RTP Evaluation Report
(The Chang School Section)

Future Skills Centre Centre des
Compétences
Centre **futures**

Canada

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Executive summary

The Indigenous Child and Youth Engagement Certificate Program was conceived to address the gap in educational opportunities and culturally relevant training that is available to Indigenous child and youth workers across Canada.

A transformative achievement of the initiative was the development of relevant curriculum by Indigenous practitioners and academics and course delivery by Indigenous instructors. In addition, the funded program was delivered online to facilitate access to those living and working in remote communities. These learners would not otherwise be able to access PSE or overcome financial barriers. Students who were engaged, had good academic outcomes and their feedback cited broader positive impacts as well.

Some learners faced challenges which included time management, preparedness for engaging in formal post secondary education, employer support and accessing digital technology. Identifying these challenges can help mitigate them in future offerings. Recommendations based on stakeholder consultations, have been provided.

The program is not sustainable without third party funding. Given the societal need filled by this program and existence of quality curriculum, alternate funding should be pursued.

Summary of key findings

The program is closely aligned with both The Chang School priorities (2023-2026) and Toronto Metropolitan University's (TMU) commitments for 2020-2030

- The Chang School priority to: *Enhance the effectiveness and availability of access and community engagement programming with thoughtful attention to equity, diversity and community inclusion.*
- TMU's commitment to be: *Guided by the broader Indigenous community and in the spirit of right relations, we will continue to work together to integrate Indigenous knowledge and teaching methods, ideas, experiences and expertise across the university. By increasing Indigenous faculty, staff and student enrolment, by expanding Indigenous curriculum, cultivating Indigenous-led SRC growth and by transforming the space we share, TMU will become a national leader in Indigenous education and a space where students can develop intercultural understanding and mutual respect for one another.*

Programming features, delivery and outcomes (environmental scan/literature search)

- Programming for Indigenous communities has been offered by other institutions in Canada. These offerings have been studied for outcomes and best practices. Outcomes (high attrition) is comparable to that observed for this program. By way of comparison, barriers to accessing education have been addressed by this program. Online delivery ensures students can learn in place and the funding model removes financial barriers. In addition, the curriculum has been developed for Indigenous students and by Indigenous instructors through community consultation. However, other features to address barriers such as smooth access to technology, wrap-around supports, dedicated time to learn, employer support, communicating performance expectations, learner diversity and literacy, orientation to post-secondary education and lack of academic preparation were not proactively anticipated or solutions implemented from program inception.

Program enrollment and graduation trends

The graduation rate in cohort 1 was 28% (based on initial registration numbers). This is comparable to the retention and graduation rates published for other Indigenous programs in Canada and from other certificates at the Chang School (even career aligned certificates linked to professional designations/credentials)[1].

- Student engagement levels (as reflected by low number of logins to the Learning Management System) was low. When students were engaged and motivated, grades received were very favorable.
- Engagement levels in cohort 2 were observed to be low. It is likely that the schedule (especially summer courses) were unsuitable for the target audience.

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[1] https://ce-tableau.ce.ryerson.ca/ (Institutional Records of Certificate graduation rates)

- Feedback also suggested that the application and recruitment process, student outreach and support all need better alignment to student personal needs and preferences. Computer literacy and access to technology also impacted outcomes.

Participant profile (obtained by RTP researcher)

- Participants in Cohort 1 were predominantly female (71% female, 29% male)
- There was diversity in the experience levels among the Community Mentors with Child and Youth Care. Experience as workers in the area of practice ranged from 1-18 years with an average of about 6 years.
- There was considerable diversity in the educational levels of the learners.
  13% had a bachelor's degree
  33% had a college certificate
  33% had education through elder teaching and ceremonies
  29% had some other form of certification
  17% had some education but no degree yet
  8% had no formal education at all

Participant satisfaction levels (determined by RTP researcher from a small sample size of 9 respondents)

- 86% of respondents reported that instructors were skilled and knowledgeable in the relevant topic areas,
- 86% of respondents said the course content met their expectations,
- 71% of respondents would recommend this program to friends.
- 71% of respondents also indicated that the course content was only sometimes organized, clear, and easy to follow (room for improvement).

Positive impact of engaging in the certificate program (determined by RTP researcher from a small sample size of 9 respondents)

- Improved community practice
- Improved confidence levels
- Increased motivation to pursue education
- Ability to apply knowledge to practice
- Improved capacity to deliver programing to youth

Program resourcing

- Most of the learners may classify in a similar way as first-generation students or those from under-served or marginalized populations. Best practices (for such students) would require more wrap-around support provided by a dedicated individual with the appropriate cultural, empathetic and professional skills. This level of support was not in place or adequately resourced.

Curriculum

- Curriculum developed was good but could be refined to include course design elements (visuals and hybrid elements) to enhance engagement of the target population.
- Curriculum was designed by Indigenous instructors and was seen (by engaged students) as relevant to their work/practice.

Online delivery

- Online delivery facilitated access to individuals in remote communities but may have been missing the communication, supportive and engaging environment required by learners unfamiliar with post-secondary education.
- While facilitating access, this mode of delivery also introduced challenges to learners. The lack of digital infrastructure such as access to functioning computers and on-demand internet access were cited as challenges.

Marketing consideration

- The value proposition for the program is not clearly defined. This may contribute to learners not drawing a clear connection between relevance, benefits and completion.

Primary learner challenges

- Lack of academic preparation for participation in degree credit, post-secondary courses
- Time management - competing priorities at home and work
- Level of employer support. Particularly time-off for coursework/homework and use of digital infrastructure.

