

I am Mook'aam Ikwe - Sunrise Woman although I am known as Nicole Al Takach. My Ojibwe Elder Patricia Danard gifted me this name which I hold with high honour. I was born and raised on Haudenosaunee Territory. I feel a strong connection to the boreal forests and great lakes of the east. I am grateful to be on Treaty 7 land and to live among the rocky mountains and the Bow River. The river's elegant flow which I am sure holds ancient stories within its curves and waves. I was named Beak Saki which translates to Magpie Woman after a Blackfoot Elder Charlotte Yellowhorn saw my name in her dream.

Although, I miss my own lands and the vibrations of the lands my ancestors walked and lived. I am of both Indigenous and Mediterranean ancestry. My Indigenous ancestry includes both the Algonquin and Huron-Wendat Nations. My healing journey began when I returned to Treaty 7 land in late 2015. I have had the opportunity to reconnect with my Indigenous heritage and embrace my Indigenous identity. I have affirmed my connections to the land and community here and might I say Turtle Island in its entirety in the last 9 years.

My spiritual journey has been a source and spectrum of grounding, hope and peace. My connection to and within a spiritual community has allowed me to blossom and discovered a deeper understanding of myself. I truly believe this road of resilience was led by the guidance of the Creator which ended with me becoming a Muslim.

One may develop resilience as I found I did through abusive family situations, intergenerational trauma and addiction.

My own healing and personal growth and bringing that learning of negative experiences into my work with others as positive learning lessons that I choose to share with strength to others in need.

My personal journey has been a foundation block to develop empathy and compassion as I come alongside when serving and working with my clients. I bring unique understanding for those who are facing complex challenges while maintaining professional boundaries and confidentiality. Personal experiences have molded my approach to supporting and working with others in a professional and personal setting.

My mission is to help others move forward in a proactive, positive manner to overcome their barriers. I have been motivated to give back to both Indigenous communities and Immigrant communities. One of the ways I have taken the opportunity to do this is providing translation services, support in various venues of appointments, provincial court, other system navigations including and not limited to; advocacy, follow up and connecting with resources, encouraging independence while being a supportive team lead for Arabic speaking immigrants.

While mentoring for 6 Nations Indigenous communities and volunteering with the ALS Society of Alberta I have found a rewarding reflective life gift. As my own mother passed in 1986 of ALS and seeing her suffer with this ailment. I personally supported her since I was 11 years old as well as through her cancer journey, I understand the impact of the work of the ALS Society. Volunteering at the ALS Betty's Walk is my way of doing my part in helping support research efforts they do and the other services including equipment loans to ALS warriors.

Growing up a short distance from the 6 Nations reserve with warm memories of the Mohawks culture and traditions. As my expression of gratitude for this relation and the sense of belonging it has provided me, I now volunteer as a mentor to students across Turtle Island of all walks of life. This opportunity has allowed me to provide counsel, advocacy and a way to connect others to relevant resources has inspired me in the direction of social work. I am now pursuing as a student through the Northern Lakes College Social Work Diploma program. This financial aid would provide the means necessary for to me to be able to accomplish my goal of becoming a registered social worker

I have reconnected to my culture by means of ceremonies and traditional sweat lodging as well as daily smudging.

My family has been instrumental in sharing ways of knowing through storytelling. My family left Quebec in the mid 1800's to settle in the bush in and around Hastings County, Ontario. I began to understand my Indigenous heritage through personal research with verified bloodlines of past generations. I have found a living connection with my tradition through developing relationships with Elders whom I have met and with and sought counsel from on a regular basis.

I heard once when you are able to speak of past traumas with even breathe; it is a sign of movement towards deeper healing. I have noted in my personal healing this to be

true. In honouring my personal journey and my gratitude to the Creator, I actively choose to support others on their journey to the best of my ability.