

Supporting Relationships in FASD: Building Bridges Across the Lifespan

Dr. Bekim Sadikovic et al.

October 20 & 21, 2026

8:30am – 4:15pm EST

Zoom – Child and Parent Resource Institute (CPRI), 600 Sanatorium Rd, London, ON,
N6H 3W7

Overall Learning Objectives:

By the end of this conference, participants will be able to:

1. Identify current multi-disciplinary findings and implications from pre-clinical, translational, and clinical research investigating neurodiversity and Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD).
2. Examine strategies for evidence-based treatment and supports for researchers, medical and allied health professionals, educators, students, families, and adults and youth living with FASD in Ontario and beyond.
3. Describe living experiences, especially as it relates to building bridges across the lifespan, from parents, caregivers, and individuals living with FASD to inform clinical and research practices.

DAY 1 Session-Specific Learning Objectives:

By the end of these sessions, participants will be able to:

DR. BEKIM SADIKOVIC, PHD, FACMG (plenary speaker)

DNA METHYLATION EPISIGNATURES AS BIOMARKERS FOR RARE DISORDERS: FROM GENE DISCOVERY TO CLINICAL TRANSLATION

1. Describe the biological basis of DNA methylation episignatures and their role as functional biomarkers of disease.
2. Explain how episignature testing is being applied in the diagnosis and interpretation of rare genetic disorders.
3. Recognize the utility of genome-wide methylation profiling for variant classification, disease stratification, and novel disease gene discovery.
4. Discuss current evidence supporting DNA methylation alterations in FASD and related neurodevelopmental conditions.
5. Identify opportunities and limitations for the broader clinical implementation of epigenomic biomarkers in precision medicine.

ANGELA GEDDES, CYW, BA (Psych), MSW, RSW, YTT, ANNA WEBSTER, MATTHEW SINCLAIR, RJ FORMANEK, & JESS FOWLER (plenary speakers)

SEEING MORE CLEARLY TOGETHER: VOICES OF LIVED EXPERIENCE DISCUSS THE IMPORTANCE OF RELATIONSHIPS, RELEVANT SUPPORTS, AND HOPE ACROSS THE LIFESPAN

1. Recognize the lifelong and whole-body impacts of prenatal alcohol and substance exposure through a compassionate, neurodevelopmental, and lived-experience lens.
2. Evaluate relationship-based, trauma-informed, and strengths-focused approaches that improve support outcomes for individuals, caregivers, and families.
3. Discuss how stigma, misunderstanding, and systemic barriers can contribute to harm, while identifying opportunities for more inclusive and collaborative support.
4. Demonstrate practical, lived-experience-informed strategies to strengthen advocacy, communication, prevention, and service delivery within participants' own communities and organizations.

PROFESSOR RAJA MUKHERJEE, MBEBS, PRCPsych, PGTDip, PHD, MBE (plenary speaker)

SPECIFIC, AN EXAMPLE OF HOW CO-PRODUCTION AND CO-DELIVERY OF A PARENTING PROGRAM FOR FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN NEWLY DIAGNOSED WITH FASD CAN IMPROVE OUTCOMES FOR INDIVIDUALS

1. Demonstrate how parenting programs can help families with FASD but that they need to be tailored to individuals with FASD.
2. Analyze the relationship between FASD, other neurodevelopmental conditions, and trauma.
3. Describe how changing approaches to the interaction with the individual with FASD can alter outcomes.

DAVID AMIN (SPEC.) (HONS.) BA (SUMMA CUM LAUDE), MA, JD (workshop speaker)

FASD AND THE LAW THROUGHOUT THE LIFE CYCLE

1. Describe the benefits of Estate Planning for families caring for individuals with FASD.
2. Identify fact patterns leading to particular Trusts that protect the property of vulnerable persons.
3. Illustrate how a Youth Court or Adult Therapeutic Court Judge will appraise an assessment report.
4. Differentiate between the Medical test for incapacity and the (lower) legal test for incapacity.
5. Recognize when capacity allows autonomous decision making, or when a Guardianship application to a judge is necessary.

EMILY JONES, MA, REGISTERED PSYCHOTHERAPIST (workshop speaker)

FASD AND MENTAL HEALTH

1. Identify common mental health concerns and trauma-related vulnerabilities experienced by children and youth with FASD, including anxiety, depression, emotional dysregulation, and suicidality.
2. Define and recognize learned helplessness in individuals with FASD, including how repeated experiences of failure, misunderstanding, unrealistic expectations, and punishment can contribute to hopelessness, avoidance, reduced motivation, and declining mental health.
3. Recognize how neurodevelopmental differences associated with FASD contribute to inconsistent functioning, executive functioning challenges, and difficulties meeting everyday expectations.
4. Use trauma-informed, strength-based, co-regulation, and environmental support strategies to promote emotional regulation, resilience, and mental wellness in children and youth with FASD.