Funding model

- As is, the program is not geared to revenue generation from tuition fees.
- Running the program without third party funding would not ensure long term sustainability.
- The funder requirements dictated the tight timelines for delivery of the pilot program. This introduced a tight schedule (two courses each) in the Winter and Spring/Summer terms for Cohort 2. For many learners with competing priorities, unfamiliarity with online delivery and formal education at the post-secondary level, this schedule presented a significant challenge. It strongly suggests that the inflexible schedule was a contributor to low engagement for this cohort.

Partnership

- The partnership between Right to Play, the Chang School and the Faculty of Community Services at TMU was positive but could have benefitted from better sharing of academic processes and detailed steps crucial to each unique role.
- The Covid-19 Pandemic and leadership changes at all partners also negatively impacted smooth program development and implementation.

Recommendations

Issue	Recommendation
Admission Criteria	● Better align admission criteria to equip prospective students for academic success. Offer foundational courses to those needing to build basic academic skills. ● Design a better application form to ensure effective screening of prospective learners.
Value Proposition	● Better articulate how completion of the program will help learners in their careers. ● Use testimonials to convey value if possible. ● Consider "professional development" options in value messaging.
Communication	● Establish a set channel for learners to communicate with instructors, peers and program staff to ensure that messaging is not missed. ● Build in more opportunities for virtual communication between students and instructors.
Curriculum	● Make placement assignments more structured and have students submit smaller but more frequent reflective pieces that counts towards their final grade (versus one large assignment) ● Tweak curriculum to incorporate best practices and online course design elements to engage learners. ● Assess if a prerequisite structure for courses would better enable student success
Learner and program support	● Resource the program so that it is able to provide wrap-around support ideally needed for an "access" program such as this. Consider using the 'Spanning the Gaps' program as a model. ● Ensure that a dedicated program manager has the skills and professional background to provide administrative support and student outreach ● Collaborate with TMU's Indigenous Student Services (https://www.torontomu.ca/indigenous-student-services/) to establish the best way to provide learners with a culturally supportive environment so they can balance academic learning with traditional teachings and culture.
Academic preparation	● Determine if an academic preparation course is needed for a subset of students to ensure academic success at the PSE level (covering writing, digital, critical thinking and analytical skills).

Engagement	● Consider mandatory attendance for some sessions (especially orientation). ● Consider a hybrid model for delivery. ● Use D2L learning analytics tools to track progress and ameliorate learning challenges in a proactive approach.
Sustainability	● Pursue options for third party funding (government, community agency or philanthropic) ● Ensure that the funding models is flexible and enables more student-centric timelines to be followed. ● Explore partnering with the Ontario Association of Child and Youth Care or an Indigenous-led institution like FNTI to deliver the program to the target audience in a certificate or micro-credential format. ● Explore promoting the programs to Indigenous-led community organizations and employers as a way to upskill, build capacity and professionalize their workforce. Employers would identify motivated individuals to support.

Background about the program

The Indigenous Child and Youth Engagement Certificate Program was conceived to address the gap in educational opportunities and culturally relevant training that is available to Indigenous child and youth workers. The non-profit organization Right To Play, Toronto Metropolitan University's (TMU) School of Child and Youth Care (SCYC) and The Chang School of Continuing Education co-developed the program with the goal of up-skilling Indigenous child and youth workers with a postsecondary certification in child and youth work. The partnership was developed to achieve the following goals:

- Improve educational opportunities to better accommodate Indigenous participants.
- Enhance the quality and long-term capacity within Indigenous communities and
- Increase the number of Indigenous people with post-secondary certificates in child and youth engagement.

To enable accessibility of the program by learners living and working in remote communities, the program was developed for the online delivery format.

In order to graduate from the certificate program students had to complete 4 required courses.

Two courses provided a theoretical grounding in child and youth care practice:

Course	Description
CCYC 405 – Therapeutic Foundations	This course is an introduction to the therapeutic philosophies and foundational processes of child and youth care practice. The student will gain knowledge of the language, theories and practices involved in the change process. Emphasis is placed on critical analysis, evidence-based as well as reflective practice, relative to the values, beliefs and assumptions of the student as well as the children, youth and families being served and how this informs professional practice.
CCYC 406 – Therapeutic Life-Space	This course provides a theoretical exploration of therapeutic life-space intervention as the central concept in working with children and youth in today's global context. The core of child and youth care practice is to be with young people where they are living their lives. This course introduces therapeutic life-space as a unified concept with physical, mental, relational, and virtual dimensions centred on the young person's interactions with life, place, space, and time. This contemporary conceptualization of therapeutic life-space reflects changes in social conventions, technology, and evolving cultural diversity.

Two courses provided students an opportunity to engage in experiential learning:

Course	Description
CVCY 300 - Experiential Learning 1	The course requires students to be involved in a paid or unpaid job placement or contract with direct contact with young people, their families and/or their communities over a 13-week period. Students are required to attend an online seminar session for one hour per week with a Chang School instructor, as well as any training or professional development as part of their paid or unpaid job placement or contract in their community.

CVCY 400 Experiential Learning 2	In this follow-up to CVCY300, students deepen their practice in their communities within existing paid or unpaid placements/contracts over a 13-week period. The placement/contract can be a continuation of their previous job placement (CVCY300) or a new placement with direct contact within their communities that meets the criteria. Students will attend a one-hour online seminar each week with a Chang School instructor, as well as any training provided through their community placement.

Evaluation – goals and research methodology

The evaluation was required by the funder to ensure that program outcomes were achieved. The evaluators (staff at The Chang School and RTP) are independent such that they are not part of the program development or implementation team. However, they were not involved at the time of program inception and so this evaluation is mostly retrospective in nature. Neither of the evaluators are Indigenous and the absence of that lens may be a limitation.

The evaluation loosely follows a logic model but since longitudinal study is not possible, long term outcomes are out of scope. Evaluation methods undertaken at The Chang School were more focused on conducting a "lessons learned" exercise. The goals are forward looking and more intent on informing iterative improvements for future program offerings.

