



PHOTOS SUPPLIED BY TEACH FOR CANADA

Many teachers from across Canada recently completed Teach for Canada's three-week training program at Lakehead University.

# Youths get cultural learning boost

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A non-profit organization that recruits, prepares and supports teachers for living and teaching in the north is getting \$1.6 million from the federal government to help 158 youths in Thunder Bay and Toronto learn how to work with northern First Nation communities, Indigenous languages and see Canadian history through an Indigenous lens.

Funding is to be provided through the Career Focus program of the government's Youth Employment Strategy (YES) for Teach For Canada's Youth Career Focus project. The funding, provided through Employment and Social Development Canada, will help Teach for Canada recruit and train more than 100 teachers in the next three years to work in northern Ontario communities, according to Kyle Hill, Teach for Canada's execu-

tive director.

"It's going to cover the recruitment of teachers and the summer enrichment program," said Hill. "Part of it will go to supporting teachers during the school year."

Hill said one of the organization's goals is to encourage First Nations youth to pursue teaching as a profession.

Launched in 2015, Teach For Canada has so far trained 108 teachers for teaching in Northern Ontario First Nations schools.

The Toronto-based organization, which was previously funded through private sector donations, will also provide youth with teaching placements in elementary, middle or high schools in northern Ontario First Nations, and two years of followup support to ensure teachers hired in these communities have the necessary tools.

Friday's announcement came from Employment, Workforce Development and Labour Minister Patty Hajdu during closing ceremonies for Teach for Canada's summer enrichment program for teachers, held at the Prince Arthur Hotel on Friday.

Meanwhile, 45 teachers from across Canada recently took part in the three-week training program at Lakehead University's Thunder Bay campus to prepare them for teaching in 18 remote First Nations communities. The teachers have a wide range of backgrounds, from new teachers to those with 30 years of teaching experience.

Training at Lakehead immersed the teachers into the history and culture of northern First Nations. It included group activities, guest speakers and representatives of the communities where they will be teaching. They were introduced to First Nations languages, and learned about challenges and successes they will likely encounter when they relocate to the communities to start teaching this fall.

This year, the cohort visited Big Grassy River First Nation to meet for a four-day experiential trip to learn more about indigenous culture.

Juanita Muise, one of the teachers in this year's cohort, was born and raised in Stephenville, N.L., and is a member of Qalipu Mi'kmaq First Nation.



Teacher Ian Brook fishes on Lake of the Woods while on an experiential trip to Big Grassy River First Nation as part of Teach for Canada's three-week training program at Lakehead University's Thunder Bay campus.

Muise who has been a teacher for two years, will be teaching in the fly-in community of Bearskin Lake First Nation in September.

"I feel it would be a great opportunity to work with First Nation students," said Muise. "I really feel that I have a lot to give. I've been in both worlds. I've been educated in Western society, but I've also had experience living in a First Nation community. I can relate to what these students are going through. Hopefully, I can inspire them to reach for their dreams."

For Ian Brook of London, Ontario, working in Sachigo Lake First Nation will be his first experience as a teacher.

"The summer enrichment program was phenomenal," said Brook. "The fact that I was able to meet community representatives was invaluable, and to have them explain specifics of the community."

Brook said the community, located about 600 kilometres north of Thunder Bay, will offer a number of opportunities for him as far as teaching outdoor education.

"One of the things they were telling me is I will find ways to integrate the outdoors into teaching math, language, arts and physical education curriculum," said Brook, an avid outdoorsman.



Ian Brook brews coffee while on the experiential trip to Big Grassy River First Nation.