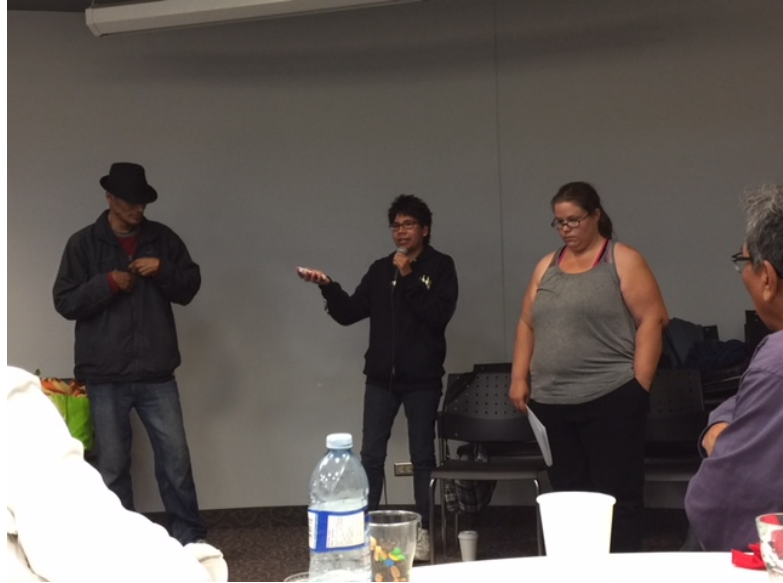


The Life’s Journey Drumming Group began playing their drums after 60 minutes to let the groups know that time was up. Next, each group shared some of the highlights from their conversations with the larger group. As each group shared highlights, it was clear that each region was excited about the idea of hosting a future Gathering in their region of Manitoba.

Visions and Voices Presentation

After a short break, Russ welcomed everyone back and introduced two other members of the Visions and Voices Program, Lisa Morrisseau and Jessica Siddle. The Visions and Voices Program offers presentations led by people with FASD. Presenters share their stories of hope, struggle and accomplishment in order to increase FASD awareness, understanding and promote dignity for those impacted by FASD.

Russ, Lisa and Jessica spoke to the group and shared their stories in order to teach people about FASD. They shared stories about what works best for them, what does not work well and the strategies they use to accommodate for those challenges. They each took turns answering questions such as:



- Their experiences in school: what went well/did not go well, what did teachers that helped?
- Their friendships/relationships with others: how do they make friends, how do they know if someone is a “good” or “bad” friend?
- Support workers: what do you like about your support workers, what are some of the things that support workers do that you do not like?
- Happiness/belonging: at the end of the day what makes you happy, where do you feel you belong?

Russ, Jessica and Lisa then took some time to answer questions from the audience before ending their presentation.

Holly thanked all three presenters for sharing their stories with everyone and reminded everyone that the Visions and Voices Program is available to present in communities across Manitoba. Before breaking for lunch, Holly thanked Russ for being an awesome co-emcee at the Gathering.

“I liked that people with FASD themselves sang and talked about their lives in first person, and it was not just the so called “experts” to make a presentation.”

- Gathering participant

Mothering Project

The Mothering Project drumming group welcomed everyone back from lunch by playing their drums. The Mothering Project Drumming Group also showed the LAEO project’s second mini-documentary called “*Meeting Women Where They’re At: Community Making a Difference*”, which focuses on the Mothering Project and the non-judgemental

approach they use to support women with addictions who are on their journey of self discovery, healing and belonging. The documentary can be viewed at: www.fasdcoalition.ca/looking-after-each-other-project/mini-documentaries/.

Teachings by the Sacred Fire

The weather improved in the afternoon, so after watching the mini-documentary everyone went back outside to meet by the Sacred Fire. For the remainder of the day, Elders took turns sharing teachings by the Sacred Fire. All of the stations were open while the Elders shared their teachings. This gave people the ability to be in charge of their own learning. People had the option to sit and listen to the teachings by the Sacred Fire or they could listen while participating in one of the activities set up inside the grove of trees.

Elders Stella Blackbird and Audrey Bone set up a Medicine Teaching station in one of the tipis for the afternoon. People were invited to come into the tipi to learn more about the different medicines that they brought to the Gathering.

