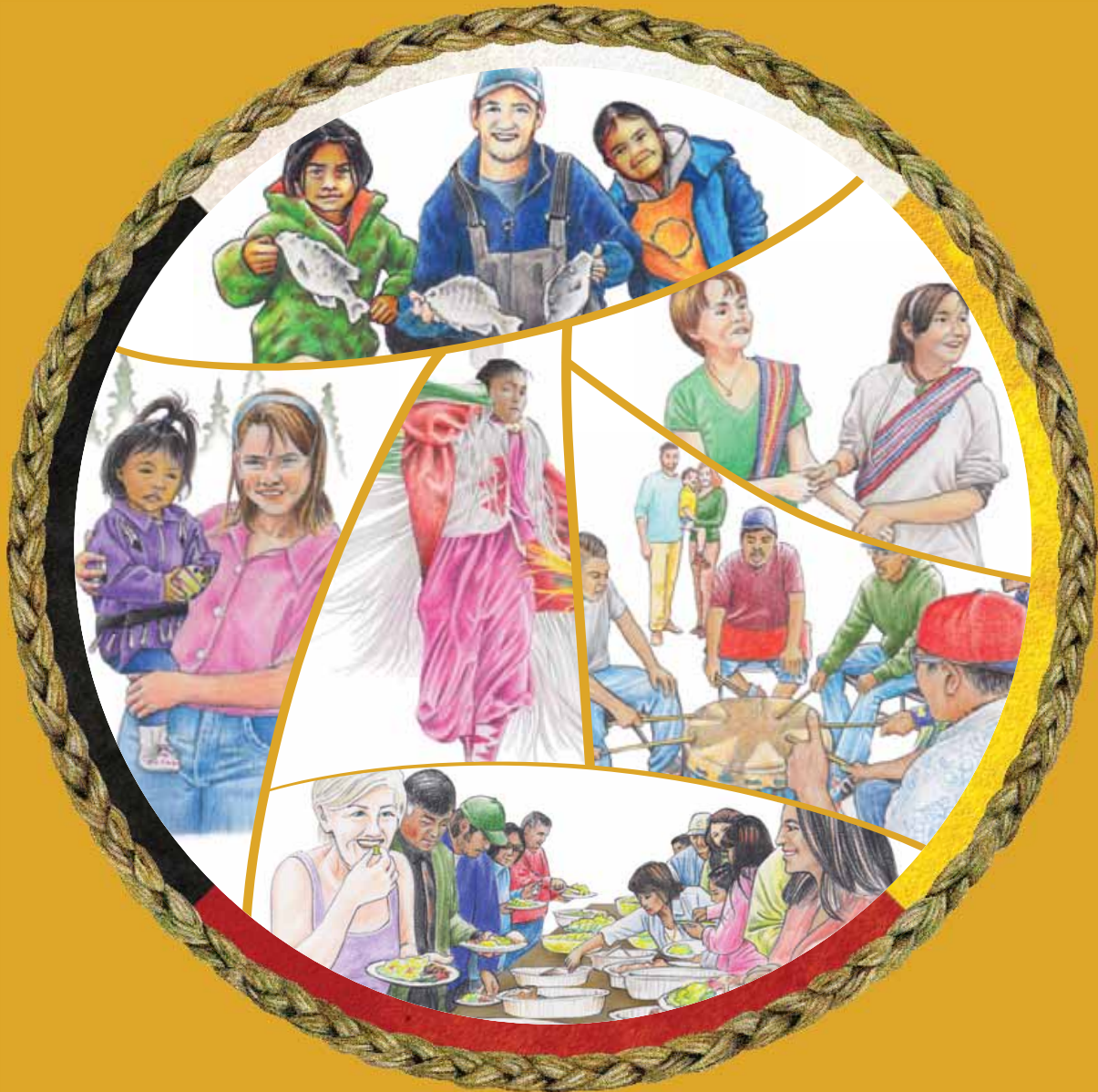


Parenting Indigenous Children with FASD

Guide to Culture for Non-Indigenous Caregivers



Fetal Alcohol
Spectrum Disorder
Ontario

Trouble du spectre
de l'alcoolisation fœtale
Ontario

health
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Parenting Indigenous Children with FASD

Guide to Culture for Non-Indigenous Caregivers

You want to provide the best parenting for the Indigenous child with FASD you care for. You may wonder about the importance of the child's Indigenous culture and heritage, whether it be Inuit, First Nations or Métis. This booklet shares some reasons why culture is important, how you can connect as a family to the child's culture and stories from other families. In this booklet, the word "child" may be referring to children, youth and young adults with FASD.



