

2024

SUMMER ENRICHMENT PROGRAM

Presenter Profiles



GAKINO'AMAAGE
TEACH FOR CANADA





**Our 2024
Summer
Enrichment
Program
Presenters**



Tammy & Bernard Nelson

WELCOME CIRCLE and BERNARD AND TAMMY'S STORY

Sunday, July 21st 9:00 AM - 10:30 AM EDT and
Monday, July 22nd 2:30 PM - 4:30 PM EDT

ELDERS-IN-RESIDENCE

Bernard Nelson, also known as Gizhii Manitou Gaamik, "Spirit of the Earth," is an Indigenous Ojibway-Cree from Eabametoong First Nation (Fort Hope, ON). He is a survivor of the Pelican Lake Indian Residential School and is currently residing in Kingston, ON with his wife Tammy.

Bernard is a long-time Men's Traditional Dancer, Eagle Staff Carrier, and Sundancer. He and his wife work with a lot of Indigenous students from all over Canada and are associated with the military, school boards, cultural camps, and various Youth groups.

Tammy Nelson, also known as Mem mem a ze waa bik kwe, "Keeper of the Water," is an Ojibway woman from Nipissing First Nation. She is a long-time Women's Traditional Dancer. Bernard and Tammy are blessed with a blended family of 9 children altogether and several grandchildren.

Both have been awarded the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal for their leadership roles within the community. Their lifestyle includes "Walking the Red Road" and following the Seven Grandfather Teachings. Much of their time is spent with the community, in ceremony, at powwows, teaching, and crafting. They enjoy working with both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.

Bernard and Tammy have served as Elders-in-Residence every year since the first Gakino'amaage Summer Enrichment Program in 2015.



Laura Maracle

INDIGENOUS HISTORIES OF TURTLE ISLAND

Sunday, July 21st

1:00 PM - 4:00 PM EDT

Laura Maracle is a mixed-race woman who has made the conscious decision to live according to Haudenosaunee tradition. Her biological father was an Anishinaabe man and her mother is of French/Irish descent. The father who raised Laura is Mohawk, and that is how she knows Tyendinaga as her home today. Laura was born and raised in Toronto, where she spent the first 22 years of her life. Thereafter, she claimed her identity, language, and culture (to the best of her ability) and has been sitting (with the Bear Clan) and learning in the longhouse with the traditional Haudenosaunee people of Tyendinaga.

Laura's work experience is diverse and covers the fields of administration, legal secretary (corporate and criminal law), Aboriginal employment, and Aboriginal education. Her passion, heart, and soul lie in the field of Aboriginal education. Having taught from early childhood right up to Adult Education, the biggest life lessons she has gained came from teaching at-risk youth at the high school level. Most recently Laura's path has led her to the field of education and social work.



Randy Weekes

CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT

Monday, July 22nd

9:00 AM - 12:00 PM EDT

Once upon a time (a long, long time ago), Randy's first job was as a teacher in an isolated community. He didn't handle it well. He experienced what we would now call a "stress injury" and had to spend time away recovering. He did recover, learned a lot, and returned to the community to complete his contract. He has spent much of his career since then helping people prepare to work in new cultural environments and to build and maintain resilience in the face of major adjustments. Randy has an MSc in International Humanitarian Psychosocial Interventions. He lives in the countryside outside Ottawa. This will be Randy's seventh year presenting at the Summer Enrichment Program.



Dr. Nicole Bell

NIIKAANIGAANA: ALL OUR RELATIONS

Tuesday, July 23rd

9:00 AM - 12:00 PM EDT

Nicole Bell is Anishnaabe (Bear Clan) from Kitigan Zibi First Nation in Maniwaki, Quebec. She is the mother of five boys and a grandmother. Nicole is passionate about Indigenous education, motivated by her educational experiences personally, and as a mother.

Nicole has been learning about her Anishnaabe stories, teachings, ceremonies, and language for the past 35 years. Her cultural teachers were/are Elders Shirley Williams, Vera Martin, and Edna Manitowabi. Nicole has also secured a strong understanding of the land and traditional land practices from her Anishinaabe father.

