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Crime prevention team aims to scare kids straight

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The Cowichan Valley's Crime Prevention Youth Team wants to scare kids straight. To do so, the team has organized a week-long workshop to educate Valley youth about the dangers of drinking, drugs and violence.

The Scared Straight Youth 2000 Empowerment and Wellness Workshop, being held from July 31 to Aug. 4, is designed to address the myriad of issues facing First Nations youth. Those issues include alcohol, drugs, gangs, relationships, suicide and violence.

Vernon Canute, coordinator of the crime prevention team, said months of planning has gone into the workshops.

The crime prevention youth team is a pilot project between the Duncan-North Cowichan RCMP and Cowichan Tribes, but Canute said the workshop is open to both native and non-native youth.

Each day of the workshop will have a different theme, and will be led by Lee Mason of the Young Warrior's Foundation.

Day one – "Who am I and how did I get here" – helps youth understand what it means to be a First Nations person and explores the First Nations heritage and culture.

Participants will learn about Native American history, like reservations and residential schools, from a First Nations' perspective so they can understand some of the factors that have influenced their ancestors and possible contributed to alcohol and drug abuse.

Day two will focus on alcohol and drug prevention, focusing on the physiological effects of booze and drugs on the mind and body.

The seminar will also explore the cycle of destruction created by heavy substance abuse.

Day three looks at the dangers of becoming involved in gangs, the myth of gangs being an extended family and the reality that gang mentality usually leads to either prison or death.

The final two days focus on building healthy relationships, suicide prevention and role model development before the week wraps up with a look at organized crime in Canada.