

## Chapter III

### The Nexus of History and Hysteria: The Historical Trauma Matrix

We are the sons and daughters of the walking dead.

We have lost everyone.

What do we indigenous people want from our country?

We stand over mass graves.

Our collective grief makes us numb,

We are waiting for the construction of our museum.

-Alexie, "Inside Dachau"

For them [Indians] the arrival of the Europeans marked the beginning of a long holocaust, although it came not in ovens, as it did for Jews.

The fires that consumed North American Indians were fevers brought on by newly encountered diseases, the flashes of settlers' and the soldiers' guns, the ravages of firewater, the flames of villages and fields burned by scorched-earth policy of vengeful Euro-Americans. The effects of this holocaust of North American Indians, like that of Jews, were millions of deaths. In fact, the holocaust of the North American Indians Tribes was, in a way, even more destructive than that of the Jews, since many American Indian peoples became extinct.

-Thornton, xv-xvi

In the last five hundred years, the Native American communities in the Americas have undergone loss of people, land, language, religion, economic sustenance and culture which has led to the total devastation of their communities. This excruciatingly painful colonial wound of the Native communities has entered into their memories resulting in multigenerational legacies of trauma. The literary

works of Native American writers invariably reflect these socio-cultural bankruptcies and the psychological pain of their communities. Sherman Alexie who believes that “The responsibilities of being an Indian writer are enormous” (Peterson xv) uncompromisingly delineates the multigenerational traumatic realities of his Spokane community in his works. Be it poetry or novel he deals with the consequences of a genocidal history that takes physical forms, emotional forms and mental forms in his community. Most of his characters suffer from not only personal losses and grievances – absent fathers, poverty, unemployment, alcoholism, etc., but also from a cultural loss and collective trauma. Their loss and grievance affects their behaviour and their lives on many levels. Their whole identity is shaped by historical suffering and pain and therefore their identity is inseparable from their pain. Alexie in an interview with Ase Nygren states, “The whole point of their identity is suffering. What keeps coming back to me is that when I think about Indians all I think about is suffering. My first measure on any Indian is pain” (Peterson 153). Alexie often compares the suffering of Native Americans to the Jewish people and the Holocaust: “Yes, I think genocides are comparable. The difference is that this country did what they planned to do. Hitler didn’t get to finish it. He didn’t get to accomplish it” (Peterson 154).

If excruciating pain forms the identity of the Spokane community, it becomes essential to acquire a profound understanding of the pain in order to get a holistic picture of the community. So, the main objective of this chapter is to make an in-depth study of the inherent trauma of the Spokane community in the select works of Alexie and its impact making use of historical trauma theory, an extension of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Historical trauma theory is a relatively new trauma construct that has been developed in 1990s, an alternative to PTSD that cannot adequately account for the psychological trauma of the Native American communities.

A brief knowledge of PTSD in the field of psychiatry and trauma theory in humanities and their limitations in understanding indigenous trauma are indispensable in order to understand the necessity of historical trauma construct to analyse the trauma of indigenous people across the globe. Trauma studies, an area of cultural investigation came to prominence in the early 1990s. There are two main reasons for trauma theory to gain prominence. The first reason is that the last two hundred years of world history reflects a painful past characterised by periods of unprecedented social, economical and political changes with genocide and disappearing cultures, the two World Wars and Vietnam War. Geoffrey Hartman states that “There is something very contemporary about trauma studies reflecting our sense that violence is coming ever nearer, like a storm, a storm that may have already moved into the core of our being” (qtd. by Luckhurst 503).

The second reason for that the emergence of trauma theory is the result of wider realignment of cultural and literary theory in the early 1990s. The radical scepticism associated with post-structuralist and postmodernist theory has risked its popularity because of its nihilistic attitude. Trauma theory serves the need for ‘ethical turn’ in criticism and also addresses a much more immediate and relevant locus of crisis.

The word “Trauma” comes from the ancient Greek meaning “wound” (qtd. by Marder 1). The early editions of the Oxford English Dictionary define it as “a wound, or external bodily injury in general” (qtd. by Luckhurst 498). The shift of the meaning of trauma from the physical to psychical has taken place over the course of the latter half of the nineteenth century. In the 1870s and 1880s, a whole new range of diseases of memory seemingly independent of the physical conditions began to be investigated seriously. The terms traumatic neurosis and nervous shock have been simultaneously coined along with hysteria, double or multiple personality, hypnotic and other trance state and amnesia.