Nicole received her Bachelor of Education degree and Ontario Teaching Certificate for the junior/intermediate division from Queen's University where she focused on the theory and practice of teaching Indigenous students while also providing cross-cultural learning experiences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students.

Nicole has a Master of Education Degree from Queen's University where she examined the effects on Indigenous identity as a result of public (government) schooling. She addressed this issue from a personal perspective as an Indigenous student who was public schooled.

Nicole has a Ph.D. from Trent University in Indigenous Studies. As the founder of an Anishnaabe culture-based school for Indigenous children in junior kindergarten to grade 12, Nicole completed her dissertation about how traditional Anishnaabe worldviews and values inform the educational process in the contemporary context. Essentially, how do we educate our children today that reflects traditional Anishnaabe worldview?

In 2003, Nicole was one of eight Canadian women chosen as a 'soul-model'. Her personal story and her efforts at providing Anishnaabe culture-based education to Indigenous children acknowledged her as 'a woman of inspiration' for other Canadian women.

Nicole is currently an Associate Professor in the School of Education at Trent University. Her research areas include Indigenous culture-based education, infusion of Indigenous knowledge into public schooling and teacher education, decolonization and healing, and Indigenous research theory and methodology.



Susannah Walker

TRAUMA-INFORMED CLASSROOMS

Wednesday, July 24th

9:00 AM - 12:00 PM EDT

MSW, RSW, PHD CANDIDATE

Susannah Walker is an enrolled citizen of the Waganakising Odawa tribe from northern Michigan and her grandmother's family is from the Santee Sioux (Dakota) Nation of Nebraska. She worked as a K-12 teacher in Texas and Medellin, Colombia for five years and completed her MSW in 2012 at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where she interned with the North Carolina Commission on Indian Affairs. In 2011, she completed a summer internship with her tribe in the Department of Human Services. Since moving to Saskatchewan in 2013, she worked as a sessional instructor in Indigenous Social Work and was hired to the Faculty of Indigenous Social Work in 2019. She worked at a nonprofit in North Central Regina as Program Director, focused on work with Indigenous youth, and now serves on the Board of Directors. She served on the Regina Homelessness Community Advisory Board and currently is a PhD student at the Johnson-Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy. Her dissertation is on the impact of cultural connection on the mental health of on-reserve Indigenous youth. She is an Odawa language learner with the tribal language program through Bay Mills Community College in Michigan.



Dr. Miranda Bevilacqua

SAFETALK SUICIDE ALERTNESS TRAINING

Thursday, July 25th

1:00 PM - 4:00 PM EDT

Miranda Bevilacqua is a dedicated nurse and educator with a passion for the outdoors, enjoying both hunting and fishing. Recently, she completed her PhD, focusing her dissertation on suicide prevention. Miranda is currently a teacher at Confederation College and also teaches casually at Algoma University, Oshki, and Lakehead. In addition to her teaching roles, she serves on the board of directors for CMHA Thunder Bay.



Dr. Angelina Weenie & Ida Swan

INDIGENEITY AS WE KNOW, LIVE, AND TEACH

Friday, July 26th

9:00 AM - 12:00 PM EDT

Dr. Angelina Weenie will be the new Dean of Indigenous Knowledge, Education, and Applied Research at the University of Prince Edward Island July 1, 2024. She will be leaving her position as an Associate Professor of Indigenous Education at the First Nations University of Canada. She is a Cree y dialect speaker from Sweetgrass First Nation, Treaty 6 territory.



Ida Swan, M.Ed, is an Assistant Professor of Indigenous Education at the First Nations University of Canada. She is a Cree dialect speaker from Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation.

Dr. Weenie and Ida Swan recently presented at Gakino'amaage on the topic of infusing First Nations content in the curriculum in a variety of ways, from learning about local protocol to perceiving students' giftedness.