RAY BEZZINA, RSW (workshop speaker)

SUPPORTING STUDENTS WITH FASD: A NEURODIVERSITY-AFFIRMING APPROACH IN THE CLASSROOM

1. Identify key neurodevelopmental characteristics of FASD that impact learning, behaviour, and regulation in school settings.
2. Describe how classroom environments can influence regulation, engagement, and felt-safety.
3. Apply FASD-informed strategies to support student success.
4. Implement practical environmental adaptations that promote inclusive, predictable, and responsive learning environments for students with FASD.

DR. TAMARA BODNAR, PHD, DR. CHRISTIE PETRENKO, PHD, SHARI FILIPONEK, EMILY HARGROVE, CJ LUTKE, & MAGGIE MAY, ADULT LEADERSHIP COOPERATIVE (ALC) OF FASD CHANGEMAKERS (workshop speakers)

FROM DATA TO DAILY LIFE: CO-DEVELOPING AND APPLYING HEALTH RESEARCH WITH ADULTS WITH FASD ACROSS THE LIFESPAN

1. Identify current gaps in research for adults with FASD and the implications for health-related outcomes.
2. Explain the value of integrating lived-experience perspectives into the design, conduct, and interpretation of health research.
3. Apply principles of effective community-research partnership to support more accessible, relevant, and impactful health interventions.

DAY 2 Session-Specific Learning Objectives:

By the end of these sessions, participants will be able to:

TRACY MOISAN, SHANNON PARSONS, RECE, TANYA EICHLER, RP, & NANCY LOCKWOOD (plenary speakers)

SUPPORTING CAREGIVERS OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH WITH FASD WHO EXPRESS AGGRESSION, THROUGH POLYVAGAL-INFORMED AND ADAPTED NON-VIOLENT RESISTANCE (NVR) SUPPORT GROUP MODELS

1. Describe key concepts of Polyvagal Theory and Non-Violent Resistance approaches, including their relevance to supporting caregivers and families experiencing aggression towards family and caregivers in childhood and adolescence (AFCCA).
2. Describe the tangible benefits of peer support models for caregivers in complex family situations, including AFCCA, and assess opportunities to incorporate AFCCA-informed strategies within participants' own programs or service settings.
3. Explain at least two core components of the Polyvagal Support Group model (psychoeducation, experiential practice, peer mentorship) and how they support caregiver regulation and connection.
4. Apply one practical tool, the "polyvagal tree," to map nervous system states, identify triggers and "glimmers," and support pathways to safety.

KATE KRISTIANSEN & REINIER DESMIT (plenary speakers)

FASD & MARRIAGE: A TRUE TEST OF LOVE

1. Recognize that folks on the FASD spectrum can find love and have very rewarding relationships with a life partner.
2. Interpret that a marriage is a marriage. Whatever two people in love have to deal with in life, FASD won't make that challenge list change. HOW the challenges are dealt with WILL probably change.
3. Outline that the heart is one of the most important components in a human being to help properly deal with FASD. And most marriages, of any kind, can use MORE heart in them!

ANGELA GEDDES, CYW, BA (Psych), MSW, RSW, YTT, & DR. MORGAN KLEIBER, PHD (workshop speakers)

A FAMILY AFFAIR: THE BIOLOGICAL AND PSYCHOSOCIAL ROLE OF FATHERS IN FASD

1. Identify Developmental Origins of Health and Diseases (DOHaD) and how they apply to prenatal, perinatal, and postnatal health.
2. Recognize that paternal epigenetics plays an important role in the well-being of a child.

3. Explain that fathers do not cause FASD, but there is growing evidence suggesting that paternal health, particularly prior to conception, can contribute to FASD-associated factors.
4. Describe how the psychosocial interactions of fathers before, during, and after the birth of a child plays an important role in maternal and child well-being.

ANNA WEBSTER (workshop speaker)

THE NEUROWISE MODEL – SUPPORTING RELATIONSHIPS IN FASD THROUGH INTEGRATING RESEARCH, THERAPEUTIC COACHING, AND LIVING EXPERIENCE

1. Interpret how Neurowise adapts attachment theory and therapeutic parenting into a brain-based approach for FASD.
2. Evaluate how Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) supports psychological flexibility for caregivers, practitioners, and people with FASD.
3. Illustrate the Neurowise dual-track Structured Psychotherapy for Adolescents Responding to Chronic Stress (SPARCS) model for supporting relationships in FASD.

NANCY LOCKWOOD (workshop speaker)

STRENGTHENING RELATIONSHIPS, BUILDING CAPACITY: FASD ONTARIO'S APPROACH TO SUPPORT

1. Identify the four Ontario FASD initiatives delivered by Partners for Planning (website, Family and Caregiver Support Group grants, service provider training, and webinars) and their role in building capacity across sectors.
2. Summarize evidence-based bilingual resources to share with colleagues, people with FASD, and family members.
3. Describe three innovative models of support groups and how they are improving outcomes for people with FASD and their family members.
4. Recognize at least two barriers faced by historically underserved communities and identify one approach to enhance culturally responsive and inclusive supports.

