

2025

SUMMER ENRICHMENT PROGRAM

Presenter Profiles



GAKINO'AMAAGE
TEACH FOR CANADA
2015 · 2025





Our 2025 Summer Enrichment Program Presenters



Tammy & Bernard Nelson

WELCOME CIRCLE, BERNARD AND TAMMY'S STORY, and CLOSING CIRCLE

Monday, July 14 - 9:00 AM - 10:30 AM EDT,

Tuesday, July 15 - 9:00 AM - 10:30 AM EDT, and

Friday, July 18 - 4:30 PM - 6:00 PM EDT

ELDERS-IN-RESIDENCE

Bernard Nelson, also known as Gizhii Manitou Gaamik, "Spirit of the Earth," is Ojibway-Cree from Eabametoong First Nation. He is a survivor of the Pelican Lake Indian Residential School and currently resides in Kingston, Ontario with his wife, Tammy.

Bernard is a long-time Men's Traditional Dancer, Eagle Staff Carrier, and Sundancer. He and Tammy work with Indigenous students from across Canada and are connected to 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 and a long-time Women's Traditional Dancer. Together, they are blessed with a blended family of nine children and several grandchildren.

Both Bernard and Tammy were awarded the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal and, more recently, the King Charles III Coronation Medal for their leadership in community work. Their way of life includes "Walking the Red Road" and living by the Seven Grandfather Teachings. Much of their time is spent with community, in ceremony, at powwows, teaching, and crafting. They are passionate about working with both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.

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



Kristin Ward

LAND-BASED LEARNING

Monday, July 14 - 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM EDT and
Tuesday, July 15 - 1:00 PM - 4:00 PM EDT

Kristin Ward is currently the Assistant Director of Education for Lac Seul First Nation. Prior to her current role, she has worked as a principal, teacher, and as a special education teacher in both First Nations schools, and in the provincial school system. Kristin is a strong advocate for trauma-informed inclusive schools that ensure all students feel safe, supported, and respected. Kristin has recently led a project to create a land-based curriculum for the elementary schools in Lac Seul that connects to the Ontario Curriculum.



Laura Maracle

INDIGENOUS HISTORIES OF TURTLE ISLAND

Monday, July 14
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), First Nation employment and 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.



Susannah Walker

MSW, RSW, PHD

TRAUMA-INFORMED CLASSROOMS

Tuesday, July 15

11:00 AM - 12:00 PM EDT

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 Master of Social Work 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, Susannah has 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 has also served on the Regina Homelessness Community Advisory Board.

In June 2025, Susannah graduated with her doctoral degree from the Johnson-Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy, and she successfully defended her dissertation 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

Wednesday, July 16

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 University. In addition to her teaching roles, she serves on the Board of Directors for Canadian Mental Health Association Thunder Bay.



Margaret Dumas

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

Thursday, July 17

9:00 AM - 10:30 AM EDT

Margaret Dumas, of Cree and Austrian descent, is a mother of four, grandmother of 14, and great-grandmother of one. Born in Churchill, Manitoba, and raised in Pikwitonei, Manitoba, she has lived mostly in the North and taught for 39 years. She holds a Bachelor of Education from Brandon University, received her grade 12 from Frontier Collegiate at Cranberry Portage, and earned a TESL certificate from UCN.

Passionate about Indigenous education, she has been a Cree Bilingual Teacher at Wapanohk Community School in Thompson, Manitoba for nine years and now teaches Cree full-time in Nelson House, Manitoba. Margaret has significantly contributed to Cree language revitalization, developing curriculum and writing three Cree Immersion documents.

Inspired by her father, she hopes to pass on the importance of the language and culture to future generations. In her free time, she enjoys working on language projects, facilitating workshops, walking, singing, playing guitar, performing at local coffee houses, cooking, baking, and writing.