Dr. Niigaan Sinclair

HOW INDIGENOUS EDUCATION WILL CHANGE THE WORLD

Friday, July 26th

Closing Ceremony Keynote

Niigaanwewidam James Sinclair is Anishinaabe (St. Peter's/Little Peguis) and an Associate Professor at the University of Manitoba. He is an award-winning writer, editor, and activist who was named one of Monocle Magazine's "Canada's Top 20 Most Influential People," and he won the 2018 Canadian Columnist of the Year at the National Newspaper Awards for his bi-weekly columns in The Winnipeg Free Press. In 2019 he won Peace Educator of the Year from the Peace and Justice Studies Association based at Georgetown University in Washington, DC. He has written national curriculums for Indspire and the Assembly of First Nations and is a former secondary school teacher who has trained educators and students across Canada. His first book on Anishinaabeg literary traditions came out with the University of Minnesota Press in 2021.

GAKINO'AMAAGE STAFF



Ken Sanderson

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Gakino'amaage: Teach For Canada

Ken Sanderson is Anishinaabe, a member of Pinaymootang First Nation in Treaty 2 Territory, and a member of the Bear Clan. Ken's career has spanned over two decades and has been dedicated to Indigenous community and economic development. Ken has served in various roles in executive leadership, organizational development, and project management.

Early in his career, Ken was a founding member of several Indigenous youth initiatives and spent many years in the consulting field. Ken was instrumental in the establishment of the Indigenous Chamber of Commerce. Working at Manitoba Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, Ken had implemented many projects aimed at economic capacity building and employment initiatives. For one such project, Ken leaned on the trust he had built with Indigenous organizations and political bodies to bring together political bodies with limited collaboration history and secure 1 million in direct funding for apprenticeship projects.

In leading Broadband Communications North as the Executive Director, Ken navigated complex political dynamics to raise the organization from obscurity to becoming one of the key players in the Internet sector. In this role, he established an industry association with all industry players, who unanimously nominated him as chair. He also established a successful subsidiary company to fill a vacant business need in the region, even gaining industry competitors as customers. In addition, Ken established an industry training centre to help prepare the regional labour force for the coming fibre optic boom in projects.

Leading Gakino'amaage, Ken looks forward to working with Community Partners to help shape the future.



Shardae Fortier

VICE PRESIDENT OF PROGRAMS
Gakino'amaage: Teach For Canada

Shardae is Anishinaabe and a member of the Red Rock Indian Band in Northwestern, Ontario. She grew up in the neighbouring town of Dorion, Ontario. Residing in this rural setting has ingrained Shardae with an appreciation of nature and has made her an avid outdoorswoman. Her favourite pastimes are camping, fishing, blueberry picking, hiking, and beading.

After gaining first-hand knowledge of the inequities facing northern First Nation communities while working for Health Canada's First Nations and Inuit Health Benefits Program, Shardae decided to attend law school so that she could aid in addressing these outcomes. As an articling student she participated in the Inquest into seven First Nation students who died in Thunder Bay after having to leave their communities to attend high school, fuelling her commitment to reducing educational inequality between First Nations and non-First Nations communities.

Shardae holds an Honours Bachelor in psychology with a minor in business from Carleton University, a Juris Doctor from the University of Toronto Faculty of Law, and is a member of the Law Society of Upper Canada.



Meredith Stapon

DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS
Gakino'amaage: Teach For Canada

Meredith is a communications professional and graphic designer who has lived in Toronto for nearly a decade. Prior to living in Canada, Meredith studied and grew up in a small town in Connecticut.

Meredith's journey of navigating her Indigeneity was largely driven by her move north. Since graduating from York University with a degree in Communications Studies, Meredith has worked with the Toronto Arts Council, Neighborhood Arts Network, and VIBE Arts.

Working extensively to create equitable access to arts education led Meredith to Gakino'amaage. Here, she joins her passion for strengthening Indigenous communities through clear and meaningful communication with an ambition to deepen personal connections to her own belonging.

Meredith lives in Toronto, Ontario, where she enjoys spending time outdoors with her dog, Maeve.



