



Northern Indigenous  
Counselling

## **RHODES WELLNESS COLLEGE: PROFESSIONAL COUNSELLOR DIPLOMA**

### **Northern Indigenous Counselling (NIC) Cohort #2: PROGRAM OUTLINE**

***Start Date: September 2023***

#### **Introduction**

16 of the 19 students from 11 communities who started the Northern Indigenous Counselling (NIC) initiative graduated in May 2022. Their journey began in September 2020 and culminated with a graduation ceremony at the Legislative Assembly Hall. The graduation was attended by dignitaries from various governments, including Premier Caroline Cochrane, Dene National Chief Gerry Antoine, Yellowknives Dene First Nation Chief Edward Sangris, and Chairperson John B. Zoe of Hotiì ts'eeda. Ministers Julie Green and RJ Simpson sent congratulatory video messages to the graduates. NIC graduates and NIC partners, Dene Wellness Warriors and Rhodes Wellness College are deeply grateful for the support of all governments and agencies that came together to make the program possible. The GNWT, Inuvialuit Regional Corporation, Dene Nation, Yellowknives Dene First Nation, Hotiì ts'eeda, and other governments and agencies have been incredibly supportive, and without their help, the 16 graduates would likely not have been able to complete the program.

#### **Early Graduate Success**

The 16 graduates are already experiencing tremendous success helping Indigenous, as well as non-Indigenous people in their communities throughout the NWT. Just five months after graduation, graduates are performing the following roles:

- Senior Advisor, Indigenous Knowledge, and Culture, GNWT
- Wellness Counsellor, Arctic Indigenous Wellness Camp
- Counsellor, Native Women's Association
- Addictions and Drug Counsellor, Tree of Peace
- Men's Counsellor, Tree of Peace
- Counsellor, NWT/NU Council of Friendship Centres
- Child and Youth Counsellor, Mezi Community School, Whatì
- Contract counselling work
- Several students have established private counselling practices to help Indigenous clients

#### **NIC #2**

Rhodes Wellness College and Dene Wellness Warriors met with the GNWT in November 2022 and together we agreed that after the success of NIC #1 we needed to move forward with NIC #2. This is likely the last cohort that will run for a number of years, but the approximately 20 students that will enroll into the second cohort are vitally needed to continue to build the expertise and capabilities of Indigenous Counsellors in the Northwest Territories to bring healing to their own people.

#### **Cohort Start and Methodology**

NIC #2 will commence on Thursday, September 14<sup>th</sup>, 2023, and will be taught with the following methodology, courses, and schedule:



### ***Fully Facilitated, Practically Applied Counselling Education***

NIC students are not limited to working with case studies. After being introduced to theory through lecture, discussion, and demonstration(s), students practice the theory or method immediately - utilizing actual experience from their personal lives and the lives of their classmates. Each class creates a confidentiality agreement to ensure the privacy of students is protected.

Because students are using real-life scenarios, they learn all counselling theories and methods first-hand. Additionally, because they apply the theories and methods in their own lives and the lives of their fellow students when practicing in class, transformation is experienced in themselves and witnessed in others. This practical experience cements each theory and helps student counsellors learn which theories and methods are best utilized in diverse situations.

### ***Methodology***

NIC is based on an experiential model and students are taught in a unimodular method. This means that students only take one course at a time and study 22.5 hours per week in a fully facilitated fashion. Courses are sequential and build on each other in an iterative fashion. Students must prove mastery in one course before being allowed to move to the next.

### ***Substantiveness of the Professional Counselling Diploma program***

NIC graduates complete a full six-semester program and attain a Wellness Counsellor Diploma and Life Skills Certificate prior to entering the actual Professional Counselling Diploma section. The whole endeavor is more in-depth and contains more hours than many Master's programs. |

### **WALK THROUGH OF THE PROGRAM**

**Program Schedule Starting Online:** NIC 2 will be taught with the following schedule. Students will start their courses online before moving to ground courses starting July 2024. NIC online is very different from any other online experience because:

- **No courses are self-taught. All courses are 100% facilitated and are taught LIVE.**
- Students who may not be familiar with technology will be assisted by our Program Coordinator in walking through all requirements until they achieve comfort levels that will enable them to fully participate in classroom discussions.
  - During NIC 1, facilitating online helped many students who had not utilized technology gain comfort with technology, which helped them create connections with their friends, family, and classmates in ways that were impossible to them previously.
- Meeting online at the beginning of the program allows students to get used to studying at a post-secondary institution while in the comfort of their own home communities; during NIC 1 we observed that this helped students manage family and personal life with the new demands of academic life. While students must move to Yellowknife partway through the program to participate in the ground classes, starting online helps students start their program without the additional stresses of moving their entire families. For instance, most students for NIC 1 had children and the majority lived outside of Yellowknife. If courses did not begin online, students of NIC 1 would likely not have been as successful as they were.