Jean Marshall, Shelby Gagnon & Charlotte Marten

HIDE TANNING
Thursday, July 17
1:00 PM - 5:00 PM EDT



For the past eight years, Jean Marshall - **Lead Hide Tanner - Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwig First Nation/Big Trout Lake, ON** - has been deeply committed to learning the art of moose hide tanning. This journey has brought her a strong sense of purpose and belonging. For Jean, hide tanning is more than a skill—it's a powerful way to (re)connect with family, culture, and community. As an artist, she finds the most joy in sewing on moose hide that she has prepared with her own hands. Each piece carries a story of patience, strength, and love for the traditions that continue to shape her identity.

 @marshall.childforever



Shelby Gagnon - **Hide Helper - Aroland First Nation, ON** - is an Anishinaabe/Cree artist, educator, hide tanner, muralist, curator, and advocate for the lands and waters. Her work spans multiple disciplines and reflects her deep, holistic connection to the land and water, often expressed through her creative practices. She brings a wealth of knowledge and experience in working with both deer and moose hides. As a student of Dechinta University, Shelby has continued to expand her understanding of land-based practices, and she carries this learning with care and intention into every space she's a part of.

 @rootveggii



Charlotte Marten - **Elder & Language - Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwig First Nation/Big Trout Lake, ON** - speaks the Oji-Cree dialect fluently. She is a retired nurse. She is passionate in revitalizing and reclaiming Anishinaabemowin. As a child growing up in a time of harmony with grandparents, she carries memories of quiet teachings. She loves meeting people and sharing her love of the language.



Beverly Chalifoux

WORKING WITH EAS AS COLLABORATORS

Friday, July 18

9:00 AM - 10:30 AM EDT

Beverly Chalifoux holds a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Sociology. With a career in education that began in 2004, she is currently teaching kindergarten in Cadotte Lake in northern Alberta. Beverly enjoys reading, walking, singing, and dancing, and she is always seeking new opportunities to learn. Her goal is to make a positive difference in children's lives, and she strongly believes in the importance of education, no matter the circumstances.



William Dumas

CULTURAL COMPETENCY

Friday, July 18

1:00 PM - 2:00 PM EDT

William Dumas is an Asiniskaw Īthiniw Knowledge Keeper and acclaimed storyteller from O-Pipon-Na-Piwin Cree Nation (OPCN). He has been an educator all his life and is passionate about Cree language and culture. He is Co-Leader of the Story Team for the Six Seasons of the Asiniskaw Īthiniwak project. Dumas is experienced as a northern educator and administrator, having worked as a coordinator for the Culture and Language Program for Nisichawayasi Nehetho Culture and Education Authority, as a First Nations Language & Culture Specialist (Cree) at the Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Centre (MFNERC), Cree Language and Culture Consultant in the Mystery Lake and Frontier School Divisions, as the Director of Education for Fox Lake Education Authority in Nelson House, and as the Executive Director for Northern Nishnabe Education Council. Dumas is the author of the award-winning picture book *Pīsim Finds Her Miskanow* (2013), which is the first book in the Six Seasons of Asiniskaw Īthiniwak series. He is also the author of *The Gift of the Little People* (2022).

GAKINO'AMAAGE STAFF



Deanna Matthews

PRESIDENT
Gakino'amaage: Teach For Canada

Deanna is Anishininewak and mixed settler, a member of Sachigo Lake First Nation on Treaty 9 territory on her father's side, with mixed European ancestry on her mother's.

A non-profit leader and policy professional, her passion for equitable education and social policy stems from her work with Mikinakoos (Little Turtle) Children's Fund in coordination with the Sioux Lookout First Nations Health Authority, with Health Canada's First Nations and Inuit Health Branch and the Climate Change and Health Adaptation Program, and as a Policy Analyst in the Privy Council Office, where she provided briefings to the Prime Minister and senior government officials on key Indigenous priorities.

Deanna holds a Bachelor of Education with distinction from Western University, is a SSHRC Doctoral Scholar studying First Nations education governance, and is concurrently pursuing a Master of Public Health in Indigenous Health at the University of Toronto. She was named a 2022-23 Action Canada Fellow.

