

Cecil Sveinson

An Aboriginal Perspective on Suicide: How historical and contemporary Aboriginal issues lend themselves to the growing problem.



In 1992 Manitoba's Aboriginal Justice Inquiry recommended that the police services in their province implement mandatory Aboriginal Awareness training sessions for all of their staff. The problem was, at the time, no one really knew what that was. By attending this session, the presenter will share what has been learned in an 18 year journey of mistakes and successes. Meanwhile, suicide rates amongst Aboriginal people skyrocketed across the country. Communities, which include police, struggled to deal with the problem. Ultimately, scholars proved what our Elders have been saying for years - youth who know who they are as Aboriginal people are less at risk.

A wide range of historical and contemporary Aboriginal issues will be discussed including traditional medicine, ceremonies, residential school and the over-representation of Aboriginal people in the criminal justice system.

Note: There will be smudging, ceremonial objects and discussion on Aboriginal spirituality. Participants are given advance notice in the event this conflicts with their personal belief system.

Cecil Sveinson bio:

Cecil Sveinson currently serves as the Program Manager for the Aboriginal and Diversity Policing Unit where he and his officers work to improve relationships with Aboriginal and Diverse communities. He sits on many different boards representing the Service including the Child Death Review Board (Office of the Children's Advocate), Aboriginal Education Directorate Advisory Committee (Manitoba Education) and the Office of Ethics, Integrity and Anti-Corruption Training Advisory Committee.

Not only does he instruct for the Winnipeg Police Academy but internationally through the Canadian Police College where he serves as

an instructor on such courses as Integrated Approaches to Domestic Violence in Aboriginal Communities and Aboriginal Gang Prevention and Diversion Strategies. He is also a master trainer in Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training. He has been called into several communities in crisis to provide training and assist in debriefing the community. He is currently part of an international group of Aboriginal suicide experts working at developing training far more specific to the needs Aboriginal communities. He has presented at many conferences, forums and workshops across the nation on Aboriginal issues.

Cecil has traditional beliefs and participates in ceremony across the country. He is firm in his belief that knowledge of the culture, language and tradition is the cornerstone for any work with Aboriginal youth in gang, suicide and drug prevention work.