Freud's contribution forms the basis of many psychological constructs in the field of psychology including psychological trauma. The publication of 'On the Psychical Mechanism of Hysterical Phenomena' in 1893 by the two young Austrian psychologists, Sigmund Freud and Joseph Breuer, have helped in tracing the transition of trauma from physical to psychical because until then hysteria has been considered as the consequence of physical degeneration. In *Traumatic Neurosis*, Freud and Breuer writes:

The operative cause of the illness is not the trifling physical injury but the affect of fright- the psychical trauma. In an analogous manner, our investigation reveal, for many, if not for most, hysterical symptoms, precipitating causes which can only be described as psychical traumas. Any experience which calls up distressing affects – such as those of fright, anxiety, shame or physical pain – may operate as a trauma of this kind. (qtd. by Luckhurst 498)

According to Freud and Breuer a psychical trauma is something that enters the psyche that is so unprecedented or overwhelming that it cannot be processed or assimilated into existing cognitive schemata and so it falls out of a person's conscious memory, but it is present in the mind like an intruder. When it comes to memory, Freud and Breuer believe that it is not the traumatic event but the memory of the trauma that acts like an agent provocateur, in releasing the symptom. Freud concludes his argument with his famous aphorism: "Hysterics suffer mainly from reminiscences" (qtd. by Luckhurst 499).

In "The Aetiology of Hysteria" Freud concludes that invariably sexual abuse forms the origin of all traumatic experiences but he later moves away from his seduction theory due to the confrontation of a new form of psychic wounding called shell shock by the soldiers of World War I. It has been understood that profound psychological impact of the trench conditions results in memory gaps, repeated re-

experiencing of extreme events in flashbacks, nightmares and hallucination after months or even years after the incident.

Similarly, in 1970 immediately after the Vietnam War, the war veterans voiced their outrage on the severe emotional consequence of their horrible experience in Vietnam and they demanded the attention of the authorities concerned to their traumatic stressors. The atrocities committed against the Vietnamese contributed to the elevated level of stress, an aftermath of war. Similarly, profound impact of about 1.7 million Vietnam War veterans resulted in the official diagnosis of the syndrome Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) by American Psychiatry Association in its Diagnostic and Statistic Manual III (DSM III) in 1980. Moreover “this was the first-time that a psychiatry diagnostic system recognized the possible existence of a wholly environmental determined psychiatric disorder” (qtd. by Vicroy 17) and the first time, since Freud, psychological problems are described with regard to the sufferers’ experiences and emotions without scapegoating the victim.

Some of the most influential and far reaching new insights on psychological trauma have come from the field of literature and literary theory. Elissa Marderin “Trauma and Literary Studies: Some ‘Enabling Questions’” states, “Over the last fifteen years or so, the emergence of ground breaking new work on trauma in literature and critical theory has made a profound impact both within and beyond the field of literature”(1). Trauma that has been mainly confined to the field of psychology came to be called ‘trauma theory’ only after the mid – 1990s when various lines of inquiry like literature, history, psychology, psychiatry, sociology, anthropology, philosophy and judiciary converged to make trauma a privileged critical category.

The growth of interest in trauma within humanities is directly referred to the publication of two path breaking texts that have become seminal both within and beyond the field of literature. It is generally agreed that the explosion of trauma work that are now being carried out in literary studies is largely due to these foundational works of the Yale School critics—Cathy Caruth, Shoshana Felman and Doris Laub.

In 1995, Cathy Caruth edited an interdisciplinary collection of essays titled *Trauma: Exploration in Memory* to which she also has written a critical introduction. In the following year, she published *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* which is a full-length study of trauma. Cathy Caruth has been “recognized as a pioneer of trauma theory, and her work has an indispensable and invaluable point of reference for much— if not all— of the work that has come after it” (Marder 1). Shoshana Felman’s initial engagement with trauma begins with her important book written in collaboration with psychoanalyst Doris Laub, *Testimony: Crisis of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History*. Susannah Radstone states, “These are undoubtedly the books which opened up the Humanities to trauma” (9) in her essay “Trauma Theory: Contexts, Politics, and Ethics”. The works of Caruth and Felman have radically altered our received ideas on trauma.