She is honoured to advocate for First Nations students in receiving the best possible education, now, and for future generations, and is learning how to be a good ancestor by spending time with the land, reflecting out of service in the bush, and nerding out about Indigenous policy, politics and systems design.



Shardae Fortier

VICE PRESIDENT OF PROGRAMS
Gakino'amaage: Teach For Canada
Hide Helper

Shardae is Anishinaabe kwe and mixed settler, a member of Red Rock Indian Band and a member lawyer of the Law Society of Ontario. She is fortunate to have grown up in and live in the traditional territory of her ancestors, the Robinson Superior Treaty. She will be a Hide Helper at SEP. Rooted in a desire to honour the animals that sustain her people, Shardae began learning the traditional practice of hide tanning four years ago. Her journey into this ancestral skill was born from a commitment to making use of every part of the animal—a practice steeped in reverence, responsibility, and gratitude. Guided by the teachings of her ancestors and contemporary mentors, she strives to uphold traditional methods and materials, embracing the slow, physical, and ceremonial process that tanning requires.

For Shardae, hide tanning is more than a craft—it is an act of remembering, a method of healing, and a way to reconnect with the land, her community, and herself.



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.



Anikka Bolender

DIRECTOR OF TEACHER DEVELOPMENT
Gakino'amaage: Teach For Canada

Anikka is a passionate educator who brings curiosity, creativity, and heart to everything she does. Her love of learning was sparked by inspiring teachers who encouraged independence and imagination in the classroom, values she now carries forward in her own role.

After graduating from Nipissing University with a Bachelor of Education, Anikka taught in Pikangikum First Nation for three years, first in grade 8, and then high school science. She later spent two years teaching primary school in vulnerable communities in northern England.

Anikka is passionate about responsive, community-informed teacher support and lifelong learning that centres student and educator well-being.

She's also a proud mom of two kids and two fur babies, an avid gym-goer, and a strong believer in the power of a good cup of coffee.



Jessica Manni

SENIOR 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.



Josh Willms

SENIOR 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 Ontario Institute for Studies in Education 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.



Meena Prabhakar

TEACHER DEVELOPMENT MANAGER
Gakino'amaage: Teach For Canada

Meena, an esteemed educator with over two decades of experience, brings her heart and soul to her role. 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'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.



Caitlin Malone

TEACHER DEVELOPMENT MANAGER
Gakino'amaage: Teach For Canada

Caitlin is an Ontario Certified Teacher who is qualified to teach Primary to Intermediate. She also has additional qualification courses in Special Education and Kindergarten. Caitlin has always had a very adventurous spirit, which has led her to have some amazing experiences in teaching. She graduated with her Bachelor of Education from Lakehead University in 2010 and travelled and taught in England for two years. She became qualified as a Waldorf Teacher at the West Coast Institute in Duncan, British Columbia in 2017 and worked as a Grade 3-7 teacher at the Kelowna Waldorf School.

Her love for holistic education inspired her to teach in Northern Ontario, so in 2020 Caitlin packed up her things and flew to Eabametoong First Nation, where she fell in love with the people and the outdoors. Caitlin developed a deep connection with the community and made the most of every moment that she had there. She became much more aware of the realities and challenges that children face in the North, but also saw the raw beauty that the North holds. This is something that captivated Caitlin and she decided to permanently move to Thunder Bay in 2022.

Last year, Caitlin gave birth to her first child and is absolutely loving being a mum. She is enjoying experiencing all the fun and wonder of life through his eyes. Caitlin is ready to share her learnings with other like-minded individuals and is very excited to be part of Gakino'amaage: Teach for Canada. Outside of work, Caitlin loves to do long-distance running, spend time with her fur babies, go backcountry camping, hike, hang out with friends and family, listen to good music, and curl up with a coffee and a book.



