

ABSTRACT

The [Certificate in Aboriginal Knowledges and Experiences](#), offered through the [Chang School](#), Ryerson University, provides a broad orientation to Aboriginal experiences in Canada and how Aboriginal Peoples have been impacted by laws, policies, and practices in the health, social services, human resources, and other sectors. The Certificate is designed for learners from all backgrounds to expand their awareness of themselves in relation to Aboriginal Peoples, Aboriginal experiences and worldviews, and the relationship between Aboriginal Peoples and the Canadian government. It addresses the need to provide a place that creates and expands awareness of Aboriginal experiences in Canada. The Certificate is broad reaching, as it appeals to working professionals from a broad range of community workplaces and professional disciplines that engage with Aboriginal communities, agencies, and people, who wish to expand their knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal experiences. It is also a way for Aboriginal community members to access education that is developed and taught by Aboriginal instructors. The Certificate addresses Ryerson's overarching goal and commitment to increasing Aboriginal participation in post-secondary education in a way that ensures Aboriginal initiatives are focused, coordinated, and driven by Aboriginal needs, values and vision, and in harmony with Ryerson's vision and mission.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

I. Value/Service: The [Certificate in Aboriginal Knowledges and Experiences](#) (herein referred to as “The Certificate”) was created in 2013 to address the societal need for changes in the curriculum, physical spaces and pedagogy of university programming for the Aboriginal communities and beyond. To date, nearly 60 students have enrolled in the Certificate, with enrolment nearly doubling each academic year¹. The value and service of the Certificate is described by efforts to engage student clientele, institutional partners and Ryerson University.

a) Student Clientele: The Certificate is dedicated to the learning of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students, regardless of their academic or professional background. Students have the opportunity to learn about Aboriginal lived experiences, as Aboriginal perspectives are infused through a six-course credit curriculum taught by Aboriginal scholars and experienced community teachers. The indications of value are the Certificate’s:

- **Multidisciplinary focus:** The Certificate is a multidisciplinary exploration, analysis, and reflection on the experiences of Aboriginal Peoples in Canada and their relationships with non-Aboriginal Peoples. This exploration aims to help develop an understanding of these experiences and relationships from many dimensions: historical, political, social, and arts- and health-related. This unique Certificate program is of interest to the public and private sectors in areas such as social services, education, tourism, business, public administration, and land use. The two required Certificate courses ([CINT922](#): Intro to Aboriginal Worldviews and [CINT923](#): Canada’s Story: An Aboriginal Perspective) leverage Ryerson University’s Interdisciplinary Studies framework which applies Aboriginal content into a variety of disciplinary and professional contexts within community services.
- **Student-oriented curriculum:** In order to meet the Certificate course requirements, students are able to choose from twelve elective courses spanning across areas in childbearing and early childhood studies, English literature, food security, media studies, politics and public administration, and social work. The Certificate is also dedicated to promoting equity with its access. The curriculum is an open learning experience for a variety of individuals who may or may not have obtained a high school diploma, GED or post-secondary education. Some certificate students have post-secondary education at the college and university level as well. There are also several access points based on the needs and backgrounds of individual learners. Students can enter the Certificate directly, through the Transitions to Certificate Program, or through the Summer Access program offered through [Ryerson Aboriginal Student Services](#) (RASS).

b) Institutional Partners: This Certificate has been built on the recognition and commitment of various Ryerson community members. The indications of value are the Certificate’s representation from Ryerson’s:

- Faculty of Community Services, including the School of Social Work, School of Early Childhood Studies, School of Child and Youth Care, School of Nutrition, Interdisciplinary Studies.
- Faculty of Communication and Design

¹ Ryerson University. Certificate in Aboriginal Knowledges and Experience Enrolment Data (Internal report)

- Department of English Studies
- Department of Politics and Public Administration
- Spanning the Gaps Program, The Chang School
- Ryerson Aboriginal Student Services

c) *Ryerson University*: [Ryerson University's Aboriginal Education Council \(AEC\)](#) provides input into Aboriginal programming and education at Ryerson. The AEC is an important partner that ensures the Certificate continually represents Aboriginal worldviews and is responsive to societal needs. The indications of value are AEC's active role as:

- Advisory Committee: This committee contributes to and monitoring the guidelines for the selection of instructors in this Certificate.
- Certificate's Steering Curriculum Committee: This committee consulted with members of Aboriginal communities through the duration of the proposal development process of the Certificate curriculum. The Certificate Standing Curriculum Committee monitors the Certificate's integrity in quality, currency and content of courses and instructor recruitment and approval regularly. Furthermore, the current Certificate's Academic Coordinator is also the Chair of the AEC.