The mixed-methodology used included that following elements:

Literature review – In order to provide context and background to this evaluation, an online search was conducted in July 2023 to find more information and analysis about online programming delivered to Indigenous students in remote communities. The search focused on recruitment practices, barriers, retention, student supports, challenges faced by students and best practices driving program success. The literature reviewed was mainly focused on capacity building programs offered to Indigenous learners limited to government reports and research papers published in academic journals.

Program participation and outcome trends - Enrollment and graduation trends were extracted from Chang School reports (institutional data) held internally by the Data and Business Intelligence Group. Additional information about student logins into D2L and cohort-based enrollment was provided by the program staff at the Chang School.

Stakeholder interviews – The perspectives of Chang School program operational staff, program leadership (program director, academic coordinator, and program founder), partner organization manager and coordinator, and program instructors were obtained by the Chang School Research Analyst via virtual interviews conducted individually or in pairs (Right to Play Partners and Chang School Administrative Staff). The interviews used semi-structured questions to elicit feedback and individual perspectives. These questions focused on roles, what worked, challenges encountered and ideas for improvement. Perspectives shared at each interview were later analyzed for common themes about retention, engagement, support, barriers and curriculum and suggestions for future offerings. Findings from the interviews are aggregated for presentation in the report.

Student baseline data and perspectives – Student perspectives and (baseline and end line data) was collected by researchers from Right to Play via surveys and interviews (for those who opted). Challenges with collecting student perspectives included very low response rates, and the lack of an evaluation process and assigned evaluators at the time of program inception. Data was shared with Chang school staff but will be reported in a separate report compiled by RTP. Data shared by RTP was used to validate stakeholder perspectives and to confirm and inform Chang School observations and conclusions.

A brief literature review - putting outcomes in context.

Recruiting underrepresented groups

Indigenous students qualify as under-represented groups when it comes to participation in post secondary education (PSE). However, there is a dearth of information on how to best recruit members of under-represented groups, and on the effectiveness of these recruitment strategies in the Ontario context.

Models for recruitment include active versus passive recruitment. Active recruitment efforts focus on proactively getting out and engaging with students and communities, versus recruitment (passive) via marketing campaigns, websites. There is also a collaborative model of recruitment. The collaborative system is characterized by open communication and cooperation between departments or organizations (as is the case for this project), an approach that seems to facilitate a smooth transition for students from prospective, to applied, to accepted and supported.[2]

Research indicates the greater effectiveness of collaborative rather than siloed approaches. A system-wide collaborative approach could reduce redundancy across support services and could better help to identify appropriate participants to recruit.

Program types and best practices

In order to increase enrollment in PSE for underrepresented Indigenous groups in Canada there are several types of programs offered through colleges and universities. According to a Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO) study[3], some of these programs are:

- Aboriginal Access Programs - *college or university preparation programs that provide Aboriginal students with the postsecondary education (PSE) skills necessary to be successful across a range of academic programs. These skills can include English, math and basic studying skills. Access programs assist students who have not completed their secondary education, as well as students who need to complete prerequisites to enter their desired program of study.*
- Aboriginal Student Services Programs - *programs that provide Aboriginal students with the culturally sensitive support and encouragement they may require to complete their PSE. These programs are often characterized by a holistic approach to the recruitment and retention of Aboriginal students and may include advice and direction* to help Aboriginal students access academic, financial, emotional and social support.
- Aboriginal Studies and Designated Programs - *programs that are designed to raise awareness about Aboriginal culture among both the Aboriginal and the non-Aboriginal student populations. The programs can include courses that focus on Aboriginal language, culture, history, art and issues of importance to the well-being of Canada's Aboriginal Peoples, as well as ways in which Canada's Aboriginal Peoples are perceived both within Canada and at a global level.*
- Aboriginal Healthcare Programs - *programs that are designed to facilitate enrolment and graduation of Aboriginal students in academic programs in the healthcare field. These types of*

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[2] Stonefish, T., Craig, J., & O'Neil, A. (2015). The Recruitment of Under-represented Groups to Ontario Colleges: A Survey of Current Practices. Toronto: Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario.

[3] R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd. (2010). Promising Practices: Increasing and Supporting Participation for Aboriginal Students in Ontario. Toronto: Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario.

academic programs may include the teaching of traditional Aboriginal healing methods and may be based specifically on the healthcare needs of the surrounding Aboriginal community.

The certificate in Child and Youth Care would likely be categorized in a way similar to a designated program and a Healthcare Program as it focuses on issues of importance Aboriginal child and youth well being, building capacity (and a credential) for Indigenous child and youth care workers and offers exposure to PSE education in the field.

Indigenous students face many barriers to accessing and completing any PSE program. Research reported in the HEQCO report identifies reasons why Indigenous students drop out. These include:

- Family Obligations and Childcare Responsibilities,
- Financial Difficulties,
- Lack of Academic and Technological Skills,
- Personal Issues,
- Differing Goals.