Caruth in her introduction to *Trauma: Exploration in Memory* begins her arguments referring to the acknowledgement of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) by the American Psychiatric Association in the year 1980 in its DSM III. PTSD includes the symptoms of what has previously been called shell shock, combat stress, delayed stress syndrome and traumatic neurosis. It also includes the responses to rape, child abuse and a number of other violent occurrences as well as natural catastrophes. Caruth states:

The phenomenon of trauma has seemed to become all inclusive, but it has done so precisely because it brings us to the limits of our understanding. If psychoanalysis, psychiatry, sociology, and even literature are beginning to hear each other a new in the study of trauma, it is because they are listening through the radical disruption and gaps of traumatic experience. (*Trauma: Exploration in Memory* 4)

Caruth’s view on PTSD is that it is a “powerful new tool” (*Trauma: Exploration in Memory* 1) that only provides explanation of disease, but when comes to diagnosis “it has brought about a fundamental disruption in our received modes of understanding

and of cure and a challenge to our very comprehension of what constitutes pathology” (*Trauma: Exploration in Memory* 1).

The authors of the essays in Cathy Caruth’s edited volume *Trauma: Exploration in Memory* consider that trauma is a repeated suffering of an event. According to Kai Erikson, it is a “continual reliving of some wounding experience in day dreams and nightmares, flash backs and hallucinations, and in a compulsive seeking out of similar circumstances” (*Trauma: Exploration in Memory* 184). Shoshana Felman states that the repeated suffering of the event is because “Our memory repeats to us what we haven’t yet come to terms with, what still haunts us” (*Trauma: Exploration in Memory* 184). The inability to come to term with trauma is due to the “*structure of its experience* or reception: the event is not assimilated or experienced fully at the time, but only belatedly, in its repeated *possession* of the one who experience it. To be traumatized is precisely to be possessed by an image or event” (Caruth 4).

In the words of Dori Laub, it is a collapse of witnessing because of the impossibility of knowing the prime event by the victim that has resulted in the trauma. Caruth calls this phenomenon as “crisis of truth” which poses a greatest challenge to psychoanalysis. “Trauma opens up and challenges us to a new kind of listening, the witnessing, precisely, *of impossibility*” (*Trauma: Exploration in Memory* 10).

On the one hand, the founding figures of trauma theory, Cathy Caruth et al. expresses their discontent with the category of PTSD which they consider as all encompassing, but that which shatters our fundamental ideas about psychological disorder. On the other hand, postcolonial literary scholarship is totally dissatisfied with both the trauma theory and the PTSD. The main accusation of postcolonial critics is that the trauma theory conceived by the Yale School critics has been “developed out of an engagement mainly with Holocaust testimony, literature and history” (Craps 40). Also Holocaust trauma studies “engage with a clearly definable period of history, and a clearer historical sense of victims, perpetrators and responsibility” (Visser 252).

As a result, trauma theory circumscribes itself to a Eurocentric, event based, individual oriented frame work, which does not account for the sustained and long endured processes of the trauma of the colonialism. According to DSM III, trauma is “a serious injury or a threat to the physical integrity of the self in the form of an overwhelming, sudden and unassimilable experience” (qtd. by Visser 252). The sudden or unexpected, single event based aspect of trauma is by no means comparable to the prolonged, cumulative hurt of long years of repression that constitutes the trauma of colonialism characterised by its repeated and cumulative stressor events which is not addressed either by the trauma theory developed by Cathy Caruth et al. or the PTSD. Therefore, postcolonial critics strongly condemn the cultural trauma theory as developed by Caruth et al. and the PTSD of DSM III.