FRANCESCA SERWAA, RSW, RP, PMP (workshop speaker)

FROM ADVERSITY TO OPPORTUNITY: SUPPORTING INDIVIDUALS WITH FASD THROUGH TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE AND REINTEGRATION

1. Describe the relationship between FASD, adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), and trauma across one's lifespan.
2. Identify factors that may increase vulnerability to child welfare involvement, school disengagement, and contact with the criminal justice system among individuals living with FASD.

3. Apply trauma-informed care principles to support individuals with FASD across educational, community, healthcare, and justice environments.
4. Evaluate strengths-based strategies that promote resilience, relationship-building, successful reintegration, and community inclusion.
5. Develop practical approaches that foster belonging, dignity, and improved outcomes for individuals with FASD and their families.

WILLIAM BARBER (workshop speaker)

INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES

1. Identify the importance of building trust in individuals living with FASD.
2. Recognize emotional triggers in people living with FASD being supported.
3. Demonstrate how to remain calm in complex, stressful situations involving individuals living with FASD.

EILEEN DEVINE, LCSW (workshop speaker)

WHEN CONNECTION BREAKS DOWN: A RELATIONAL COGNITIVE SKILLS FRAMEWORK FOR FASD

1. Identify three core relational cognitive skill domains that commonly impact relationships in individuals with FASD.
2. Differentiate between willful behaviour and skill-based relational challenges using a brain-based framework.
3. Describe how stress and nervous system dysregulation can interfere with empathy, flexibility, and social connection.
4. Apply a relational cognitive skills lens to interpret challenging relational interactions across caregiving, educational, and clinical settings.
5. Implement practical, relationship-based strategies that support connection, reduce conflict, and strengthen relational skill development.

DR. NINA KAMINEN-AHOLA, PHD (workshop speaker)

EFFECTS OF PRENATAL ALCOHOL EXPOSURE ON THE HUMAN EPIGENOME AND DEVELOPMENT

1. Explain what epigenetics is and describe the focus of epigenetic research.
2. Define the concepts of developmental programming, mitotic epigenetic memory, and epigenetic biomarker.
3. Describe how the effects of prenatal alcohol exposure on gene regulation and embryonic development can be studied using human cells and tissues.

4. Summarize the key findings of the epiFASD study on the effects of prenatal alcohol exposure on gene regulation and the phenotype of six-year-old exposed children.
5. Recognize the effects of alcohol exposure in early pregnancy.

DR. MICHELLE PONTI, HBSC, MD, FRCPC, JUSTIN TEMPLE, HBA, RT, & ERIN WATKINS, DSW (workshop speakers)

SCIENCE TO STRATEGIES: HOW EVIDENCE-INFORMED PRACTICES CAN SUPPORT CHILDREN AND YOUTH WITH FASD AND PROBLEMATIC SCREEN USE

1. Summarize current scientific and clinical evidence on problematic screen use and social media in children and youth with FASD and other neurodevelopmental conditions, including associated risks and potential benefits.
2. Explain how neurodevelopmental vulnerabilities (e.g., self-regulation, social cognition, impulsivity, executive functioning) contribute to increased susceptibility to maladaptive screen use, online safety concerns, and mental health challenges.
3. Describe the impact of social media on social functioning in youth with FASD, including effects on peer relationships, social stress, and interpretation of social cues, alongside opportunities for connection and support.
4. Apply relationship-focused, developmentally informed strategies to support healthy screen use, strengthen attachment and social skills, and promote meaningful off-screen interactions for children, youth, and families.

Day 1 – October 20, 2026

8:30 – 8:50	Sign into Conference via Zoom - Overview of the Day – Technology, COI Readings, Agenda, & Land Acknowledgement
8:50 – 9:15	Traditional Elder/Healer Joanne Jackson
9:15 – 9:25	Living Experience Speaker Shannon Butt
9:25 – 10:25 - 15-minutes will be dedicated to a question-and-answer period	Plenary Speaker Dr. Bekim Sadikovic – <i>DNA Methylation Episignatures as Biomarkers for Rare Disorders: From Gene Discovery to Clinical Translation</i>
10:25 – 10:40	Break
10:40 – 10:45	Hosts - Welcome Back
10:45 – 11:45	Living Experience Panel / The Natalie Davison Honourary Lecture