Promising practices to recruit and retain students identified in the report that are relevant to this evaluation are:

- *Programs should solicit the input of the communities they intend to serve. Program designers should work within the Aboriginal community to nurture an environment that supports and encourages students to continue their PSE. This includes identifying role models within the community and soliciting the support of Elders to counsel students both within the community and on campus.*
- *Programs that take a holistic approach should be offered (emphasis should be spread across cultural knowledge and understanding, academic skills and employability). If necessary, multiple programs should be offered.*
- *The majority of Aboriginal students are female and predominantly mature students, so programs should support their roles in their families and communities in order to increase student retention levels. Programs should be designed to meet the needs of the local population.*
- *Consideration should be given to offering programs that allow students access to degree programs and the resources to pursue those programs, even if those students do not fit the usual college and university requirements.*
- *Aboriginal students should have access to programs that minimize the time spent outside their communities, as these are very attractive to Aboriginal students (particularly those who live in remote areas). So, too, are modular programs of study that allow Aboriginal students to earn seasonal livelihoods.*
- *Students should be recruited from within their communities through networks created between postsecondary institutions, the Aboriginal Band council, Elders and local high schools. The role of Native recruitment officers should also be explored.*
- *Students should be provided with a sense of pride in their own culture through the development of course materials that are culturally relevant and culturally sensitive. This type of curriculum is best provided by an Aboriginal teacher who can serve as an additional role model. Ideally, the program should be delivered in whole or in part in the local Aboriginal language, which, in turn, helps bolster the cultural integrity of the community. This delivery method also creates a demand for PSE Aboriginal educators.*

- *Wherever possible, programs should be launched with a physical presence on campus (e.g., an Aboriginal student services centre). A student services centre provides Aboriginal students with a "safe place," where they can reaffirm their culture and receive personal and counselling support. It also generates awareness of the Aboriginal student program and of Aboriginal issues both among Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students and among faculty members.*
- *Academic skills courses should be considered where there are significant numbers of students who could benefit from improving their performance in all their courses. These types of courses could be offered to both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students in a combined setting as a means of facilitating exposure between the two groups with the hope of decreasing resistance to Aboriginal services among the non-Aboriginal student population.*
- *Partnerships should be initiated and nurtured both within the academic community and with local business groups. Wherever possible, local economic interests should be addressed so that employment opportunities for program graduates are optimized. If possible, field placements should be included to enable graduates to obtain valuable work experience in preparation for the job market.*
- *Collaboration between Aboriginal student services and Aboriginal access programs should be ensured. Each can reinforce the other, and students attending one can become aware of the other through friends using the services.*

Online Indigenous students – supports, barriers and preferences

A recent study[4] was undertaken by Thompson Rivers University (TRU) with the goal of collecting information on how the graduation rate (persistence) of Indigenous students could be improved. The university focused on offering online courses, and this includes providing programs to remote Indigenous communities. There is little research on persistence of Indigenous students and early studies point to barriers to success that Indigenous students face in rural communities. These include online course logistical and timing problems, childcare, transportation, scheduling, cost, and limited access to qualified instructors and technology (including internet connectivity). The TRU Study had the primary goal to identify strategies that could increase the persistence of Indigenous students taking online courses. Findings support a holistic Indigenous human model of university persistence that includes intersecting social, cognitive, physical, and cultural components. These findings led to recommendations for more Indigenous faculty and culture on campus, building good relationships with faculty and students and a positive social environment, building time management skills, cognitive skills (literacy, mathematics, and computer skills, providing non-academic support such as financial support, family support, etc. They found that online, students preferred embedded media, graphics, virtual environments, and games over other online design elements. Email was the preferred method to communicate with faculty. While students liked group work they found that assigning one mark for group projects worked against social cohesion. Most students reported having the skills needed to complete online courses, with the exception of time management. Online Indigenous students interviewed indicated that childcare, academic tutoring, and face-to-face meetings were identified as important supports. In terms of online course design, Indigenous students indicated that they preferred

[4] Patrick Walton, Robert Byrne, Natalie Clark, Michelle Pidgeon, Mike Arnouse, & Kristen Hamilton
 Online Indigenous University Student Supports, Barriers, and Learning Preferences, International Journal of e-learning and Distance Education, Volume 35, No. 2, 2020

to have more virtual environments and Indigenous content. They least preferred audio and video instructor lectures. These findings may provide some insights to this evaluation.

Adapting online learning for Indigenous learners

The Indigenous people (First Nations, Inuit and Metis) make up a large proportion of population in Canada's north and health inequity issues are evident in this region. In 2009-2012, the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) tried to build capacity of northern professionals via its Skills Online program. Governmental and non-governmental organizations are the main agencies that hire staff and partners in public health service delivery. In small communities, some professionals, primarily registered nurses, and paraprofessionals with varied educational backgrounds and skills, as well as diverse ethnic and language backgrounds deliver services. PHAC ran a pilot to provide continuing education opportunities to this diverse population. Design elements of the pilots included:

- targeted solicitations of learners in particular, paraprofessionals with Aboriginal ethnicity from the public health workforce who would not necessarily self-register for Skills Online modules.
- assignment of a trained facilitator with Northern and Aboriginal public health experience.
- adaptation of modular content and/or delivery modality to better meet learning preferences and specific knowledge gaps of the learner group.

The goals of the pilot were to determine if Skills Online could deliver competency-based education and what adaptations were needed for effective delivery. The findings of the pilot were published[5] and are relevant to this evaluation. They are captured in the table below.

THEME	KEY FINDINGS
Learner Solicitation	- Targeted solicitation proved to be a successful way to recruit learners - The attrition rate was 60% and 77% in the 2nd and 3rd pilots (compared to 30% average for Skills Online learners in general)
Learner retention	- The 3 most prevalent challenges to completing a Skills Online module were a lack of time due to workload, lack of time due to personal time conflicts, and technological challenges such as broadband infrastructure and computer literacy
Learning Facilitation	- Learners appreciated the level of expertise and ability of facilitators to connect to their (facilitators were chosen based on their knowledge and prior experience with Northern practice and Aboriginal public health issues) - Facilitators needed to be flexible and innovative to address the challenges that diversity within learning groups presented to e-learning
Educational Diversity	- Diversity (learner's educational backgrounds) within learning groups was both a benefit and a challenge, especially for facilitators. Computer literacy also varied. - Lack of prerequisite skills prevented some from even attempting the online portion of the module.

