

Wanda Dexel (Shackelly), BA, RPC#3796



Wanda Dexel is a member of the Nooaitch Indian Band. After being away from her community for 35 years, she returned in July, 2014. Wanda's goal has always been to return home so that her education, knowledge and experience would benefit her People within the Nlaka'pamux Nation. Wanda has 24 years of experience working with Indigenous/Aboriginal People of all ages, within the field of social services, education and counselling.

In 1987, with three young children in tow, Wanda's educational journey started at Cariboo College in Kamloops BC. Here, she began to understand how Canada's historical genocide had an effect on Native People, with an emphasis on identity. This in turn became the driving force behind furthering her education at Simon Fraser University (SFU) in 1990, where she graduated with a Bachelor of Arts, majoring in Psychology with a minor in Sociology.

Since 2016, Wanda has further explored her understanding of trauma and substance use by venturing into two counselling programs at the Justice Institute of British Columbia: (1) The *Aboriginal Focusing-Oriented Therapy and Complex Trauma certificate program*, which takes a body-centered and person-centered approach to healing with a focus on Indigenous treatment modalities; and (2) the *Substance Use Certificate program* that concentrates on many topics such as concurrent disorders, working with Aboriginal clients in substance use and recovery and prevention to harm reduction.

After graduating from SFU, Wanda was employed with the Ministry of Children & Families Aboriginal Unit in East Vancouver as a Social Worker in Child Protection. From 1995 to 2014, Wanda joined the Burnaby School District's Aboriginal Team. This brought much personal and professional gratitude because of the opportunity to work with children, youth and their families to promote the development and appreciation of one's heritage and Cultural Identity. In July of 2014, Wanda was presented with an opportunity to work for Conayt's Friendship Society as a Family Development Coordinator and gladly accepted the offer so she could finally return to her community, People of the Creeks or Scw'exmx. Lastly, as of September 2015, Wanda started working with the Nlaka'pamux Mental Health Services as a Mental Health and Addictions Counsellor.

In addition to being open to learning anything and everything about traditional teachings, Wanda has an ongoing interest in expanding her understanding of intergenerational trauma and healing practice. Thus far, Wanda has used models like the Medicine Wheel and Circle of Courage. These models have been utilized to help guide individuals to identify personal goals, to be proud of who they are as Indigenous citizens and to have faith and hope on a journey of recovery or discovery.

On a lighter note, Wanda enjoys gardening, drum making, beadwork, meditation/visualization, listening to traditional native music and practicing aromatherapy. Other adventures include attending cultural events, participating in traditional ceremonies, and striving towards a balanced lifestyle. Most importantly, Wanda enjoys spending time with her six grandchildren.

In the Spirit of Wellness, Wanda continues to collect traditional tools and knowledge to assist her on her personal journey and in her role as a Mental Health and Addictions Counsellor with Nlaka'pamux Mental Health Services.