In “Decolonizing Trauma Studies: A Response”, Michael Rothberg too adds that “trauma studies has tended to focus on European and US American histories and that, within that focus, the Nazi genocide of European Jews has had a predominant place” (227). Critics, asserts that it “cannot illuminate ‘non-western’ trauma because it remains locked in a one dimensional ‘event theory’ of trauma— what Van Styvendale usefully calls the ‘accident model’” (Rothberg 228). In a catastrophic age such as ours, Caruth believes that disparate historical experiences of different community can serve as a bridge in bringing about cross cultural solidarity and to the creation of new forms of community and therefore “trauma itself may provide the very link between cultures” (*Trauma: Exploration in Memory* 11). But this notion is self-defeating because the dominant conception of trauma which considers trauma as an individual phenomenon and discards wider social situations proves to be a greatest disadvantage of trauma theory.

Stef Craps squarely points out the works of leading scholars in the field such as Caruth, Felman and Laub, Hartman, and La Capra tend to show little interest in traumatic experiences of members of non-western cultural traditions. Trauma theory’s failure to give the sufferings of those belonging to non-Western or minority groups its

due recognition stands in opposition with the field's ethical aspiration. While calling on trauma theory to broaden its usual focus, Stef Craps also cautions that the traumas of non-Western or minority cultures must be given due recognition.

Though widely considered a universal phenomenon, the concept of psychological trauma is a "Western artefact" ("Beyond Eurocentrism" 48) rooted in "the late nineteenth century. Its origins can be located in a variety of medical and psychological discourses dealing with European and American experience of industrialization, gender relations, and modern warfare" ("Beyond Eurocentrism" 48). Hegemonic definition of trauma has been criticized for being culturally insensitive and exclusionary, and charges of cultural imperialism have been levelled at the uncritical cross cultural application of Western trauma concepts in the context of non-western disenfranchised groups. "Drawing on such notion as 'Insidious trauma', 'Oppression based trauma', 'Post Colonial Syndrome' and 'Post Traumatic Slavery Syndrome', unlike the traditional, individual and event based model these variations can account for and respond to collective, ongoing, everyday forms of traumatizing violence" ("Introduction: Postcolonial Trauma Novels" 3).

The concerns mentioned above and the alternative paradigms that have been proposed, have so far received very little attention from within the field of cultural trauma research, which for the most part continues to adhere to the traditional, event based model of trauma, according to which trauma results from a single, extraordinary catastrophic event suffered by victims of racism, or other forms of structural oppression. Therefore, it is accused that the field is "irredeemably tainted with Eurocentric bias" ("Introduction: Postcolonial Trauma Novels" 4). Even though the main methodologies from which trauma theory takes its inspiration – psychoanalysis and deconstruction – have been accused of being fatally compromised by their (supposed) European provenance. Stef Craps expresses that trauma theory can and should be reshaped, resituated and redirected so as to foster attainment to previously unheard sufferings.

Though the phenomenon of trauma has been long recognized but frequently ignored one in the field of medicine, the American Psychiatric Association has finally acknowledged the phenomenon under the title Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in its DSM III in the year 1980, after the Vietnam War veterans uprising. PTSD enshrined in DSM III of APA perceives that after experiencing or witnessing horrific events, many people develop a long-term mental disorder called PTSD. It is considered as a syndrome with two essential components: a precipitating traumatic event and a resultant constellation of symptoms - shell shock, combat stress, delayed stress, syndrome traumatic neurosis, as well as the emotional responses of being victim of imprisonment, repeated torture and ethnic cleansing. It also includes the effects of terrible acts of natural calamities, atrocities committed intentionally by terrorism, isolated tragedies occurring to individuals, and prolonged disasters befalling an entire society are joined under a single rubric. Psychologist Ehrenreich states that the use of a single construct to describe responses to such a range of horrific happenings makes no sense either from psychological, human, or moral perspectives.

The very definition of PTSD as an “event outside the range of usual human experience” is highly contested by Laura S. Brown in her article “Not Outside the Range: One Feminist Perspective on Psychic Trauma”. She articulates that “incest and the “secret trauma” (*Trauma* 101) being repeatedly suffered over a long period of time by girls and women have gone unnoticed and unacknowledged by PTSD. She argues that the repeated and prolonged trauma of incest that which is relatively common in the society stands in opposition to the definition of PTSD as “an event outside the range of human experience” (*Trauma* 100). Brown clearly highlights the contradictions stating “These experiences are not unusual, statistically; they are well within the “range of human experiences” (*Trauma* 101).