[5] Marnie Bell & Karen MacDougall (2013) Adapting online learning for Canada's Northern public health workforce, International Journal of Circumpolar Health, 72:1, 21345, DOI: 10.3402/ijch.v72i0.21345

Technological issues	● Many relied on satellite-based Internet signals. Slow downloading speed and connectivity issues challenged learner participation in the pilot. Additionally, hardware and software issues unidentified prior to the pilot were barriers for learners that had to be addressed during the pilot. For example, computers were upgraded and programs were installed etc. to enable access to the e-learning platform.
Content Adaptations	● Learners consistently stated that the modules could be improved with the addition of relevant Aboriginal and Northern examples to illustrate concepts presented in the online module content.
Delivery Adaptations	● The pilot program demonstrated that Aboriginal paraprofessional learners require more individualized support and that telephone conversations/conferences are often more effective than electronic communication mechanisms in establishing whether messages and concepts are received and understood – added facilitation and innovative ways were needed to enhance communication (ice-breakers etc.)
Employer Support	● Employer support was cited as an enabling factor associated with learner retention and success. The support of employers for staff professional development can be demonstrated in a variety of ways such as allowing study to be done at work, providing lieu time when study is done outside of work time, allowing use of work computers, providing technical support, mentoring and bestowing recognition.

Three key lessons learned were identified:

Know your learners – Learners represent a diversity of educational backgrounds, literacy levels, learning preferences, computer skill. Adapt content and/or delivery modality accordingly to maximize completion and retention.

Know your learner's environment – Be proactive and identify technological challenges and find innovative solutions before online course start dates. Address inequities that may exist in the availability and quality of technology to enable e-learning.

Employer support enables completion of e-learning - Encouragement and recognition from supervisors who show genuine interest in what employees are learning contributes to the retention of learners and application of this learning to their work. Make sure workers are aware of this. Learners appreciate work time and use of office equipment to do online study. Lieu time and use of laptop computers is also helpful.

Ensuring academic success of Indigenous learners

In 2018, another study[6] investigated the factors that impacted academic success of Indigenous learners. Specifically, they asked: what are the unique learning needs of Indigenous students completing distance education pedagogies, and how can distance education meet the Indigenous students' goals for academic success and indigenization? They studied the delivery of a certificate program designed to equip para-professionals (working in healthcare) with knowledge and skills to meet basic standards stipulated by their respective professional bodies (American and Canadian Diabetes Association).

The study found that the following themes emerged as supporting academic success:

1) personal interaction with the instructor and peers,

2) learning tools that are sensitive to learning needs and visual learners,

3) flexibility that allows for learning/family needs balance;

4) preference for cultural relevance and appropriate materials enhance learning, and

5) technological access and ongoing support.

They concluded that Indigenous learners can benefit from online programs that allow them to learn where they live. However, addressing the barriers to personal interaction and teacher support, technological issues, and cultural appropriateness enhances course completion.

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[6] Cochrane, J. E., & Maposa, S. (2019). How to Ensure Academic Success of Indigenous Students Who 'Learn Where They Live'. *International Journal of E-Learning & Distance Education Revue Internationale Du E-Learning Et La Formation à Distance*, *33*(2). Retrieved from https://www.ijede.ca/index.php/jde/article/view/1099

Program participation and outcome trends

Enrollment trends and outcome trends for Cohort 1

Cohort 1 – First Registered in Winter 2022

Number Initially Recruited for registration	Number who registered and actively enrolled in courses	Number who registered and actively persisted in most courses	Number graduated
25	18 (72% of initially registered cohort)	12 (about 50% of initially registered cohort)	7 (5+2)* (28% of initially registered cohort)

 *2 students from cohort 1 completed their courses with cohort 2 and so graduated in Fall 2023.
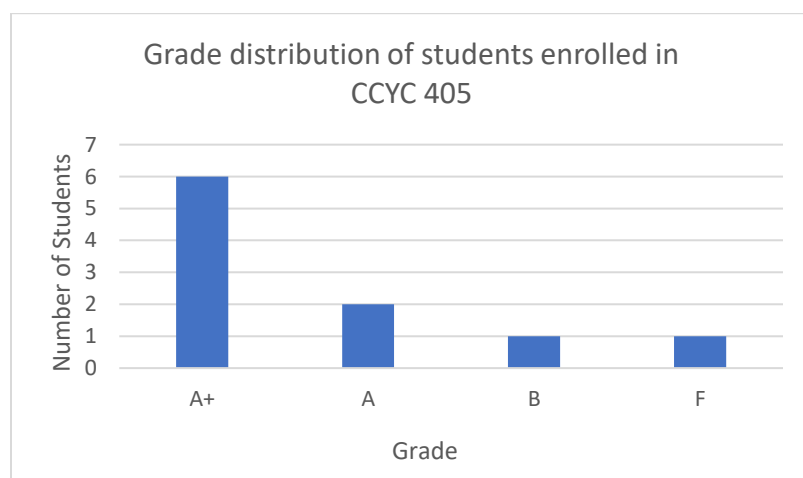
7 students from Cohort 1 then enrolled in Cohort 2 so that they could acquire what they were missing to meet graduation requirements. As noted above, 2 of the 7 students graduated with Cohort 2.

