



MEDIA RELEASE
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Canadian First Nations guest Jenelle McMillan and her son Jordan are in New Zealand to share their story to help New Zealand families, agencies and communities better respond to Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD).

Drinking alcohol during pregnancy can cause a range of adverse effects on fetal development. These effects are collectively known as Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD).

At one end of the spectrum, heavy drinking during pregnancy can result in Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) which includes physical birth defects, brain damage and the characteristic facial features.

At the other end are the more hidden disabilities related to brain damage that often go undiagnosed. These include impulsive behaviour and memory problems, difficulty understanding social cues and applying the rules, difficulty planning ahead and completing complex tasks. Left undiagnosed and therefore misunderstood, these are likely to lead to more serious consequences. Research shows that the affected people are at greater risk of experiencing mental health problems, school disruption, unemployment and even trouble with the law. With appropriate support these people can lead very successful lives.

There is no known safe level of alcohol and no safe time during pregnancy. The brain is constantly developing and is susceptible to the damaging effects of alcohol.

Efforts to support women not to consume alcohol during pregnancy must be increased as prevention is far better than cure. Efforts to support affected individuals and their families must also be increased.

Alcohol Healthwatch has brought Jenelle McMillan, a skilled community educator, counsellor and birth mother, to New Zealand for a series of presentations on FASD. She is joined by her 18 year old son Jordan who will also be presenting on his experience of living with FASD. The series of five presentations are being delivered with the support of local agencies and marae.

A formal welcome will be held at Orakei Marae in Auckland today at 10am before the presentations get underway tomorrow.

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More details on Jenelle McMillan and the presentations available on www.ahw.org.nz **What's New Action on Liquor** - See www.ahw.org.nz for policy briefing papers on key liquor issues: including **Warning Labels**, Taxation, Sale of Liquor, Advertising, Blood Alcohol Concentration for driving and Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder. Also see Fact Sheet on Tertiary Student Drinking