All children are a gift. Children with FASD teach others about understanding, compassion, patience and caring.

The Importance of Culture

Connecting to culture is a source of strength and healing. It supports a sense of self-identity and belonging. It creates well-being, builds self-esteem and helps children to feel they have a place in the world.

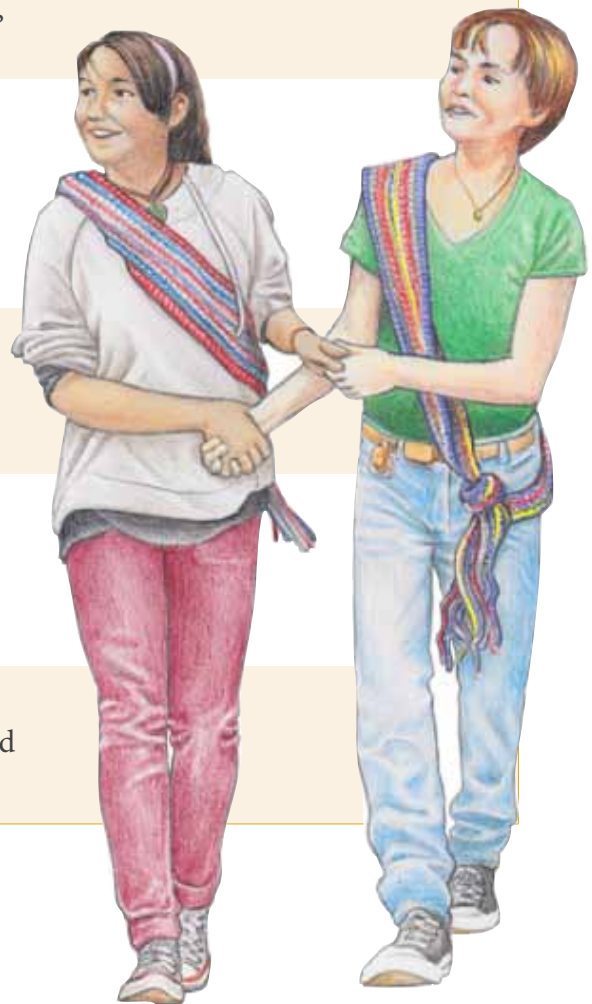
By finding out about the culture of the child you are caring for, you will provide the foundation for a lifelong sense of inclusion and connectedness. Even if the child or youth does not seem interested in their own culture, continue to explore it. The child will see the respect for their cultural background.

It is the right of all children to feel connected to their culture. There are many ways for a family to connect to Indigenous culture. This booklet contains ideas from Indigenous workers and non-Indigenous caregivers of Indigenous children with FASD.



Understanding the Child you Care for:

- ❖ Learn what happened in the child's life. Consider how trauma may have affected the child's development and be prepared to provide holistic supports to address complex situations.
- ❖ Find out more about the needs of people with FASD and ensure that other people who care for them or lead activities with them understand how to work with their strengths.
- ❖ Look for cultural activities and practices that provide positive role modeling, pro-social friendships, routines, structure, security, consistency and acceptance.
- ❖ Use direct language. Avoid using expressions such as "hold your tongue" or "pull yourself together". A child with FASD may focus on the words and not the behaviour change that is needed.
- ❖ Involve yourself in the development and implementation of the child's individual educational plan. Each child is unique.
- ❖ Be aware of the child's previous language environment. If different than yours, it may take them a little longer to translate and give an answer.
- ❖ Remember that youth with FASD may be manipulated by peers and can easily be led into violence, drugs and alcohol.