Another crucial accusation on PTSD is its failure to address the trauma of genocides of colonisation, forced transmigration of hundreds of thousands of people, large scale natural disasters such as famines and epidemics and sustained violence in

the name of civil war, international war, terrorism, ethnic cleansing that results in destruction of pre-existing social structures, social role, and traditional ways of life. There is no generally accepted name for this category of traumatic events. “Social trauma” or “collective trauma” or “mass trauma” capture some but not all, aspects of it (Ehrenreich 19). Moreover, he states that “mass traumatic events transform cultures as well as individuals” (Ehrenreich 23). Such cultural transformation lends to profound impact on individuals those who directly experience the traumatic events as well as the subsequent generations. He concludes “Our understanding of the intergenerational transmission of trauma to entire societies will be greatly impoverished if it is studied as purely individual phenomenon” (Ehrenreich 23).

Kali Tal, one of the post-colonial trauma critics, in her *World of Hurt* strongly criticizes the Euro-American critics for ignoring African American literature that which is aggressively concerned with ideas of trauma and memory right from its very inception. She writes:

...traumatic enslavement for a period of over four hundred years, and brutal and traumatic oppression, ever since, combined with both deliberate and incidental erasure of whole cultures and histories within that population. To be an American critic and to turn one’s eye to Europe, to Holocaust for an example of an traumatized population *while at the same time* steadfastly refusing to look at any aspect of the African American experience (or for that matter, the experience of Native Americans) is to perpetuate the racist and Eurocentric structures that were responsible for the traumatization of those populations in the first place.(10)

Though Tal argues for African American literature, we can very well apply it to Native Americans as well. In reality the predicaments of Native Americans are more pathetic since they are indigenous to the land.

After a critical examination of PTSD implemented by American Psychiatric Association and the cultural trauma theory developed by Yale school critics, it is understood that both the trauma construct fail to acknowledge the trauma of non-Western communities and the prolonged and repeated trauma of the oppressed masses and hence aptly branded Eurocentric.

In chapter I, attempt has been made to capture an elaborate social picture of the Spokane community in select works of Sherman Alexie with its binge drunkards, unemployed young men, third world American poverty stricken day-to-day reservation life. No doubt, that it is a very dismal picture with intrinsic violence but it is very crucial to remember the critiques of Teuton who asserts that such social degeneration has never been the cultural values of the Native communities in pre-Columbian eras but they are the direct results of five hundred years of colonisation that has led to economic deprivation. Their socio-cultural devastation is only part of a scenario, while the impact of five centuries of colonisation, cultural suppression and historical oppression that has resulted in the intergenerational trauma of the entire population is all pervasive in their lives and it is the prime underlying cause of their present condition. The Native American communities are considered as survivors of more extreme traumatising, because they have come through five centuries of genocide and forced assimilation.

The long term impact of suppression and historical oppression of the indigenous people as the result of prolonged colonization has led to the rise of a distinct kind of trauma construct called historical trauma. This construct has emerged in the behavioural and health science literature for first time during the mid 1990s. Initially, it has been considered by Brave Heart et al. as a complex and intergenerational form of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) that has resulted from European conquest and colonization. "The concept obtains its rhetorical force by consolidating two pre-existing constructs: *historical oppression and psychological trauma*" (qtd. by Kirmayer et al. 300). The prime reason for formulating historical trauma has been

to contextualise Indigenous health problems as the consequence of postcolonial suffering.

Thornton points out that the initial impact of European contact with the Indigenous population of the American First Nations, Inuit and Metis of Canada and the Native Americans of the US has resulted in “massive loss of life through infectious diseases and violent encounters that has been called the “American Indian Holocaust” (qtd. in “Rethinking Historical Trauma” 301).

The emergence of the settler-controlled nation states has been associated with exploitation and racist policies aimed at colonisation, ethnic cleansing, cultural suppression and forced assimilation of the Natives through the Indian Boarding Schools and systematic implementation of detrimental policies against them which is a cultural genocide. Increasing awareness of this history has a strong impact on the collective identity of these Natives as well as the individuals. The newly developed construct of historical trauma offers an explanation for continuing inequalities in the health and wellbeing of the indigenous population and a context for social, cultural and psychological interventions. The greatest achievement of historical trauma is that it has politically led to explicit recognition of past violence.