- 15-minutes will be dedicated to a question-and-answer period	Matt Sinclair, RJ Formanek, Jess Fowler, and Anna Webster (hosted by Angela Geddes) – <i>Seeing More Clearly Together: Voices of Lived Experience Discuss the Importance of Relationships, Relevant Supports, and Hope Across the Lifespan</i>			
11:45 – 12:45	Research ePoster Presenters Available in Breakout Rooms			
12:45 – 1:45	Lunch			
1:45 – 1:50	Hosts - Welcome Back			
1:50 – 2:50 - 15-minutes will be dedicated to a question-and-answer period	Plenary Speaker Professor Raja Mukherjee – <i>SPECIFiC, an Example of How Co-production and Co-delivery of a Parenting Program for Families with Children Newly Diagnosed with FASD can Improve Outcomes for Individuals</i>			
2:50 – 3:05	Break			
3:05 – 3:10	Hosts - Introduce Workshops			
3:10 – 4:10 - 15-minutes will be dedicated to a question-and-answer period	Workshop (Room 1) David Amin – <i>FASD and the Law Throughout the Life Cycle</i>	Workshop (Room 2) Emily Jones – <i>FASD and Mental Health</i>	Workshop (Room 3) Ray Bezzina – <i>Supporting Students with FASD: A Neurodiversity-Affirming Approach in the Classroom</i>	Workshop (Room 4) Dr. Tamara Bodnar, Dr. Christie Petrenko, Shari Filiponek, Emily Hargrove, CJ Lutke, and Maggie May, Adult Leadership Cooperative (ALC) of FASD Changemakers – <i>From Data to Daily Life: Co-Developing and Applying Health Research with Adults with FASD Across the Lifespan</i>
4:10 – 4:15	Hosts - Research ePoster Presentation & Artwork Contest Winners Announcements - Closing Remarks & Online Evaluations			

Day 2 – October 21, 2026

8:30 – 8:50	Sign into Conference via Zoom
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	- Overview of the Day – Technology, COI Readings, Agenda, & Land Acknowledgement			
8:50 – 9:50 - 15-minutes will be dedicated to a question-and-answer period	Plenary Speakers Interwoven Connections: Tracy Moisan, Shannon Parsons, Tanya Eichler, and Nancy Lockwood – <i>Supporting Caregivers of Children and Youth with FASD who Express Aggression, Through Polyvagal-Informed and Adapted Non-Violent Resistance (NVR) Support Group Models</i>			
9:50 – 10:05	Break			
10:05 – 10:10	Hosts - Introduce Workshops			
10:10 – 11:10 - 15-minutes will be dedicated to a question-and-answer period	Workshop (Room 1) Angela Geddes and Dr. Morgan Kleiber – <i>A Family Affair: The Biological and Psychosocial Role of Fathers in FASD</i>	Workshop (Room 2) Anna Webster – <i>The Neurowise Model – Supporting Relationships in FASD through Integrating Research, Therapeutic Coaching, and Living Experience</i>	Workshop (Room 3) Nancy Lockwood – <i>Strengthening Relationships, Building Capacity: FASD Ontario's Approach to Support</i>	Workshop (Room 4) Francesca Serwaa – <i>From Adversity to Opportunity: Supporting Individuals with FASD Through Trauma-Informed Care and Reintegration</i>
11:10 – 12:10	Research Lightning Talks			
12:10 – 1:10	Lunch			
1:10 – 1:15	Hosts - Welcome Back			
1:15 – 2:15 - 15-minutes will be dedicated to a question-and-answer period	Plenary Speakers Kate Kristiansen and Reinier deSmit – <i>FASD & Marriage: A True Test of Love</i>			
2:15 – 2:30	Break			
2:30 – 2:35	Hosts - Introduce Workshops			
2:35 – 3:35 - 15-minutes will be dedicated to a question-and-answer period	Workshop (Room 1) William Barber – <i>Inclusive Communities</i>	Workshop (Room 2) Eileen Devine – <i>When Connection Breaks Down: A Relational Cognitive Skills Framework for FASD</i>	Workshop (Room 3) Dr. Nina Kaminen-Ahola – <i>Effects of Prenatal Alcohol Exposure on the Human Epigenome and Development</i>	Workshop (Room 4) Dr. Michelle Ponti, Erin Watkins, and Justin Temple – <i>Science to Strategies: How Evidence-Informed Practices can</i>

				<i>Support Children and Youth with FASD and Problematic Screen Use</i>
3:35 – 4:05	Hosts - Research Lightning Talks Winner Announcement - Closing Remarks & Online Evaluations Traditional Elder/Healer Joanne Jackson			

25% of this program is dedicated to participant interaction

For RCPSC (MOC Section 1)

This event is an Accredited Group Learning Activity (Section 1) as defined by the Maintenance of Certification Program of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada, and approved by Continuing Professional Development, Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry, Western University. You may claim a maximum of 8.00 hours (credits are automatically calculated). Each participant should claim only those hours of credit that they actually spent participating in the educational program.