II. Complexity: To foster the degree of complexity required to adequately develop a Certificate that is responsive to Aboriginal needs, values and vision, The Chang School and Ryerson University are well aligned with relevant Aboriginal community efforts that aim to take a comprehensive view of Aboriginal education, including:

a) [National Working Summit on Aboriginal Postsecondary Education](#) (2010): The Certificate goals align with the objectives of this Summit, organized and facilitated by three national organizations – the National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation (NAAF), the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) and the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC). Specifically, the Summit's objective to “take a holistic approach to ensure successful transitions for students and to help more Aboriginal students complete their postsecondary education”² directly aligns with one of the Certificate's primary goals “to create a successful transition for Aboriginal learners to post-secondary institutions by creating a welcoming environment that recognizes the value of individual and shared experiences, Aboriginal knowledges and reciprocal learning”³.

b) [Ryerson University's Aboriginal Education Council](#) (AEC): The Council was created to coordinate the implementation of the plan by enabling the University to take a comprehensive view of Aboriginal education, access, recruitment, services, research, and community partnerships. The Council complements Ryerson's larger goals and objectives and its core activities of teaching, research, service and community partnerships. The ultimate goal of the AEC is to participate in the process of developing a new relationship of truth and reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people at Ryerson and in the community at large, based on knowledge and respect. The Certificate directly supports this goal as it invites learners from

² Association of Universities and Colleges Canada. (2010). Moving Forward: National Working Summit on Aboriginal Postsecondary Education. Available from: <http://www.univcan.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/aboriginal-moving-forward-report-summit-dec-2010.pdf>

³ Ryerson University. (2013). Certificate in Aboriginal Knowledges and Experiences Proposal. (Internal document).

all backgrounds to expand their awareness of themselves, Aboriginal experiences and worldviews.

III. Ingenuity and Innovation: The Certificate offers ingenuity in its development, content, process and outcomes.

a) Development addressed societal need: The Aboriginal community at Ryerson expressed the need for changes in the curriculum, physical spaces and pedagogy of university programming. This mobilized action to develop culturally relevant programming that addresses the gap in curriculum, which does not address systemic and intergenerational inequities in Aboriginal health, including poverty. This led to the development of three broad Certificate goals focused on i) A broad orientation to Aboriginal experiences in Canada; ii) Successful transition for Aboriginal learnings to post-secondary institutions; Engaging non-Aboriginal learners with knowledge and skills necessary to work with Aboriginal communities.

b) Comprehensive Aboriginal content: The Certificate consists of six courses of thirty-nine hours each (234 hours in total) of university degree and certificate credit status. The Certificate has courses on Aboriginal experiences in a variety of topic areas that will be explored from an Aboriginal perspective. This includes topics such as Aboriginal theories of community engagement, politics, society, economy and a representation of various Aboriginal worldviews on these topics including those of the First Nations, Inuit and Métis. Students have the opportunity to begin or expand their knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal worldviews, develop beginning professional skills in working with Aboriginal Peoples and communities and in some cases work towards entry into further post-secondary education.

c) Intentional process for learners, instructors, advisors: One important need addressed by the Certificate is a place to create and expand awareness of Aboriginal experiences in Canada that welcomes all learners. The Certificate provides non-Aboriginal learners with the opportunity to hear about Aboriginal experiences and worldviews. This is a crucial step in increasing the awareness of common experiences for Aboriginal Peoples and what those experiences have meant to different individuals. For individuals who regularly interact with Aboriginal Peoples through their professional work, this understanding is crucial.

Furthermore, the instructors for the Certificate include representatives from the Aboriginal communities within Ryerson and externally. Teaching is led with an Aboriginal perspective that fosters learning about Aboriginal identities, worldviews and languages in a welcoming environment for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal learners. This is identified as a critical factor in the recruitment and success of Aboriginal students in particular. The Standing Curriculum Committee is comprised of a minimum of 51% of Aboriginal members. The Academic Coordinator for the Certificate will also be an Aboriginal faculty member or selected by the Curriculum Committee and be from the Aboriginal community.

d) Knowledge and capacity-based outcomes: Students graduate from the Certificate with an understanding of structural inequities that create social and economic exclusion for Aboriginal Peoples and communities as well as their own subjectivity and disciplinary perspective and how

this impacts engagement with Aboriginal Peoples and communities. Outcomes are further enhanced by graduates acquiring the ability to place their discipline/work within a framework of engagement with Aboriginal Peoples and communities; develop opportunities for collaborative partnerships and relationships with Aboriginal Peoples in an urban context; and communicate effectively and respectfully with Aboriginal Peoples, agencies and organizations.