Dr. Brave Heart, who is considered the pioneer of historical trauma construct has formulated historical trauma as an alternative to the established psychiatric disorder that has ignored to explain the enduring mental health disparities that is deeply rooted among the Native communities as the result of Euro-American colonisation. The term historical trauma for the first time has appeared in the mental health literature addressed to American Indian Communities in American Indian mental health context. She describes historical trauma as a “deeper and more pervasive communal loss, resulting from genocide, massive human trauma over generations, [and] loss of land to which [AIs] were spiritually and emotionally tied” (qtd. in “Reconsidering American Indian Historical Trauma” 388). Dr. Brave Heart further defines historical trauma as “The collective, emotional and psychological injury both over life span and

across generations, resulting from a cataclysmic history of genocide” (qtd. in “Reconsidering American Indian Historical Trauma” 390). Heartman and Gone illustrate the characteristics of historic trauma with the concept of “Four C’s” of Indigenous historical trauma:

i) Colonialinjury of Indigenous people by European settlers who “perpetrated” conquest, subjugation and dispossession. ii) Collective experience of these injuries by entire Indigenous communities whose identities, ideal and interactions were radically altered as a consequence; iii) Cumulative effects from these injuries as the consequence of subjugation, oppression and marginalization have “snowballed” throughout ever-shifting historical sequences of adverse policies and practices by dominant settler societies and iv) Cross-generational impactsof these injuries as legacies of risk and vulnerability were passed fromancestors to descendants in unremitting fashion until healing interrupts these deleterious processes.(Kirmayer et al. 301)

During the same year (i.e. 1995) the Apache Psychologist Eduardo Duran and Opelousas public health researcher Bonnie Duran elucidated the term “soul wound” which is considered as the core of Indigenous suffering rooted in histories of colonial oppression. They explained that“the trauma of the loss of land, culture and people has never been resolved, but has been anesthetized by alcohol and other drugs. Native American people suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder as a consequence of the devastating effects of genocide perpetrated by the U.S. government” (*Native American Postcolonial Psychology* 152). According to Mr. Duran, the concept of ‘soul wound’ is very recent in the field of Psychology, whereas, theknowledge of what is characterised as the ‘soul wound’ has been an integral part of indigenous knowledge for many generations.Ever since their first contact with European colonizers the Native people attribute their problems in the contemporary society to

the traumatic historical events of the past. Brave Heart and De Bruyn observe that “current synonymous terms for ‘soul wound’ includes historical trauma, historical legacy, American Indian Holocaust, and Intergenerational post traumatic stress disorder” (“Healing the American Indian Soul Wound” 341). Eduardo Duran observes that historical trauma is more complex than surface exploration would reveal. In order to understand the transgenerational psychological and physiological difficulties faced by American communities, Brave Heart and De Bruyn have utilized the literature of Jewish Holocaust survivors and their descendents and pioneered the concept of historical trauma. They believe that the current problems encountered by the Native American communities are the result of the legacy of chronic trauma and unresolved grief across generations.

During the early twentieth century the Holocaust has become a paradigm for incontestable genocide and the most extreme form of evil, and this recognition has contributed to international efforts to protect human rights. Following the recognition of the Holocaust in popular culture, many ethnic minorities both within and outside of United States started to equate between the Nazi Holocaust and their own traumatic histories. For Indigenous people in the America the publication of Thornton’s *American Indian Holocaust and Survival: A Population History Since 1492* has set the stage for this kind of comparison. Thornton draws analogies between the Holocaust and the precipitous drop in the Native American population after European contact. Many subsequent authors have come out with more detailed parallels and direct connections. Native scholars Standard and Churchill apply the term Holocaust to denote the devastation of Indigenous peoples wrought by diseases, violence, and policies of cultural oppression brought by settlers and colonizers.

Kirmayer states that the Native scholars explicitly reject the kind of exceptionalism that considers Shoah as a unique event that cannot be compared with other genocides. Indeed, “[S]tandard went so far as to claim that Hitler was inspired by America’s success at killing its Indigenous people: on the way to Auschwitz the

roads pathway led straight through the heart of the Indians and of North and South America” (qtd. by Kirmayer et al. 303). One of the main objectives of making these historical parallels has been to recognise and valorise Indigenous people as victims of violent oppression at the hands of European colonizers and their regimes. Certainly there are innumerable evidences of violent acts of aggression, dislocation and cultural suppression driven by ideas and policies that are explicitly genocidal and racist in many cases.

