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**Learning Objectives**

At the end of the presentation, participants will be able to:

1. Describe the challenges to implementing recommendations of Coroner’s juries, independent reports, and other oversight mechanisms

2. Discuss the evolution in Canada of sudden death restraints at the hands of the law enforcement authorities (prison guards and police officers), and the public interest ramifications of the reliance on the forensic medical terminology of “positional asphyxia” and “excited delirium”;

3. Explain the history and barriers to the implementation of mobile crisis intervention teams as a means of de-escalating police confrontations with members of the public, and the intersectional role of race, Indigeneity and mental health in many cases involving police violence.

**Abstract**

After three decades of advocacy and writing on issues of racism in law enforcement, Julian has learned that the famous and undeniable French expression, “Plus ça change, plus c’est la même chose”, applies to work in this area. Yes, dialogue has advanced, and yes, we are more and more willing to acknowledge the existence of systemic racism in our law enforcement bodies, but we are failing to implement concrete steps to fix it. In 1992, 28 years ago, Julian had the honor of representing the Urban Alliance on Race Relations in the Inquest into the death of Lester Donaldson, a black Jamaican man who suffered serious issues of mental illness, and was shot to death by Constable David DeVinney. DeVinney was ultimately acquitted at a high-profile criminal trial in relation to the fatal shooting. Since then there have been many others: Edmund Yu (fatally shot by
police), Wayne Williams (fatally shot by police), Manish Odhavji (fatally shot by police), Levi Schaeffer (fatally shot by police), Douglas Minty (fatally shot by police), Robert Gentles (died in custody at the Kingston Penitentiary), Ashley Smith (died in custody at Grand Valley Federal Penitentiary), Junior Manon (died while being forcibly restrained by police), Sammy Yatim (fatally shot by police); all individuals whose cases have received an extraordinary amount of public coverage in respect of the needless and preventable loss of life that occurred. His work for Indigenous community members has followed the same sad pattern: Ricardo Wesley & Jamie Goodwin (died in custody while incarcerated in Kashechewan First Nation), and Donald Mamakwa (died in custody of the Thunder Bay Police Service). Julian will survey select experiences of advocacy related to deaths at the hands of the law enforcement authorities, the inquiries into them, their outcomes, and the challenges to impacting substantive change. This will include remarks in respect of asphyxial deaths where cause of death terminology such as “positional asphyxia”, “excited delirium” and “restraint asphyxia” figure prominently in the proceedings. Further discussions will include the resistance to adopting mobile crisis intervention teams, and the failure to hold law enforcement authorities accountable where their actions result in death.