IV. Innovation in Delivery:

The Certificate's innovation in delivery is indicated by flexible and accessible course delivery, enhanced teaching methodologies and support by Aboriginal Learning Services:

a) Course Delivery: The Chang School continuously monitors the needs of learners and resources to adapt to the program delivery options. While all courses are currently delivered in-class, online-course offerings are currently under development. To meet the needs of nontraditional students, courses are offered in the evenings (e.g., 6:30-9:30PM) as well as intensive formats (e.g., one week offering from Monday through Friday, 9:00AM-5:00PM).

The Certificate is also inspired by Ryerson University's partnerships with the First Nations Technical Institute (FNTI), through its Department of Politics and Public Administration and School of Social Work. Public Administration and FNTI have had a productive relationship in delivering programming off-campus to Aboriginal students since 1998. The Department delivers a degree in public administration and governance, offering eighteen courses a year on a wide variety of subjects both on its campus and in Manitoulin Island, Sudbury, Orillia, Ottawa, London, Brantford and Tyendinaga First Nation. Under the FNTI-Ryerson Agreement, it is understood that the off-campus students receive the same curriculum as the on-campus students. More specifically, on-and-off-campus courses have the same course objectives, assignments, weighting for assignments and core readings. It is also understood that the off-campus programs have a different delivery format, responsive to Aboriginal worldviews using an adult education model and with courses taught by Aboriginal academics and community instructors where possible.

Furthermore, since many Certificate students have had lapses in time since being in an academic program, the instructors recognize different students need varying levels of assistance to make the transition back to university-level study. For those students having never been to university or returning after a long absence, additional preparation courses are available and students are counselled upon request by the Academic Coordinator.

b) Teaching Methodologies: The Certificate will bring an innovative learning methodology to Ryerson that will integrate Aboriginal pedagogical models into the post-secondary institution setting. Emphasis will be placed on Aboriginal circle teaching methods. Students assist in preparing the classroom by moving desks and chairs into a circle in order to facilitate this type of learning method.

c) Aboriginal Learning Services: Ryerson University also offers a variety of services for Aboriginal learners. The [Ryerson Aboriginal Student Services](#) (RASS) provides a culturally

supportive environment to promote academic excellence and serves as a place to balance academic learning with traditional teachings and culture.

V. Profile of Continuing Education:

The Chang School's mission is to be a leader in innovative, quality, lifelong learning that empowers adults to reach their life and career goals⁴. As Canada's largest and most successful continuing education program, The Chang School strives for superior and innovative programming through a collaborative model that adapts to the unique needs of adult learners. The Certificate addresses this mission as well as Ryerson University's overarching commitment to increasing Aboriginal participation in post-secondary education in ways that ensure Aboriginal initiatives are focused, coordinated, and driven by Aboriginal needs and values. This goal is indicated in the Ontario Government's [*Aboriginal Postsecondary Education and Training Policy*](#).

With respects to employment, the Certificate acts as a career builder by inviting a range of individuals without post-secondary education into university-level studies. The Certificate can support individuals in applying for a variety of degree programs after completing the Certificate and gaining confidence in one's abilities in university-level studies. In particular, Aboriginal learners will see that the University is striving to provide a curriculum that is relevant and accurate about Aboriginal worldviews and experiences. Recognizing the inherent values of continue education, the Certificate can also function as a career changer or enhancer. This Certificate appeals to public and private sector professionals in various fields where knowledge of Aboriginal experiences would be beneficial.

VI. A copy of the promotional material(s).

(See attached)

⁴ The G Raymond Chang School of Continuing Education. (2017). About Us. Available from: <http://ce-online.ryerson.ca/ce/default.aspx?id=71>

Certificate in Aboriginal Knowledges and Experiences



Ryerson
University

The Chang School
of Continuing
Education



ryerson.ca/ce/aboriginal

Your opportunity to learn more about Aboriginal Knowledges and Experiences

Are you interested in an occupation that works with Aboriginal people and communities?

The Certificate in Aboriginal Knowledges and Experiences explores the experiences of Aboriginal people in Canada and their relationships with non-Aboriginal people. Driven by Aboriginal needs and values, with relevant and accurate curriculum developed and taught by Aboriginal scholars and experienced community members, this certificate will appeal to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students and professionals who are interested in Aboriginal governance, health, land use, literature, and community resources.

The Certificate in Aboriginal Knowledges and Experiences will build on the following skills:

- critical analysis
- self-reflection
- written and oral communication
- accurate terminology
- becoming an ally
- applying Aboriginal knowledges that are applicable to all people

For More Information

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Interest meets engagement at The Chang School.



Melissa

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