NOTE: This resulted in a **graduation rate of 28%** when calculated by using those initially registered (25).
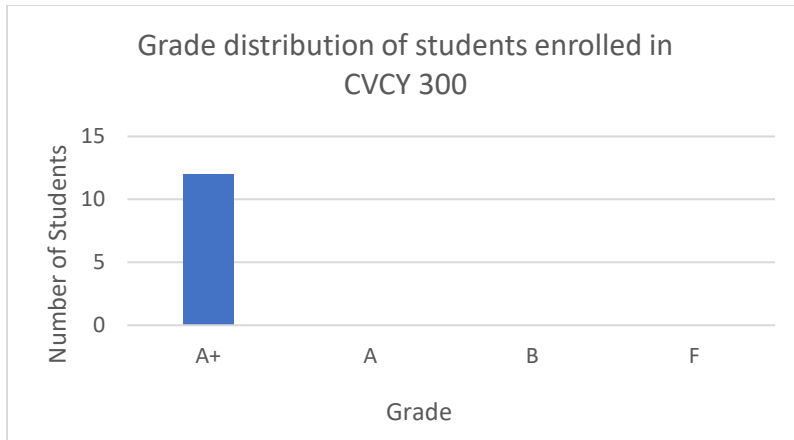
Cohort 1 - Course Enrollment Pattern
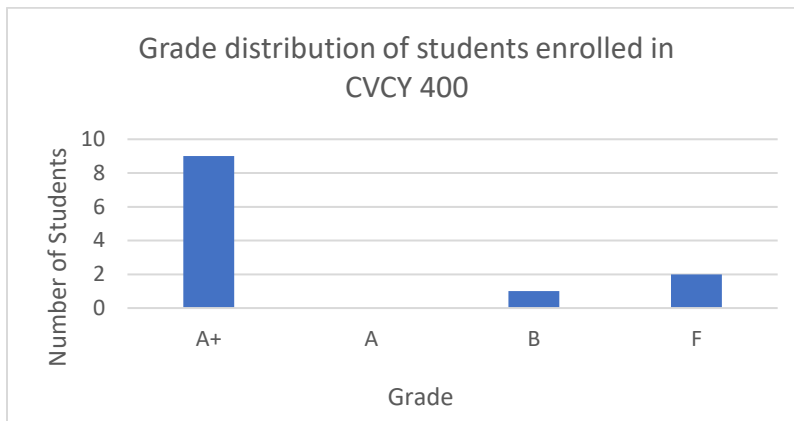
Number of Courses taken	Number of students
4	10
3	1
2	7

Grade Distribution Pattern for Cohort 1

Grade distribution of students enrolled in CCYC 405

50% received an A+ in CCYC 405.

Grade distribution of students enrolled in CVCY 300

Number of Students

A+ · A · B · F

Grade

100% received an A+ in CVCY 300.

Grade distribution of students enrolled in CVCY 400

Number of Students

A+ · A · B · F

Grade

75% of the students received an A+ in CVCY 400.

Grade distribution of students enrolled in CCYC 406

Number of Students

A+ · A- · B+ · B · B- · F
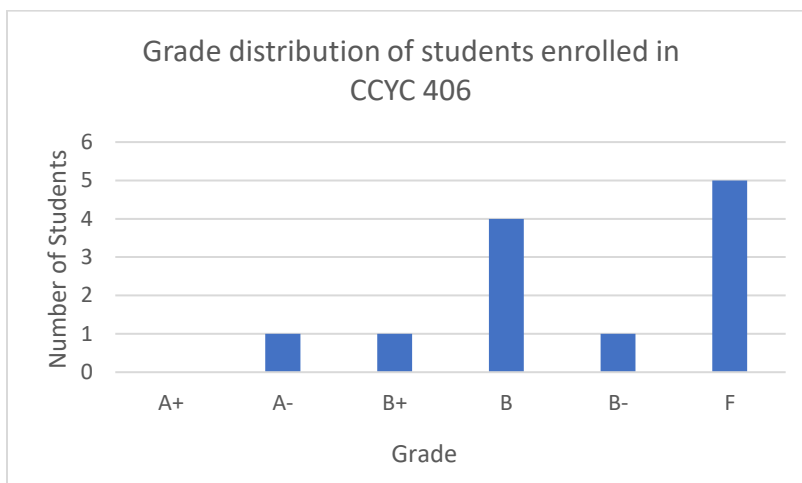
Grade

42% of the students received a fail grade (F) in CCYC 406.

5 students out of 12 in the Cohort 1 needed CCYC 406 to graduate

2 students needed CVCY 400 to graduate and I student needed 2 courses (CCYC 405 and 406).

