

A Virtual Lunch and Learn: Anti-Racism Series

Session 3 of 5 Sessions

On

Misconceptions of Indigenous Rights and Life Ways

With

Biimskwaa Niibiish (Turning Leaf) also known as Cynthia Bell from the Loon Clan, Odawa/Ojibway/Potawatomi people, originally from Turtle Island, however, through colonial constructs of reservations, her family are now members of the Wiikwemkoong Unceded Indian Reserve. She has been working with her community in many capacities over the past 26 years.

In her younger years she had worked as the Cultural Programmer for Wiikwemkoong over 15 years, where she successfully supported the revitalization of the communities' culture and language. She had created the foundation of Immersion within the primary grades through successfully obtaining funding for implementation and supervised its growth. She also created, planned and implemented a community-based language strategy, which involved the community members, community businesses and organizations.

During these 15 years she has supported youth to understand the importance of culture and language through ceremonies and learning resources. She has been strongly advocating for youth over these years, especially her children, where she decided to relocate to Toronto so her children can have access to resources specific to their needs.

Upon her arrival to Toronto, she quickly settled into the city and began to support her community as Cultural Programmer, Executive Assistant and the ENAGB Youth Mental Health & Addictions Program Manager, while with the Native Canadian Centre. During this time, she was able to create the ENAGB Youth program with community and especially youth involvement. Alongside youth, they created services that provided case management supports, transitional housing program, youth drop in, housing subsidies, mental health programming, addiction programming, social enterprises and many other programs/services that the youth voiced as a need.

Over those 9 years youth have voiced the need for their own autonomy, since September 2018, she supported the youth to create its own agency. Now as the ENAGB Executive Director Cynthia again with the youth are rebuilding ENAGB as its own agency. She alongside a 10-member board (60% youth) and an 8 member youth council are successfully moving toward the right direction. She believes this is the first of its kind in the GTA and maybe in the province that youth now have their own social agency that supports Mental Health and Addictions and is led by these remarkable and knowledgeable youth.

This workshop is created to provide a safe space for allies to begin to understand the history of the Indigenous community. It is also an opportunity to ask questions you feel you could not ask out of fear to possibly be looked upon as racist or discriminatory. You are encouraged to formulate your questions, or to ask questions you always wanted to ask, but never found the appropriate time or person.

Learning Objectives:

- History of Indigenous People
- Our story of North America & It's Treaties
- Opportunity for self-reflection on your position within the history of Indigenous People

For example, questions that have been asked before:

- Why do you call yourselves Indian, aboriginal or indigenous?
- What is a status card?
- Do you all speak the same language?
- Why don't you pay taxes?
- Why don't you all just get over it and move on?
- Why don't you think residential schools were not good for you people?
- Why are you always blocking roads, highways and protesting?

When: Thursday, January 25, 2024

Time: Noon to 2:00 p.m.

Feel Free to share this event with your colleagues

To register or if you have any questions contact Domenica Dileo at ddileo@cmhato.org