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- For online classes, students meet on Zoom and are taught by expert instructors with many years of counselling experience with diverse populations including marginalized populations; faculty and students are assisted full-time with an Indigenous TA from the Northwest Territories.
- Online curriculum is taught one course at a time, and classes will be taught from 10am – 2:30pm MST. This single course, course-by-course methodology helps student gain comfort and competence in one area before moving to another.
- Attendance and participation are mandatory and are worth minimally 20% of each course grade. Faculty are skilled at facilitating group discussion and through the richness of dialogue students process and learn at a much quicker rate than they would if the program focused only on lecture and assignments.
- Faculty engage students with applied demos, breakouts (through break-out rooms), slideshows, videos, and other visuals, and they give significant time to helping students discuss the theory being taught in the context of their own lives.
- Students practice each skill they learn from the very beginning of the program and throughout with each other first, and then with acquaintances, prior to working with the public under close supervision towards the end of their program. Utilizing online breakout rooms creates safe spaces for private conversations and trusting relationships where students can support each other while the faculty member and TA can go from room to room providing supervision and mentorship during skill practice time.

**Moving from Online to On-ground Studies:** After students have completed introductory courses and start to gain confidence through mastering coaching skills, and understanding introductory counselling methods, they will then move to Yellowknife to commence on-ground courses in July 2024.

The On-ground program will start seamlessly. Students will already have worked extensively together, will have built close relationships with each other, and will already likely have met and worked with classmates who are in their same community. Coming together will feel like a family reunion!

When ground classes start in the summer of 2024, we will host a special week of workshops to learn on the land. We will partner with the Organizations to delve into Indigenous spirituality and camaraderie as students start a challenging learning cycle which includes physical, spiritual, and emotional counselling therapies, followed by grief and loss counselling. It is vital that the students, the TA, and faculty meet and support each other face-to-face as students will delve into their own past traumas to help draw on healing and learn first-hand how to help others through their own traumas, pain, and difficulties.

### **Supervision and “Professionalization”**

Counselling in all populations must be conducted within a scope of practice that is consistent with the counsellor’s level of expertise. It must be conducted ethically, professionally, and confidentially. Still, there are special considerations when Indigenous counsellors are working with Indigenous populations.

During their last two semesters students will learn how to bridge these requirements while still honouring their cultural traditions. Students also learn how much value and reliance should be placed on supervision, and Rhodes Wellness College and Dene Wellness Warriors will ensure that guided supervision is provided to all students.



## Career Development

Students will receive opportunities during their practicum to further develop their individual business plan so that they can determine the areas of counselling they wish to enter. They can choose their desired locations/organization for their practicums which can be in their home communities, in Yellowknife any other community in the Northwest Territories. If students need or desire a website, we will help them develop one. Students will also learn how to utilize social media and traditional media (e.g., newspapers, radio, etc.) to promote and position themselves. Of course, they will also be supported in networking amongst their communities as they seek to gain awareness and find opportunities that will exist for them to help others.