Closing and Farewell

At the end of the day, Holly thanked everyone for participating in the two-day event. She reminded everyone to continue the conversations started at the Gathering throughout the year. We need to carry these messages home with us in order for the LAEO project and dignity promoting messages to reach more people across Manitoba.

Elder Velma Orvis was invited to share some final words and to provide a closing for a safe journey home.



Appendix A: My Brain Tools Song

(Sung to the tune of "If you're happy and you know it")

My brain has many tools in my head (clap,clap)
My brain has many tools in my head (clap, clap)
My brain has many tools which I think is really cool,
My brain has many tools in my head.



My Big Muscle Tool is really cool (clap, clap)
My Big Muscle Tool is really cool (clap, clap)
My Big Muscle Tool helps me swim across a pool,
My Big Muscle Tool is really cool



My Small Muscle Tool is really cool (clap, clap)
My Small Muscle Tool is really cool (clap, clap)
My Small Muscle Tool helps me cut and print at school,
My Small Muscle Tool is really cool.



My Memory Tool is really cool (clap, clap)
My Memory Tool is really cool (clap, clap)
My Memory Tool is cool, it helps me with the rules in school,
My Memory Tool is really cool.



My Listening Tool is really cool (clap, clap)
My Listening Tool is really cool (clap, clap)
My Listening Tool is cool, it helps me listen up in school,
My Listening Tool is really cool.



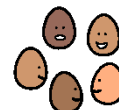
My Talking Tool is really cool (clap, clap)
My Talking Tool is really cool (clap, clap)
My Talking Tool is cool, it helps me sing and talk at school,
My Talking Tool is really cool.



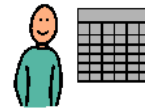
My Attention Tool is really cool (clap, clap)
My Attention Tool is really cool (clap, clap)
My Attention Tool is cool, it helps me do my job at school,
My Attention Tool is really cool.



My Social Tool is really cool (clap, clap)
My Social Tool is really cool (clap, clap)
My social tool is cool, it helps me be a friend at school,
My Social Tool is really cool.



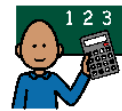
My Planning Tool is really cool (clap, clap)
My Planning Tool is really cool (clap, clap)
My Planning Tool is cool, it helps us plan our day at school,
My Planning Tool is really cool.



My Sensory Tool is really cool (clap, clap)
My Sensory Tool is really cool (clap, clap)
My Sensory Tool is cool,
it helps me stay in the “green zone” at school,
My Sensory Tool is really cool.



My Learning Tool is really cool (clap, clap)
My Learning Tool is really cool (clap, clap)
My Learning Tool is cool, it helps me do my math at school
My Learning Tool is really cool.



Appendix B: Brain Domain Presentations

Presentation #1 – Michael

Hello, my name is Michael and I am in grade 8. One of my strengths is that I always try my best and I am really good at asking for help.

The Brain Domain I am talking about is the Boss of the Brain which includes impulse control and hyperactivity.

This part of my brain helps me to do a lot of things. Some of the things that it helps me do are; make plans, solve problems, stay organized, express my emotions and stay in control of myself.

A strength for me is that I remember to do some deep breathing which helps me stay in control of myself.

Challenges:

When I am doing my school work and I get frustrated, I will shut down and do nothing. Also when I can't solve problems like not getting along with my friends, I become quite emotional and will likely cry.

Some strategies that will help me when I am frustrated or too emotional is I take time to calm myself by doing some deep breathing or I sit and rip up paper into tiny pieces.

Presentation #2 – Sarah

Hi, my name is Sarah and I am in grade 6. One of my strengths is that I am very artistic. I love to draw!

The Brain Domain I am talking about is Adaptive behaviour, social skills and social communication.

The adaptive part of my brain helps me to do all the things that I need to do to live on my own as well as taking care of myself, like washing my hair or brushing my teeth. It also controls how I get along with my peers and the adults in my life.

One of my strengths is that I am really good at making friends.

Challenges: Sometimes I have difficulty remembering what I need to do to get myself ready for school in the morning, like brush my teeth or wash my face. Relationships with adults can be hard as sometimes they talk really fast, then I have difficulty understanding and remembering what they have said. When this happens I get angry and want to run away from school.

Some strategies that help me when I forget what to do in the morning is when adults remind me or when I have a list of what I need to do in the mornings posted on my fridge. When adults talk to fast I have to remember to politely ask them to slow down or to please repeat what they have just said.