Enrollment trends and outcome trends for Cohort 2

Cohort 2 – First Registered in Winter 2023

Number Registered	Number graduate
15	1

Cohort 2 was required to take 2 courses (CCYC 405 and CVCY 300) in the Winter term (2023) and then 2 courses (CCYC 406 and CVCY 400) in the Spring/Summer term (2023) in order to meet the timelines of the funder (the course offerings were to be completed by September 2023). From enrollment records it appears that all 15 students were automatically enrolled in the courses by the program staff. This made for a tight schedule and relatively heavy course load for the online students to carry.
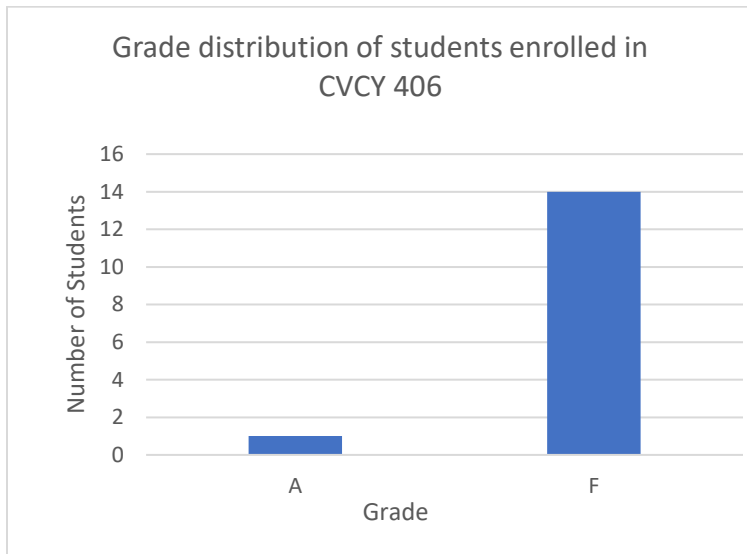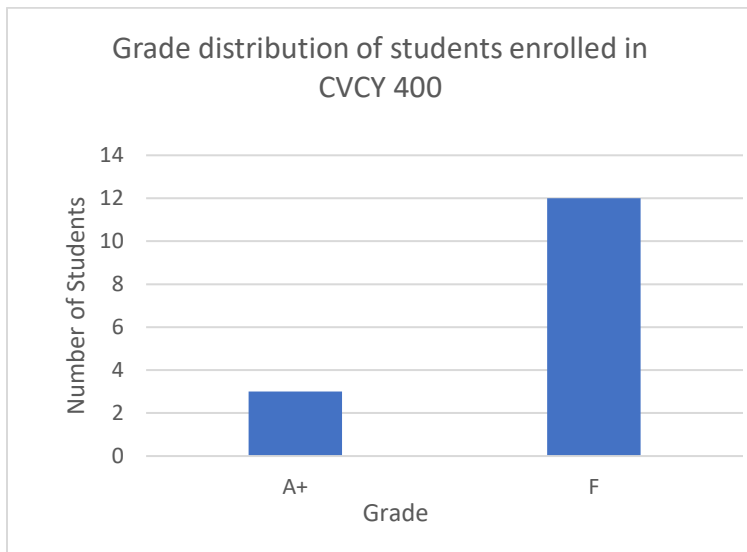
Grade Distribution Pattern for Cohort 2
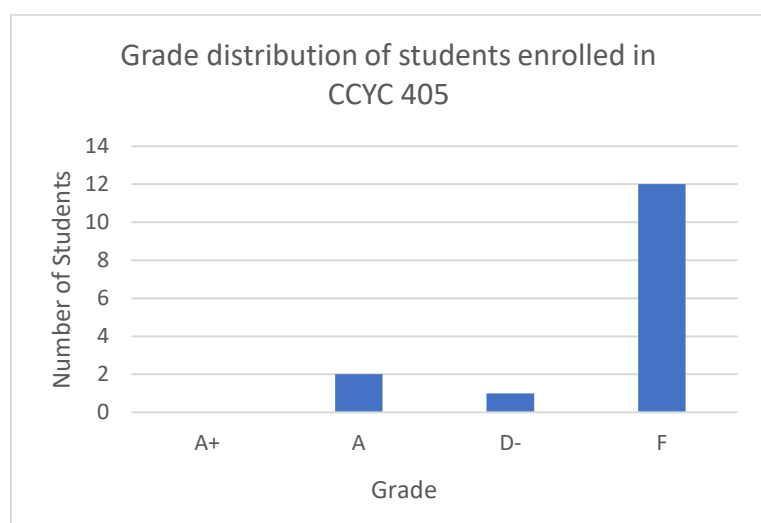
Only 3 students passed the course CCYC 405. 12 individuals or 80% got a F grade.
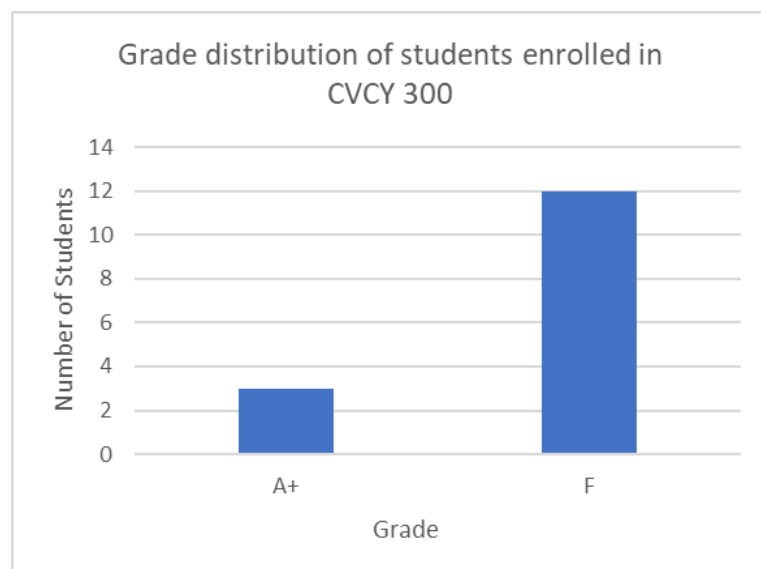
The engagement seen in the experiential course CVCY 300 was dramatically different from that observed for Cohort 1. The instructor for both courses were the same. Insights obtained from instructor interviews suggested the students who were engaged logged in and found the reflective report to be relevant to their work. Others were not logging in to the biweekly check-in sessions (7 never logged into the D2L course shell), and it is possible they were not academically prepared to write a short reflective assignment that was required. These students (80%) initially got an incomplete (INC) grade which converts to F on their official transcript if they do not complete within a set time.

Grade distribution of students enrolled in CVCY 400

Grade distribution of students enrolled in CVCY 406

Grade outcomes for CCYC 400 and CVCY 406 (both offered in Spring/Summer 2023) showed that of the students who passed the courses, a good grade was attained. D2L learning analytics reveal that only 3 out of the 15 students logged in. Follow-up calls and emails from program staff were not successful in establishing communication with learners.