Stephanie Aitchison

TEACHER DEVELOPMENT MANAGER
Gakino'amaage: Teach For Canada

Stephanie graduated from Nipissing University in 2010 with a Bachelor of Education. Before that she had spent four years living on the East Coast while obtaining her undergraduate degree in History and English from Saint Francis Xavier University. Stephanie's love of learning and travelling combined as she began her career overseas in London, England. From there, she relocated to Cairo, Egypt where she taught at a Canadian International School. Upon her return to Canada, Stephanie moved to Northern Quebec, where she taught high school English and History in Long Point First Nation. Stephanie has since taught in Timiskaming First Nation as a literacy specialist teacher and has travelled to Prince Rupert, British Columbia, where she first tackled online learning. Stephanie has additional qualifications in Special Education, Writing and Reading as well as Guidance. During her work in Long Point First Nation, Stephanie met the love of her life. She currently resides in Northern Ontario with her four children and two huskies.



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.



Devo Moosewaypayo

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

Devo is a member of the Kinistin Saulteaux Nation in Treaty 4, Saskatchewan. However, she grew up in Calgary, Alberta, located in Treaty 7, which she considers home. She is a recent graduate of the University of Toronto where she completed an Honours Bachelor of Arts Degree in Indigenous Studies and History.

As an Indigenous person who lived in foster care and did not complete high school, Devo has an awareness for the systematic obstacles that Indigenous people face when it comes to being able to complete or prioritize their education. During her time as an undergraduate, she supported other Indigenous students on campus by rebuilding the Indigenous Students' Association to strengthen the sense of community and well-being among Indigenous students. Devo is also interested in continuing her own education in the future, with a particular focus in Indigenous Language Revitalization. She is delighted to be able to play a role in Gakino'amaage: Teach For Canada.



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. During her free time, she enjoys herself in the beautiful outdoors of Thunder Bay.



Bernard Ryan Bucao

**SUMMER ENRICHMENT LEARNING
MANAGEMENT SYSTEM MANAGER**
Gakino'amaage: Teach For Canada

Ryan holds an Honours Bachelor of Science for Psychology, Economics, and Media Studies from the University of Toronto, along with a post-baccalaureate certificate in Public Administration from Toronto Metropolitan University. His academic work consisted of independent research on Indigenous representation in Canadian broadcasting policy (1958-1991), healthcare access for First Nations in Northwest Ontario, Indigenous women's leadership in governance, and risk preparedness for Kashechewan First Nation and an international Indigenous film organization.

Ryan has experience in project and operations management in the mental health field, focusing on process and systemic improvements, as well as accessible resource development for organizational accountability, collaboration, and sustainability. In his free time, Ryan enjoys learning about modern world history, with a particular focus on Russia, alongside Canada, and Southeast Asia. He has a strong dedication to music, having led a composition club and playing various instruments across many genres.



Olanrewaju Adeyanju

COMMUNICATIONS INTERN
Gakino'amaage: Teach For Canada

Olanrewaju (or Lanre) is a recent graduate with a bachelors in Government and African Studies from Harvard University and a certificate for civic engagement. Outside of her classes, Lanre has dedicated her time in extracurricular and professional experience to working in public service and education. Previously she served as a high school mentor all 4 years of college with the Harvard Radcliffe Emerging Leaders Program, as well as working as a mentor for Franklin Teen with the Philip Brooks House Association. Outside of college, she worked with the Rio Secretary of Education Ethnic Relations team to develop a storytelling project performed at 10 public English-bilingual Rio state schools. In engaging with her immediate community, Lanre has experience working as the Director of Communications for Harvard Black Pre-Law Student Association, and Co-Social Chair for the Harvard Nigerian Student Association.

In her free time, Lanre enjoys cooking, learning about world history research, watching romantic TV shows, listening to music, and meeting new people.

Miiigwetch

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

**AMANDA DEWAR - STRENGTH COUNSELLING
ALL THE GAKINO'AMAAGE: TEACH FOR CANADA
STAFF, TEACHERS AND ALUM WHO CONTRIBUTED
IDEAS AND CONTENT!**

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

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







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