Finding Supports for Yourself and the Child you Care for:

- ❖ Make social and cultural connections through your local Friendship Centre. These centres may offer workshops for families. Many have children's programs and activities.
- ❖ Look for a local Aboriginal Head Start program or Aboriginal Health Access Centre. There may also be other services through the school, public health unit, EarlyON Child and Family Centre or Children's Aid Society.
- ❖ Connect with Elders and Knowledge Keepers from the child's culture. It will provide a larger support network. In some communities, they become a grandparent figure to all children and can support the cultural development of Indigenous children who are in foster homes or adopted.
- ❖ If possible, get the child to know some of their biological relatives, such as aunts, uncles, cousins and siblings. Build relationships with them.
- ❖ Find out if the child you care for is entitled to be registered for Indian status and therefore eligible to benefits and rights under the Indian Act. First Nations children should not lose their status when they are adopted.
- ❖ Jordan's Principle makes sure all First Nations children can access the products, services and supports they need, when they need them. Jordan's Principle can help with a wide range of health, social and educational needs. Find out more through the Government of Canada website.
- ❖ Connect with other families in a similar situation. This may help you, and the child you care for, feel like you are not alone.
- ❖ September 9 is Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Awareness Day. Find out if there is anything happening locally or online that you can join in.
- ❖ Find support to acknowledge grief and loss. Grief may be related to milestones or school expectations that are not met. Loss may be related to family, celebrations or birth dates. Talking about this and sharing with support groups may help caregivers and children.

Understanding the Culture of the Child you Care for:

- ❖ There are many Inuit, First Nations and Métis communities, each with their own heritage and culture. Find out about the child's own community and, if possible, involve them in it.
- ❖ Learn what happened historically in the child's culture. It will help you understand the child's identity and needs.
- ❖ Indigenous people teach how all parts of the universe are connected in a holistic way. When caring for a child, this means to be aware of their overall well-being: emotional physical, mental and spiritual.
- ❖ Participate with your child in cultural activities and events. It provides children a larger context of belonging. It also opens up the possibility to further learning.
- ❖ Find out about the child's cultural protocols such as the appropriate language to use, the ways to respect privacy, the role of the Elders, the participation in events, etc.



Connecting the Child you Care For to Their Culture

Make culture part of your home life by:

- ❖ Taking time to learn about the specific culture of the child in your care and introducing them to that culture.
- ❖ Finding out the child's traditional name, clan and colours. This may require building a relationship with an Elder from the child's community.
- ❖ Learning and playing games that are part of the child's culture. Friendship Centres and Elders can help and the internet has many suggestions, including videos demonstrating them, such as the *Stick/Bone Game*, *Ring the Stick* or *Make the Stick Jump*.
- ❖ Reading culturally and developmentally appropriate books to your child such as *Making the Water Sing*, *A Journey through the Circle of Life* or *An Aboriginal Carol*.
- ❖ Finding out about arts and crafts that reflect the culture of the child. Providing opportunities to make crafts with traditional or natural materials. This may include using culturally appropriate colouring books or pages.
- ❖ Displaying art from the child's culture in your home.
- ❖ Requesting and using culturally appropriate books, magazines, CDs and DVDs from your local library.
- ❖ Looking for recipes, gathering, preparing and eating food together as a family that reflects the child's culture. This may include wild rice, moose, venison, salmon, fish, fiddleheads, etc., and accessing Indigenous cookbooks, recipes and cooking shows.
- ❖ Finding out about cultural practices so you can add them to your daily life. This may include knowing some traditional medicines and their usage, thanking the Creator and respecting all aspects of nature.
- ❖ Providing the child opportunities to learn or improve their home language. The television network APTN has children's programs in traditional languages.
- ❖ For older youth and young adults, accessing television programs, movies and documentaries that relate to Indigenous culture such as *A Fish out of Water*, *Powwow Highway*, *Rumble: The Indians who Rocked the World* and *Fast Runner*.

- ❖ Making available traditional and contemporary Indigenous music such as *A Tribe Called Red*, *The Jerry Cans*, *Buffy Sainte-Marie*, *Robbie Robertson* and *Red Bone*.
- ❖ Speaking openly and asking questions in a positive way about race and culture so the child feels comfortable with his/her own identity.

