



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – “Everyday in Canada an unborn life is changed by Alcohol”

By Lisa Faingold

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VANCOUVER, BC – At one time, doctors told expecting mothers that a glass of wine or a beer was good for their unborn baby. So, mothers took their advice and had that glass of wine or beer daily, and some more than two, others more... if only they knew then what they know now.

That was more than 30 years ago. Not much has changed, except today doctors tell mothers **THERE IS NO SAFE AMOUNT OF ALCOHOL DURING PREGNANCY**. It causes brain and other neuro-system damages in unborn babies. **Everyday in Canada at least one child is born with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)**. There is no estimate of the number of people living with the FASD condition, but it is known that FASD is 100 percent irreversible and 100 percent preventable. Yet FASD has the highest incidence of any major birth defect in Canada affecting more than 9 in 1000 babies born.

It is estimated that 60 to 75 percent of women age 18 to 34 consume alcohol. Combine this with the fact that 50 to 75 percent of pregnancies are unplanned, and the chance of having a healthy baby becomes as likely as winning the lottery.

Advice from doctors is not enough. A young woman enjoying her teenage years and youth often does not see a need to visit the doctor regularly. Other help is needed. Understanding this, the **BC Aboriginal Child Care Society (BCACCS)** developed a program to help youth and communities prevent FASD. It's called ***The Best Start in Life: What Youth Need to Know about Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder***. It includes community information sessions, youth training, and a toolkit containing a video and training material. The kit enables youth across Canada to facilitate a one-hour presentation in schools and communities to develop greater awareness and understanding about FASD.

Charlees Joe and **Alana Gauley** are two BCACCS FASD youth facilitators. Charlees says “I became a facilitator because I wanted to show youth what I’m going through having FASD and how they can prevent it.”

As youth facilitators, Charlees and Alana go to BC communities and schools to talk about the effects of alcohol during pregnancy, the FASD condition, and things that youth can do to prevent FASD. Alana says, “This is a very powerful session for youth because the 12-minute video was developed by youth and gives information about FASD from youth’s perspectives.” Suitable for ages 12 and up, the video features messages from a doctor, nurse, Elder, a mother with children affected by FASD, and a true-to-life drama about Susan, a young woman who is pregnant.

The video and facilitator’s toolkit are ideal tools for hosting information sessions, and preparing youth to deliver them. Toolkits can be purchased from and sessions booked through the **BC Aboriginal Child Care Society**.

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