Though historical trauma construct has evolved based on the Holocaust survivorsthere are profound difference between the kind of trauma experienced and the subsequent impact on survivors and the descendants of Indigenous people when compared to that of the survivors of Holocaust and their offspring’s. The violence experienced by Indigenous people involves strategies of forced assimilation and marginalisation as well as outright murder. The Holocaust has been a time-limited series of events covering about a decade during the second World War period, whereas the event that constitute historical trauma for Indigenous people in the Americas lasted hundreds of years – almost five centuries. Survivors of the Holocaust have migrated to various parts of the globe and started new lives with the support of diasporic communities that are already well established and thriving. Indigenous people have been divested of their own lands and frequently relocated to marginal spaces marked by deprivation and neglect. As a result, they are economically crippled and politically powerless.

In recent years, the concept of historical trauma has been mainly applied with American Indians and Alaskan Native populations. Historical trauma is an extension or elaboration in contrast to ordinary PTSD. American Indian historical trauma is asserted to be collective, since affecting entire Native families and communities, cumulative because of compounding of multiple sociologically and psychologically devastating experiences that culminated in greater disabilities. It is intergenerational due to its nature of passing along from ancestors to descendants.

Brave Heart defines the characteristics of the historical trauma response as a ‘Constellation of features’ which include “an array of psychological problems such as denial, depersonalization, isolation, memory loss, nightmares, psychic numbing, hyper vigilance, substance abuse, fixation on trauma identification, with survivors’ guilt and unresolved grief” (qtd. by Sotero 96). According to Brave Heart, “historical trauma is cumulative and collective, psychological and emotional injury sustained over a lifetime and across generations resulting from massive group trauma experience (qtd. by Sotero 96).

A key feature of historical trauma theory is that the psychological and emotional consequences of the trauma experience are transmitted to subsequent generation through psychological, environmental and social aspects. Historical trauma is also defined as the “subjective remembering of events in the mind of an individual or the life of a community, passed from adult to children in cyclic processes as collective, emotional and psychological injury over the life span and across generation” (qtd. by Kirmayer et al.13).

With reference to the distinctive attributes, historical trauma is most clearly distinguished from PTSD by its alleged intergenerational character. The phenomenon of multigenerational trauma is largely accepted in the American Indian communities as a key concept and it is often understood to be a root cause of the suffering of American Indian families. The definition of multigenerational trauma relates to the idea that subsequent generations learn from and are affected by parents through their psychological, environmental and social arenas. As a result, there prevails an intergenerational cycle of trauma response. Duran and Duran in their book *Native American Post Colonial Psychology* suggest that, “historical trauma becomes embedded in the cultural memory of a people and is passed on by the same mechanisms by which culture is generally transmitted and therefore becomes ‘normalized’ within that culture” (Atkinson et al.138).

Evidence of multigenerational trauma has emerged in studies of “multigenerational Holocaust Survivor families, refugee families, and families around the world dealing with multigenerational effects of genocide, mass killing and other collective violence” (Coll et al. 95) as in the case of Palestinians, Russians, Cambodians, and indigenous population around the world. These studies have documented that offspring of parents affected by trauma exhibit an array of psychological disorders. Clinicians and researchers Duran, Kinzie Raphael, Yellow Horse Brave Heart and Weiss and others have enlisted symptoms that range from higher levels of depression, withdrawal, various forms of anxiety, suicidal ideation and behaviour, substance abuse, anger, violence, guilt behaviour and adopting a victim identity. Researchers have also noted that descendants may have difficulty in interpersonal relationships, reduced energy, pathological expression of mourning, nightmares about traumatic experiences, insomnia, social isolation, exaggerated dependency or independence, concern over betraying ancestors for being excluded from the suffering (a sort of intergenerational survivor guilt), an obligation to share ancestral pain and a collection of other psychological or mental disorders.