Lanna MacKay

DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION PATHWAYS
Gakino'amaage: Teach For Canada

Lanna is an Ontario and British Columbia certified teacher. She has 20 years of teaching experience where she co-created nature and arts-based alternative secondary programs. She completed a Master of Education in Adult Education and Community Development at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education with research that includes Indigenous-settler relationships, Indigenous Knowledge education, and land-based learning. Currently, she is pursuing a graduate diploma in Expressive Arts Therapy at the CREATE Institute, where she is considering how intermodal art practices can process and transform grief and conflict.

Lanna enjoys commuting by bicycle, dancing, canoeing, and sharing time with horses. She is learning to play guitar, dreaming of future possibilities and cultivating the art of deep listening.



Nicole Gomes

DIRECTOR OF TEACHER DEVELOPMENT
Gakino'amaage: Teach For Canada

Nicole is an educator certified and living in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Driven by her passion for educational leadership, she is currently pursuing a Master's in Educational Administration, Foundations, and Psychology at the University of Manitoba. Her focus on transformative leadership is evident in her advocacy for reconciliation, promotion of equity, and dedication to fostering holistic growth. This commitment to transformative leadership is woven into her philosophy, emphasizing the building of strong relationships, a focus on professional development, and a genuine emphasis on community well-being. Beyond her professional endeavours, Nicole is family-oriented, a dog, rabbit, and fish mom, and finds joy in travel, painting, and archery. Eager to contribute her skills and enthusiasm, Nicole looks forward to supporting teachers on their journeys alongside the Gakino'amaage team.



Jessica Manni

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT MANAGER
Gakino'amaage: Teach For Canada

Jessica lives in Toronto, Canada, and has always had a passion for education. She is an experienced educator with certifications in Primary, Junior, and Intermediate education in Ontario. She holds additional qualifications in Special Education, Physical Education, and the Principal's Qualification Program (PQP). Jessica also has expertise in the Primary Years Programme (PYP) and experience with multiple curricula, including the Ontario, British, and US systems.

Jessica has earned a Bachelor of Arts, a Bachelor of Education, and a Master of Science specializing in Educational Leadership. Over the past 15 years, she has worked in independent schools across South Korea, Vietnam, Abu Dhabi, and China.

In Ontario, Jessica has taught Grades 2/3 and now serves as the Professional Development Manager for Gakino'amaage.



Brittany Wilkinson

TEACHER DEVELOPMENT MANAGER
Gakino'amaage: Teach For Canada

Brittany is known as a compassionate, resourceful and resilient educator with a strong sense of curiosity and a love of learning. She is committed to building positive relationships with those around her.

She is an Ontario Certified Teacher with additional qualifications in English, Special Education, Teaching English Language Learners, and Understanding FNMI Traditional Teachings, Histories, Current Issues and Cultures. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Communication from Wilfrid Laurier University, a Bachelor of Education from OISE, and a Teaching English as a Second Language certificate from Seneca College. Brittany is currently a Teacher Development Manager for Gakino'amaage.

Brittany loves music, laughing, and trying to learn languages. She currently resides in Waubaushene, Ontario where she is spending lots of time outdoors with her family's puppy, Sonny, and is learning French with her son.



Amanda Scarlett

TEACHER DEVELOPMENT MANAGER
Gakino'amaage: Teach For Canada

Amanda wanted to be a teacher from a young age and moved from the small, rural town where she grew up to the big city to follow that dream. What she didn't expect was for her interest in teaching to shift from traditional classroom teaching to one focused more on problem-based learning, socio-emotional development, and life skills after volunteering with inner-city youth and working in group homes during her university years.

After graduating in 2011, she took her first teaching contract in a remote First Nations Cree community on the James Bay coast, which inspired a love for outdoor and alternative education. She later moved near Val-d'Or, Quebec to work with an Algonquin community for two years, then taught in an Ojibway community near her hometown for a year, before pursuing curriculum content development for online learning and adult education for a few years. Today, Amanda is certified for and has experience in junior, intermediate, senior, and adult education, special education, alternative education, outdoor education, online learning, and curriculum content development. She also has extensive experience working with various types of neurodivergence and with individuals who have acquired brain injuries.