Make culture part of your social and community life by:

- ❖ Introducing children to cultural songs, drumming, dancing, powwows, round dances, celebrations and community gatherings that bring out the spirit of Indigenous children.
- ❖ Participating as a family in cultural experiences so that everyone learns to embrace the culture.
- ❖ Taking part in traditional sport and everyday activities such as lacrosse, archery, snowshoeing, fishing, canoeing, camping, building an igloo and making tea over a campfire.
- ❖ Attending powwows, ideally in the child's home community. Make sure you prepare the child for what to expect: drumming, dancing, food, people. Decide to what extent the child will participate. If appropriate and possible, bring or make regalia. There may be a regalia-making workshop at a local Friendship Centre.
- ❖ Helping the child make friends with others their own age and adults from the same culture.
- ❖ If protocol allows, taking photographs of the child participating in cultural activities and posting them in your house, in a scrapbook, photo album or video.
- ❖ Going to museum and exhibits with the whole family to celebrate the child's culture.
- ❖ Celebrating important holidays in the child's culture, such as National Indigenous Peoples Day (June 21). Some communities may also have regular celebrations linked to the seasons.
- ❖ Ensuring the First Nations, Inuit and Metis child you care for spends lots of time outdoors because it is a key piece of Indigenous history and culture.

Building Self-Esteem

Strengthen the bond between you and the child you care for by focusing on their strengths, cultural connections and talents. Speak to the child about these qualities.

For example, you can say: You...

- ◇ ...are affectionate, trusting, friendly loving.
- ◇ ...love powwow dancing.
- ◇ ...love drumming.
- ◇ ...love animals.
- ◇ ...love physical activity.
- ◇ ...are a great artist.
- ◇ ...are a wonderful storyteller.



We wish you well on your family's journey to connecting with the culture of the child you care for. The following organizations, resources and websites may provide support toward this goal.

Organizations Supporting Indigenous Culture for Families

4Canoe (magazine)

www.canoekids.com

Aboriginal Health Access Centres

www.allianceon.org/aboriginal-health-access-centres

Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (APTN)

www.aptn.ca

Indigenous Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder/Child Nutrition Program

www.children.gov.on.ca/htdocs/English/indigenous/fasd.aspx

Indigenous Services Canada

www.canada.ca/en/indigenous-services-canada.html

Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami

www.itk.ca

Inuuqatigiit – Centre for Inuit Children, Youth and Families

www.inuuqatigiit.ca

Métis Nation of Ontario

www.metisnation.org

Ontario Aboriginal Head Start Association

www.oahsa.ca

Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres

www.ofifc.org

Ontario Native Women's Association (ONWA)

www.onwa.ca

Information on Indigenous Culture and History

A Child Becomes Strong: Journeying Through Each Stage of the Life Cycle

www.resources.beststart.org/product/k12a-a-child-becomes-strong-manual

Atuaqsijut: Following the Path – Sharing Inuit Specific Ways

www.resources.beststart.org/product/k84a-atuaqsijut-inuit-manual

Native Land

www.native-land.ca

The Sacred Journey from Preconception to Parenting for First Nations Families in Ontario

www.resources.beststart.org/product/e31a-preconception-to-parenting-first-nations-ontario-manual

On-line Stores Providing Indigenous Resources

Good Minds

www.goodminds.com

Native Reflections

www.nativerellections.com

Strong Nations

www.strongnations.com

Resources on FASD

FASD ONE. Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Ontario Network of Expertise.

www.fasdontario.ca

FASD Ontario. Database of resources, services and training related to FASD.

www.fasdon.ca

Success Stories

“ My adopted child with FASD has been dancing since she was three years old. She responded to drumming, the heartbeat of the culture, with actual powwow steps. As a preschooler, she took blankets and wore them as fancy shawls when she danced. She really focuses when she dances. She is completely accepted by other dancers, as a kid who loves to dance! There are no differences.

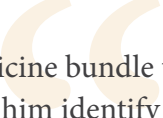
– *Non-Indigenous Foster/Adoptive Parent*

“ When I take Indigenous children with FASD who are in my care camping in the summer, they fall asleep faster under the moon and the stars while listening to recorded powwow music near an open fire. It is a spiritual calming response that speaks to a connectedness to their culture. – *Non-Indigenous Foster/Adoptive Parent*

“ Children, youth and adults with FASD go to naming ceremonies and sweat lodges so they understand who they are in their First Nation identity.

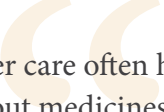
– *Non-Indigenous Foster/Adoptive Parent*

“ A 10 year-old boy with FASD who was in care was having repetitive dreams seeing a particular landscape. He wanted to know the meaning of his dream. A healer perceived this place was a deep blood memory of his birth landscape. The child's name came through the healing session which was heart-warming. The experience helped the boy be more grounded, with a name and place as cultural identifiers. – *Non-Indigenous Foster/Adoptive Parent*

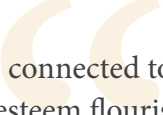


An adolescent with FASD was given a medicine bundle to walk through life with by a healer, to help him identify his special gifts. The boy and his family benefitted greatly as it helped them all to focus on the culture and a positive journey.

