

Education

Teach for Canada holds enrichment training

Rick Garrick
Wawatay News

Teach for Canada-Gakinaamaage recently completed another Enrichment Program for teachers who will be teaching in First Nation communities across northern Ontario, Manitoba and Saskatchewan at Lakehead University's Thunder Bay campus. The program featured a variety of sessions including Language Lessons and opportunities for the teachers to meet representatives from their matched community and Teach for Canada alumni who have taught or are teaching in their matched community.

"This is our first year back after doing virtual sessions," says Nikki Martin, growth and partnerships manager at Teach for Canada-Gakinaamaage. "This is our first attempt at a hybrid program delivery so lots of learning curves, but really exciting to see everyone in person. There's a quality of connection you can't get when you're doing these sessions virtually, just to be able to greet people, to do the smudges, open ceremonies with a hugging circle and really just have that time to connect."

Martin says the Trauma-Informed Classrooms and Land-Based Learning sessions were among the highlights during the Teach for Canada-Gaki-

naamaage program.

"(We're) just making sure teachers are equipped with good pedagogy, making sure to have a well-rounded understanding of the context that they're going into and how to best support students," Martin says. "We had our Land-Based Learning session highlighting the importance of creativity when you're teaching Indigenous students in the north and finding ways to get out and learn from the land as opposed to just the traditional classroom setting in the west."

Greg Meconse, an Indigenous teacher who has family in Eabametoong and Lac Seul, is looking forward to teaching

in Lac Seul at Obishikokaang Elementary School.

"My family was really happy that I'm going back there and making a connection again with my home community," Meconse says. "This week was good for if you had any questions about how it might work being a teacher in a First Nations community, a lot of trying to explain to the teachers what the community might be like while you're there and some of the differences in culture between the city and the rez. I felt pretty comfortable already but there's just a couple of little missing pieces of the puzzle and I think Teach for Canada really helped me fill in those little

gaps."

Meconse says Patricia Ningenwance, a Lac Seul citizen who was appointed as a Member of the Order of Canada in December 2022 for her contributions to the vitality of Indigenous languages as an Anishinabemowin teacher, author and publisher, taught Anishinabemowin to the teachers who will be working in communities that speak Anishinabemowin during the Teach for Canada-Gakinaamaage program.

"She supported us in some learning and I think everybody got some basics down, nothing too complex but we definitely got some basics down for Anishinabemowin," Meconse

says. "We just learned how to say hi, I'm a teacher and just the kind of basics, where you are from and such."

Meconse also highlighted the connections he made with other teachers and community representatives during the Teach for Canada-Gakinaamaage program.

"I connected with another teacher going to Lac Seul," Meconse says. "As we kind of get to know each other better and then you see people that are going to the same community as you, so you get more comfortable. We made plans to go fishing already, we're going to go fishing when we meet up at Lac Seul."

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