Josh Willms

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT MANAGER
Gakino'amaage: Teach For Canada

Josh has worked to serve children and youth as a mentor, leader, and educator in several communities across Canada for nearly twenty years. Since receiving his Bachelor of Education from OISE in 2014, Josh has taught at elementary schools in Pikangikum First Nation, Vancouver, Toronto, and the Georgian Bay region. As a teacher, Josh thrives on the pillars of empathy, compassion, and humility in working with others, and he deeply values critical thinking, inquiry, and child-centred learning.

Prior to teaching, Josh worked with Right To Play, which uses sport and play as tools for promoting education, youth leadership, and healthy living in First Nations communities. Josh graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in History (Honours) at Wilfrid Laurier University and a Master of Arts in History at the University of Ottawa. Josh also learned some of his greatest lessons while biking solo across Canada, cycling over 7000km from Victoria to St. John's in 2013.

When he isn't working, Josh can be found hiking, biking, and looking for the next game, sport, or puzzle to play.



Kimberly Todd

TEACHER DEVELOPMENT MANAGER
Gakino'amaage: Teach For Canada

Kimberly has her Doctorate from the Department of Social Justice Education at OISE U of T. Her research interests include education, decolonization, dreaming, and teacher praxis. She is also a certified teacher with experience teaching in South Korea, the United Arab Emirates, and Little Pine First Nation in Saskatchewan. She has also designed curricular resources for the David Suzuki Foundation and Amazon Watch. Kimberly was a part-time professor at Seneca College in the Department of English and Liberal Studies and is currently a Teacher Development Manager at Gakino'amaage. In her spare time, she likes to travel, read, try out new restaurants, go for walks and engage in dreamwork.



Meena Prabhakar

TEACHER DEVELOPMENT MANAGER
Gakino'amaage: Teach For Canada

Meena Prabhakar, an esteemed educator with over two decades of experience, brings her heart and soul to her role in Gakino'amaage as a Teacher Development Manager. Her educational ethos is shaped by a lifelong belief in learning's transformative power, a principle rooted in her childhood by her grandmother's gardening lessons, which she sees as a metaphor for nurturing growth and potential.

Holding a Master's degree in Language and being an Ontario Certified Teacher, Meena's professional path witnessed a pivotal shift in 2019 when she joined Gakino'amaage: Teach For Canada to serve Pikangikum First Nation. Here, she embraced the rich culture and breathtaking landscapes of the North, and strengthened her dedication to ensuring that every child receives a high-quality education.

Meena Prabhakar's zest for life extends beyond her professional sphere. Her talent for storytelling brings smiles to her student's faces and she dreams of channeling this passion into writing a children's book someday. Meena loves cooking and her daughter playfully boasts that Meena makes the best chai in the world.



Robert Lanni

TEACHER RECRUITMENT MANAGER
Gakino'amaage: Teach For Canada

Robert is a graduate of the University of Guelph-Humber with an Honours Bachelor of Science degree in Psychology as well as a Post Graduate Certificate in Human Resources Management from Humber College. During his studies in psychology, Robert had the opportunity to visit Indigenous communities in northern Ontario; while there, he met and spoke with community leaders and elders. Robert has always had an interest in history and learning about different cultures, thus learning more about First Nations was no exception.

Robert is kept busy by being a cat dad to two beautiful rescue kitties, as well as being outdoors whenever he is able. He enjoys hiking, playing soccer, and is open to trying anything at least once. Robert is an adventurous spirit who is always looking to learn new things.



AJ Porter

TEACHER RECRUITMENT MANAGER
Gakino'amaage: Teach For Canada

AJ graduated from Acadia University with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology, followed by a postgraduate diploma in Addiction and Mental Health from Humber College. Most recently, AJ has completed a postgraduate degree in Applied Health Sciences from Western University and has expanded his knowledge of health equity within a Canadian context.

