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First Peoples Child & Family Review
An Interdisciplinary Journal Honouring the Voices, Perspectives, and Knowledges of First Peoples through Research, Critical Analyses, Stories, Standpoints and Media Reviews

For So Long....

Wanda Gabriel

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Volume 4, Number 2, 2009, p. 8

FOR SO LONG ...

Wanda Gabriel

Bio

Wanda Gabriel is a citizen of Kanehsatake Mohawk nation. She is a community organizer as well as a national trainer & facilitator who use's traditional Mohawk teachings and interactive techniques to facilitate family and community healing, specializing in working with women, families and youth. She has 18 years of experience working in First Nations communities dealing with crisis intervention and issues of sexual abuse, lateral violence, drug and alcohol addiction, domestic violence and residential school issues. Wanda was also the regional coordinator of community support for Quebec and Ontario, at the National Aboriginal Healing Foundation. In recent years she has worked within the academic setting as an instructor and curriculum administrator. She is presently undertaking a whole new domain of work by providing social support to the Cree workers who are contracted by Hydro Quebec, for the James Bay project. Being a community organizer has given her the privilege of working in many different First Nations and Inuit communities across Turtle Island. Wanda is a licensed social worker with the Quebec Professional Order of Social Workers and a Graduate from McGill University, Master of social work program. Wanda lives in Kanehsatake, Quebec Mohawk territory.

For so long there was a voice inside of me, the voice kept telling me that I was a stupid Indian, an ugly Indian, dirty, smelly, a slutty squaw, not Indian enough, not smart enough, too skinny, too fat. The not good enough messages went on and on. For so long I believed my place inferior along side others. Then I met elders, they told me my spirit was beautiful. For so long I pushed their kind words away, doubting. In healing they told me you have to know your history, you have to know where you come from. I looked back through time and I saw.

The first "great white" who arrived on Turtle Island did not know what to make of the life, a life in balance. The people knew harmony, they knew togetherness, they knew, collaboration. The "great white" knew chaos and destruction.

The "great white" could not live comfortably with that harmony because of his / inner chaos, the world they had lived across the water was vile. Those first "great whites," they were sent away from their home because of their evil ways. They came here and started to live with the First Peoples of Turtle Island. They transferred their pain and ugliness with superiority. They told our ancestors they were the "great white father," come to take care of the helpless savage children. They shamed our ancestors into believing they were childish and that their way of being in the world was not good enough. So they doubted they doubted their ways for so long.

For so long, the "great white" father, along side his sisters they attacked the soul, the very essence, the culture, the language of my ancestors. Children they were, taken from home, for so long they pillaged the spirit and the sexuality of the children until their childhood and innocence was forever gone.

These children grew into the world convinced that their bodies were something filthy and worthless. For so long our families passed on the darkness and pain. Each generation carrying the anger, grief, and the sadness.

Dear grandmother and grandfather it was not your fault, for so long you took in the shame and the pain of the "great white", it was not your fault. I know now why we have carried the burden of shame, I know now why the voice that cruelly whispers "you are not good enough." It is not ours to hold anymore!

For so long we came to believe that we were the inferior ones not good enough to be. For so long we were hidden in the shadows of belonging, the shadow of success … no more! Ours is the seventh generation! Healing is ours!

My voice no longer silenced, the voice inside positively fosters compassion and strength within me. I sing my songs, live with an attitude of gratitude, I embrace my culture with a hunger for more. Standing tall and sure I rightfully take my place on the medicine wheel.

In this way I now go knowing that before long the ones coming behind us will carry the medicine of a good mind, peace, power and righteousness…Tanon!

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