## SCHEDULE

### **SEMESTER 1: Thursday, September 14<sup>th</sup> – Friday, December 15<sup>th</sup>, 2023 (296 hours, 13.5 weeks)**

***Sep 14 - Sep 22*** Orientation and PRAC 110: Career Planning and Self Development I

***Sep 25 - Dec 15*** COAC 101: Life Skills Coaching

### **WINTER BREAK**

### **SEMESTER 2: Monday, January 8<sup>th</sup> – Friday, March 29<sup>th</sup>, 2024 (270 hours, 12 weeks)**

***Jan 8 - Jan 19*** COUN 100: Basic Counselling

***Jan 22 - Feb 2*** COUN 102/103: Introduction to Family and Youth Counselling

***Feb 5 - Feb 16*** COUN 104: Introduction to Abuse and Trauma Counselling

***Feb 19 - Mar 1*** COUN 105: Introduction to Addictions Counselling

***Mar 4 - Mar 15*** COUN 108: Introduction to Grief and Loss Counselling

***Mar 18 - Mar 29*** COUN 109: Counselling Sessions- Structure and Practice

### **SEMESTER 3: Monday, April 8<sup>th</sup> – Friday, June 28<sup>th</sup>, 2024 (270 hours, 12 weeks)**

***Apr 8 - Apr 26*** COUN 220: Human Development: Theory and Practice

***Apr 29 - May 17*** COUN 230: Mental Health

***May 20 - Jun 28*** WELL 140: Mental Wellness (CBT, DBT, Narrative Therapy)

### **SEMESTER 4: Monday, July 15<sup>th</sup> – Friday, October 4<sup>th</sup>, 2024 (270 hours, 12 weeks)**

***Jul 15 - Jul 19*** Career Planning and Self Development II (ON THE LAND)

***Jul 22 - Aug 30*** WELL 110: Physical Wellness (Somatic Therapy)

***Sep 3 - Oct 4*** WELL 120: Spiritual Wellness, Indigenous Spirituality

### **SEMESTER 5: Monday, October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2024 – Friday, January 17<sup>th</sup>, 2025 (270 hours, 12 weeks)**

***Oct 7 - Nov 15*** WELL 130: Emotional Wellness (Trauma Therapy)

***Nov 18 - Dec 6*** COUN 210: Advanced Grief and Loss Counselling

***Dec 9 - Dec 20*** PROF 230 (a): Supervised Clinical Practice (Introduction)

### **WINTER BREAK**

***Jan 13 - Jan 17*** PROF 230 (b): Supervised Clinical Practice



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**SEMESTER 6: Monday, January 20<sup>th</sup> – Friday, April 11<sup>th</sup>, 2025 (270 hours, 12 weeks)**

**Jan 20 – Feb 7 PROF 210: Professional Practice and Ethics**

**Feb 10 - Feb 28 COUN 260: Counselling Theories & Methods**

**Mar 3 - Mar 21 COUN 240: Advanced Counselling: Solution Focused Therapy**

**Mar 25 - Apr 11 COUN 250: Relationship Counselling**

**Practicum and Professional Practice: Monday, April 14<sup>th</sup> – Friday, July 4<sup>th</sup>, 2025 (270 hours, 12 weeks)**

**Apr 14 - May 2 PROF 231: Supervised Clinical Practice (Business Development)**

**May 5 - May 23 PROF 220: Group Therapy and Personal Leadership**

**May 26 - Jul 4 PRAC 201: Supervised Practicum**

- **TOTAL HOURS: 1916 hours, fully facilitated**
- **TOTAL WEEKS IN CLASS: 85.5**

**Counselling Supervision:** Supervision for NIC Cohort #2 will be overseen by our Supervision Committee, which includes:

- **NIC Supervisor:** Roy Erasmus, RPC, MBA, JD, 8 years of counselling experience focusing on addictions and trauma counselling for Indigenous people, Indigenous Services Canada approved Service Provider for residential school survivors, co-founder of Dene Wellness Warriors.
- **NIC Supervisor:** Jean Erasmus, RPC, BA Native Studies/B.Ed, in progress, 9 years of counselling experience focusing on addictions and trauma counselling for Indigenous people, Indigenous Services Canada approved Service Provider for residential school survivors, co-founder of Dene Wellness Warriors, Arctic Indigenous Wellness Foundation Board member.
- **Manager of Supervision:** Kerry Vega, MPCC-S, RCS, MA (Clinical Counselling), BA – 16 years of experience as a counsellor and over eight years' experience as a clinical counselling supervisor.
- **Senior Educational Advisor:** Bea Rhodes, MPCC-S, Med (Curriculum), BA Psych – 25 years' experience as a counsellor specializing in Trauma Counselling and over 15 years' experience as a counselling supervisor.
- **Director of Education:** Chelsea Lee, MM, BA, C-IAYT. Chelsea brings over 8 years of experience leading programs for colleges and is well-versed in somatic therapy-based approaches.
- **President:** Benjamin Colling, MLead. Ben brings over 22 years of senior management experience to Rhodes in the areas of academics, student services, and community involvement.
- **Director of Student Services and Career Services:** Janice Prinsloo, RPC. Janice has more than 8 years of experience working as a counsellor and oversees all practicums and the student counselling centre.

**Faculty:** All clinical counselling courses are taught by instructors with a minimum of a Masters degree and years of professional counselling experience. Faculty credentials are also from one of the counselling associations:

Canadian Professional Counsellors Association (CPCA), Association of Cooperative Counselling Therapists of Canada (ACCT), Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association (CCPA), or the BCACC (BC Association of Clinical Counsellors).