Stakeholder perspectives

Interviews with internal, program and partner stakeholders highlighted various perspectives. Several themes emerged from these consultations. These themes identified: program elements that worked effectively, challenges faced by learners and program staff, areas that need improvement and suggestions for moving forward. They are captured in the table below

Program Elements	Finding
Curriculum/development	- Course Content good – in-field/experiential component a good idea - Developed with input from Indigenous instructors who had experience in the area of practice - Reflection components of the theory courses were effective in promoting thinking over self-care and healing - Some instructors were new (had less experience with curriculum development) and could have used more guidance/feedback for optimization - Degree credit status of the courses introduced university regulatory governance procedures that impeded agile roll-out and implementing changes
Partnership	- Shared vision and goals - Each partner brought unique expertise - Overall, RTP were good partners for managing relationships between community partners - Roles and responsibilities were initially well defined but blurred a little during implementation which resulted in some confusion about who was doing what - Communication was consistent and open - University procedures and bureaucratic formalities were not automatically apparent to partners
Value Proposition	- Not clearly spelled out so students did not understand what completing this certificate would give them - Some did not realize that the courses could be applied towards an undergraduate degree - Could be positioned as professional development or credential for Child and youth care workers
Learner Challenges	- Academic expectations were not realistic. These students are not prepared for PSE. - No communication about academic expectations early on – there was an orientation but not all attended. Students did not comprehend what they were getting into.

	● The Chang School certificate model is more geared to working professionals - not geared to supporting Indigenous students. ● Learners were not familiar with university policies about drop dates and concept of permanent transcript records ● Learners did not find group work convenient, especially as some participants were located in different time-zones (usually were paired with students in the same time zone). ● Sometimes an engaged student could not make progress if an assigned group member was not active in the course. Instructors usually tried to reassign learners. ● Some learners had trouble putting together the assignment – which was a portfolio of what they had done/accomplished (they were given help at the meeting sessions).
Operational supports	● Supports from all levels of Chang School operational team was seen as good ● There was some lack of communication about summer offering ● The instructional design team and program leadership were also very supportive ● The program could have benefitted from a single 'point-of-contact person' such as a Program Officer who could dedicate time and effort towards running the pilot ● Inform new Instructors about formal rules, term dates and deadlines so that they can convey this to the students ● Students are block registered in the course/program. This may minimize their perception of the commitment they are making. ● Even those that get an F in the first course are automatically enrolled in the second. No prerequisite structure.
Program format/delivery	● Online format was seen as positive for program accessibility ● Delivery by Indigenous instructors and coordinators was positive. ● The funder organization deadlines made it necessary for learners to take two courses per term. This was not optimal for adult learners with busy schedules.
Admission criteria	● An application process was introduced for the second cohort but it did not specify admission criteria. The admission criteria do not necessarily have to be academic.
Student success	● Support for participants varied greatly. Some supervisors did not permit time off for homework assignments or allow

	learners to use work computers. Level of supervisor support appeared to correlate directly with student success ● There was a core group of engaged students. These students worked in youth-based programs in the community and saw that they could apply the learnings to their work – or were motivated to apply projects to work. One who wanted to pursue PSE was successful.
Technology/communication	● Some students did not have consistent access to a computer. This may have impeded logging in to D2L when needed. ● It is unclear if internet connectivity always met the needs for smooth login and access to course material. ● Students were not reachable by phone or email. ● Students were not aware that they had to communicate using the TMU email or just preferred to use their private email. Communications sent to students may have gone unread.
Time management	● Students were working full time and life-work balance was a challenge
Flexibility	● Instructors tried to be flexible with time (offered extra drop-in hours) and methods of communication so that students could connect. Added discussion boards etc. ● Instructors were also flexible with assignment deadlines to facilitate more engagement
Program management/ Miscellaneous	● Leadership change (Academic Coordinator and Program Director) may have impacted development progress and but it also prompted the team to question rationale behind the program approach ● The Covid-19 pandemic impacted development timelines and implementation ● The program was not well resourced from an administrative – needs a dedicated program administrator with the right skills for an access/outreach program. ● The pandemic also caused participants in their placements to bounce between remote and on-site work. This was disruptive.
Sustainability/Ideas for going forward	● Partner with a college (like FNTI) so that students can get the skills as quickly as possible ● Consider intensives ● Consider Indigenous partners ● Treat it more like a transitional program ● Offer it as a stream in the Aboriginal Knowledges certificate

	- Focus on a different demographic: non-Indigenous people, professionals, current Indigenous students in CYC who may want a specialization. - RTP partners with over 70 Indigenous organizations and initially viewed this program as a training option for Indigenous employees. They envisioned that the program would address the gap in educational opportunities and culturally relevant training that is available to Indigenous child and youth workers. Perhaps this is too niche and not a long term option for sustainability. - Develop a value proposition to promote the program to community organizations. Students (sponsored by the organization) who complete the program will bring value and additional 'capacity'. Provide a detailed schedule and course outline on the certificate webpage so prospective learners know what they are getting into before they agree to register. - Orient partners about university and program processes and platforms – so that academic rules and the Learning Management System (LMS) is not a "black hole". - Need 3 party funding – bursaries from Government or philanthropic donors - Generating revenue from student fees is not doable for this audience. - This program was not designed for non-Indigenous students - Collaborate with the Ontario Association of Child and youth care. Focusing on the need to build professionalization to practice, explore if the curriculum can be of use to their membership.

Strengths and Weaknesses

Strengths
Aligned to The Chang School priorities (2023-2026) and TMU's commitments (2020-2030)
Course content and relevance to field of practice
Degree credit status (enabling access to PSE)
Biweekly sessions when run like a sharing circle encourages participation and reflection
Allows students to get credit for what they already do (experiential component)
Indigenous faculty and instructors who showed flexibility to accommodate the needs of the learners
Employer engagement/support (when it exists)
Online format (facilitates access to education for remote learners)

Weaknesses
Value proposition – not well defined
Degree credit status (academic expectations too high for most first time PSE learners)
Student expectations not clearly outlined
Online Format (maybe challenging for those without computer skills or appropriate technology infrastructure)
Dependence on third party-funding (which comes with inflexible timelines)
Participant recruitment and admission criteria (selecting participants for success)
Need for dedicated administrative/support resources (program manager) equipped with the culturally appropriate background or training.
Timelines not aligned to the competing priorities of adult learners
Formal procedures/policies associated with degree-credit PSE