– *Non-Indigenous Foster/Adoptive Parent*



Children and youth with FASD who are in foster care often have no idea where they belong. Learning about medicines and smudging has a grounding effect on these children. Once they have learned about smudging, this practice lessens anxiety and uneasiness in their environment. This practice will stay with them throughout their life and provide comfort. – *Indigenous FASD worker*



Since our 11 year-old son with FASD has been connected to his culture, I have seen his confidence and self-esteem flourish. It makes me so proud to see my future Métis leader have a safe space and cultural wraparound support to grow.

– *Métis Nation of Ontario citizen and proud mother*

Acknowledgements

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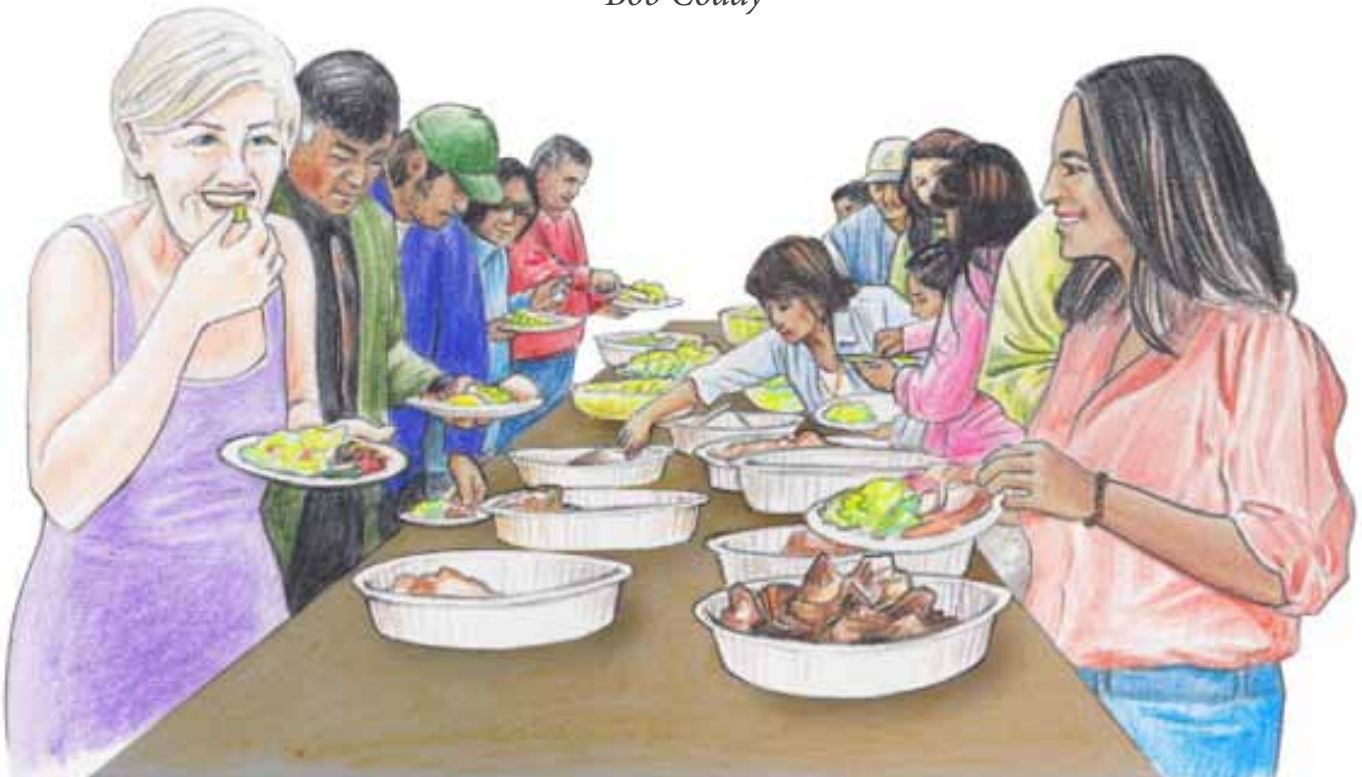
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