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**Indigenous Specialization:** One of the most important elements that led to the successful completion of NIC's first cohort was implementing Indigenous content and contextualization. Throughout the program, NIC and its partners, Dene Wellness Warriors and Rhodes Wellness College, received help and direct assistance for curriculum customization from:

**Dr. Lois Edge, Assistant Professor at MacEwan University. Dr. Edge has a Ph.D. in Education Policy Studies – Indigenous Peoples Education Specialization, an M.A. in Social and Cultural Anthropology, and a B.A. in Anthropology and will be prepared to once again help with NIC #2.**

**Approvals and Accreditation:** In British Columbia, the Ministry of Advanced Education, through the Private Training Institutions Branch (PTIB) manages private colleges. Rhodes Wellness College is regulated and designated as a Category 1, Designated Learning Institution by the Ministry of Advanced Education of British Columbia.

Meeting the “additional requirements associated with a higher level of quality” for a Designated Learning Institution (DLI) that PTIB refers to on their website has also led to our college receiving B.C.’s Educational Quality Assurance (EQA) designation. PTIB states on their website that EQA designation has “Standards that are above and beyond: Institutions carrying the EQA designation meet criteria beyond what’s required by legislation, regulatory bodies and accreditation processes”.

**Student Counselling Centre:** NIC students can work in the Rhodes Student Counselling Centre in their fifth and sixth full-time semesters. The counselling centre offers online pro-bono student counselling to members of the public in need of counselling assistance and is managed and supervised by Rhodes Wellness College.

**Practicums:** Each student in the Professional Counsellor Diploma must complete a 120-hour Practicum to graduate. Practicums are overseen by the Director of Student Services and Career Services. They must demonstrate, either individually or within an organization, that the student can successfully apply all learning concepts they were taught over the six semesters of the program.

**Post-Graduate Supervision:** All Professional Counsellor Diploma graduates receive one year of supervision provided by an external supervisor who has formal supervisor status with either CPCA or ACCT (or both). The cost of supervision for each graduate is paid for by Rhodes.

**Liability Insurance:** Students are covered with Rhodes’ liability insurance while gaining experience through pro-bono and Practicum work that they do as part of their graduation requirements.

**Professional Designations Available to Graduates:** Rhodes graduates are eligible to:

- Write the national exam to join the Canadian Professional Counsellors Association. Graduates that pass this exam become Registered Professional Counsellor-Candidates (RPC-C) and can immediately start practicing as a counsellor, under the guidance of an approved counselling supervisor, until they accumulate enough hours to become a full Registered Professional Counsellor.
- Show proof of Direct Contact Hours (DCC) with clients while in their fifth, sixth, and Practicum semesters and, upon vetting of application documents, become a Registered Therapeutic Counsellor-Candidate. Post-graduate supervision is then provided to graduates with this designation until they have enough supervised hours to gain Registered Therapeutic Counsellor (RTC) status.



**What does Completion of the Program Deliver?**

Northern Indigenous Counselling graduates will be skilled and well- practiced. Due to the college’s practical, experiential approach, graduates can immediately step into counselling roles and make a positive impact for any organization or in their private practice. They will be ethical, competent, experienced counsellors, ready to assist individuals with mental, emotional, and spiritual health concerns, trauma, and goals. NIC graduates will have expertise in the areas of trauma and addictions counselling. They will have also gained valuable experience through many hundreds of hours of practice counselling and coaching each other during the program and Indigenous people during their practicums. By the time they graduate they are ready to make a difference for Indigenous people in the north.

**Conclusion**

NIC Cohort 1 was successful only with complete commitment from Rhodes Wellness College, Dene Wellness Warriors, and the GNWT. We were fortunate to have additional help for our students through Hotì ts’eeda, Inuvialuit Regional Corporation (IRC), Indigenous Skills and Employment Training (ISETS), and Indigenous Services Canada (ISC). NIC Cohort 2 will be even more successful with the continued commitment of these organizations.

We are extremely grateful for the willingness to support NIC #2 as indicated by the tremendously positive meetings we had in November with the Department of Health and Social Services and the Department of Education, Culture, and Employment.

We look forward to continuing to work with the GNWT and others to help make long-lasting change and to help bring healing and respect to Indigenous peoples across the NWT.

Jean Erasmus, Co-founder, Dene Wellness Warriors

Ben Colling, President, Rhodes Wellness College

Roy Erasmus, Co-founder, Dene Wellness Warriors