Prior to Gakino'amaage, AJ had the opportunity to work closely with vulnerable populations in the non-profit sector and Toronto's shelter system. From these experiences, he became extremely passionate about promoting equity and social justice in all forms- including equitable access to education for everyone in Canada, ultimately bringing him to the organization.

AJ believes that harm reduction and trauma-informed practices are the beating heart of social justice work, and by elevating the voices of impacted populations through these lenses, we can begin the path to reconciliation.

In his spare time, he enjoys being active, listening to podcasts/audiobooks of all genres, travelling, and spending quality time with friends, family, and his roommate's cat Marshmallow.



Laura Juodvirsis

**SUMMER ENRICHMENT
PROGRAM COORDINATOR**
Gakino'amaage: Teach For Canada

Laura is a passionate Ontario Certified Teacher, living and working in Waterloo, ON. She has earned an Honours Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology and Social Development Studies, with specializations in Research and Education, and a Bachelor of Education in the Primary-Junior division. During her studies, she had the opportunity to travel to Deer Lake First Nation with Gakino'amaage for a placement in a grade four class. While there, she was welcomed with open arms and made lasting friendships with many local community members. Some of her favourite memories of being in Deer Lake include helping prepare for a community-wide egg hunt, singing karaoke with new-found friends, and playing catch with students at recess. In her spare time, Laura enjoys spoiling her two cats, attending weekly book club meetings with friends, and hiking.



Sarah Ribey

**SUMMER ENRICHMENT
PROGRAM ASSOCIATE**
Gakino'amaage: Teach For Canada

Sarah Ribey just graduated from the Applied Human Nutrition program at the University of Guelph, where she was also a member of the Guelph Gryphons Varsity Rowing team. She will be attending NOSM University's MD program in the fall in Thunder Bay, with a passion to pursue rural family medicine. When she's not studying, Sarah enjoys going to the gym, rowing, running, baking, or enjoying nature. She is excited to join Gakino'amaage as the Summer Enrichment Program Associate to help Indigenous youth receive the best education they deserve.



Amanda Pike

**SUMMER ENRICHMENT
PROGRAM ASSOCIATE**
Gakino'amaage: Teach For Canada

Amanda is a student pursuing her Honours Bachelor of Education at Lakehead University with a minor in English. In her second-year placement, she was fortunate to gain meaningful experience working closely with KIHS (Keewatinook Internet High School), focusing on students from Fort Severn First Nation. This opportunity allowed her to engage with the culture, language, and teachings of the Cree people where her passion for teaching was sparked further. Amanda dedicates her time to coaching basketball with local schools and clubs, sharing her love for sports. During her free time, she enjoys herself in the beautiful outdoors of Thunder Bay.



Ryland Dupre

**LEARNING MANAGEMENT
SYSTEM COORDINATOR**
Gakino'amaage: Teach For Canada

Ryland is Woodland Cree and a Status First Nation member of the Lac La Ronge Indian Band, Treaty Six. He holds a Bachelor's degree in Education from the Indian Teacher Education Program at the University of Saskatchewan and is currently studying for a Master's in Educational Technology at the University of British Columbia. Rylands speaks and writes Cree (th) and develops educational resources for the revitalization of the Cree (y) and (th) dialects. He builds virtual environments (Virtual Reality/Augmented Reality) to create remote learning opportunities for communities in Northern Saskatchewan.

Miiigwetch

Gakino'amaage would like to thank the following individuals for their support and assistance in co-creating this year's Summer Enrichment Program.

**WELLSPRING COUNSELLING
STRENGTH COUNSELLING
GAKINO'AMAAEGE: TEACH FOR CANADA STAFF
ALL THE GAKINO'AMAAAGE TEACHERS AND ALUMNI
WHO CONTRIBUTED IDEAS AND CONTENT!**

**WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT THE
GAKINO'AMAAAGE: TEACH FOR CANADA TEAM?**

Go to teachforcanada.ca/our-people to get to know our staff.







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