



GAKINO'AMAAGE
TEACH FOR CANADA
ENSEIGNER POUR LE CANADA

For immediate release

Rooted in the Land: Gakino'amaage's 10th Annual First Nations-Led Program Prepares Teachers to Stay and Succeed in the North

Thunder Bay, Ontario – From July 13–19, 2025, Gakino'amaage: Teach For Canada returns to Lakehead University for its 10th annual Summer Enrichment Program—a milestone that marks a decade of deepening partnership with First Nations across the North. What began in 2015 with 7 Community Partners has grown to include 32 First Nations across four provinces. Throughout this growth, Gakino'amaage has remained grounded in its purpose: preparing and supporting educators to live and teach in First Nation communities.

Since launching in 2016, the Summer Enrichment Program has helped prepare nearly 300 educators to teach in northern and remote First Nations—including 79 who are currently working in Community Partner schools this year. This long-standing partnership has contributed to a strong first-year teacher retention rate of 90.9%, with many educators staying in community well beyond that—including one teacher who, this year, marks 10 consecutive years.

While the Summer Enrichment Program has always been First Nations-led, this year's shift to a fully land-based learning framework marks an important evolution. Guided by Gakino'amaage's Advisory Council of First Nations Community Partners, the transformation reflects a deeper integration of land, language, and cultural practice across every aspect of the program.

"We're not just integrating Indigenous knowledge into existing systems—we're centring it," said Lanna MacKay, Director of Education Pathways. "This shift came directly from Community Partner input and is helping educators reframe how they relate to land, curriculum, and community."

Program Highlights: Land, Language, and Nation-Led Learning

- Three integrated land-based sessions anchor the in-person week, including hide tanning, land-based learning, and curriculum design grounded in Indigenous practice.
- Language lessons and community-led sessions reflect the diversity and voices of the partner First Nations, shaping a truly community-centred, First Nations-led experience.



GAKINO'AMAAGE
TEACH FOR CANADA
ENSEIGNER POUR LE CANADA

- A new “Working with EAs” learning session—led by educational assistants from partner First Nations—recognizes EAs as frontline educators and reimagines classroom collaboration.

This year’s Summer Enrichment Program cohort includes 36 teachers, 11 of whom are educators hired directly by the First Nations Gakino’amaage serves. This shift reflects a core truth: recruiting and retaining teachers in northern and remote First Nations is deeply challenging, and every educator plays a vital role. Whether teachers come to the classroom through Gakino’amaage or another path, they deserve to be fully prepared, supported, and rooted in community to succeed and stay. Expanding access to the Summer Enrichment Program is one way Gakino’amaage is responding to that need—helping all educators build the relationships, knowledge, and confidence to thrive in their roles.

“Student success means working with everyone who shapes learning—local educators, EAs, Elders, and leaders,” said MacKay. “That’s what makes this truly community-centred.”

Now in its 10th year, the Summer Enrichment Program continues to evolve in response to community voices. The 2025 program reflects a decade of educator preparation rooted in listening, humility, and First Nations resurgence. It is part of Gakino’amaage’s broader work to address educational inequity through relationships, capacity-building, and systems change grounded in First Nations values and knowledge systems.

About Gakino’amaage

Gakino’amaage is a non-profit that partners with northern First Nations to recruit, prepare, and support committed teachers. Too often, educators arrive in the North without the preparation they need to succeed and stay. Gakino’amaage helps close the education gap between First Nations and non-First Nations communities, with student success always at the center. For more information, visit teachforcanada.ca.

-30-

Contact: Meredith Stapon
Senior Director of Communications
meredith@teachforcanada.ca
416-562-4402