



*Pathways to Resiliency, Strength and Recovery*

**Closing Keynote – Michael Kral, Associate Professor, School of Social Work,  
Wayne State University**

**Date:** Friday, May 6, 2016

**Location:** Regis University Lowell Campus, Denver, CO

**Time:** 2:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.

**Title:**

Social Justice and Suicide Prevention: Lessons Learned from Research with Indigenous People

**Abstract:**

Community-driven suicide prevention can be applied to marginalized or high-risk groups such as Indigenous peoples, LGBT, and veterans. By using a social justice perspective we broaden the lens of types of interventions we can implement and who we enroll in our efforts. Evidence-based practices do not always apply and culturally relevant, population-driven efforts often build significantly more long-term effects. In this keynote presentation, Michael Kral, a researcher from Wayne State University, will discuss lessons learned from working with Indigenous peoples who have among the highest suicide rates globally. For example, his conclusion is that their high risk for suicide is often the result of social problems stemming from the traumatic impact of colonialism, and not mental illness, per se. The most negative impact of colonialism has been on the relationships Indigenous peoples have with each other, particularly their family relationships. In these contexts, Western efforts at suicide prevention have failed. His research shows that when Indigenous communities develop their own suicide prevention programs and run them, suicides decrease significantly. In this presentation he will discuss my research over 20 years with Inuit in Arctic Canada and give examples of community-driven successful suicide prevention

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efforts turned into social justice through reclamation for Indigenous peoples, an example of sovereignty on the ground at the community level. In addition, he will share findings from his research studying Inuit youth resilience and found it to be social and ecological, a new way of looking at resilience. Community-driven suicide prevention is a social justice approach, and Dr. Kral will extrapolate these lessons learned and suggests generalized empowerment-based approaches that could be applied to other populations with social determinants to their suicide risk.

**Learning Objectives:**

1. Understanding how colonialism is the background for Indigenous suicide, certainly among the Inuit in Arctic Canada. Learning how it has negatively affected the people.
2. Learning about other factors related to Indigenous youth suicide.
3. Learning how social justice can affect suicide prevention through community-driven and run suicide prevention programs.
4. Learning about the positive effects of participatory, collaborative action research.