Historic trauma experts explain the characteristics of historic trauma using trauma gram with various numbers of stages. The ‘C’ traumagram of Gone and the four distinct assumptions of historic trauma by Sotero are more or less similar in considering the colonial injury, collective experience, cumulative effect and cross generational impact. The first generation survivors of the trauma that affects the collective population often transmit the psychological effects to their following generational impact. Ms. Brave Heart and Duran make use of six phase concept to explain the characteristic of historical human which includes colonization, economic competition, invasion/war period, subjugation/Reservation period, Boarding school period and forced relocation and Termination period. Mrs. Brave Heart further elucidates historic trauma theory by stating that historic trauma may manifest itself as unresolved grief, disenfranchised grief and internalised oppression.

The select works of Sherman Alexie is analysed under the historical trauma lens with this basic theoretical background. The works of Alexie deal with contemporary life of the Spokane people, whose characters are not first generation direct victims of European diseases and wars, but they are beyond dispute intergenerational trauma victims.

A basic knowledge of the conquest of Americas and the making of the United States of America are very essential to understand the historical trauma of the Native Americans. It is generally considered that, "The conquest of America is a story of five European Nations and five hundred American Indian nations" (Wolfe et al. n.pag). When Europeans first arrived in the Americas, they encountered a continent that was home to over two thousand cultures with their own significantly differing ways of functioning. It has been estimated that approximately 500 Indian languages were spoken in what is now the United States and Canada "over five centuries later, less than two hundred are still spoken" (Porter 42).

In October 1492, when Columbus arrived in the Caribbean Islands, the Spanish estimated the Indigenous population of Hispaniola to be around 8 million people. "By 1542, the Native population of Hispaniola was only two thousand. Enslaved Africans were now the main source of labour" states Jeffrey Ostler ("American History: Oxford Research Encyclopaedia" 4).

Styvendale has quoted Cynthia Wesley – Esquimaux and Magdalena Smolewski who have introduced the concept of Historic Trauma Transmission (HTT) referring to the virgin soil diseases and the depopulation of the Americas from 1493 to 1520 that has formed a nucleus of traumatic memory that is buried deep within the collective memory of the aboriginal peoples. The suffering due to the return of this intense memory which is termed as dark nucleus is considered to continue until the present generation.

The massive depopulation of the indigenous was due to two main reasons. The first one was the spread of epidemic disease such as small pox, diphtheria, measles

and cholera that Europeans brought to the new world. The second reason was the intentional killing of the Natives for land. Bartoleme de las Casas, a Jesuit Priest and later bishop in the Catholic Church, who accompanied Columbus on his second voyage wrote several books about his observation in the new world. “Violence, then was central to Spanish colonization in the Caribbeans, although for more Indians died from disease, malnutrition and starvation” (qtd. by Treuer 29).

The English followed the same attitude and approach in dealing with the Native population in order to achieve their goals. The most debated question among ethnologist and anthropologist is the total population that inhabited the New World in the pre-Columbian era. “Some Experts believe that perhaps 10 million people lived above the Rio Grande in 1492. In 1890 the United States census revealed a shocking collapse of the Native American population with a count of only 250,000” (Perdue and Green 16). This massive population reduction is considered as the greatest demographic disaster in human history. Again it is “the intentional killing of Native Americans and the exposure of Native Americans to European diseases” (Brown-Rice 118) that formed the two main factors in North America.

The bitter memory of the smallpox evil is a strong presence in the collective subconscious of the Native people. Alexie captures the irrevocable pain and disillusionment brought about by the smallpox disease through the voice of Thomas-Builds-the-Fire the Spokane Reservation’s misfit, story teller. In “A Drug Called Tradition” the three reservation heroes of Alexie leave to Benjamin Lake in order to have their vision. Going on vision quest is part of Native spiritual experience and is believed to reveal their destiny. Ironically, these reservation heroes try to have their visions with the help of drugs. Alexie makes use of their visions to narrate the fatal history of the community. In Junior’s vision Thomas, the story teller narrates “*They’re all gone, my tribe is gone. Those blankets they gave us, infected with smallpox, have killed us, I’m the last very last, and I’m too. So very sick. Hot. My fever burning so hot*” (LRTFH17).

Since infected blankets were used as biological weapon to exterminate the Natives, the very name of the disease evoked dreadful fear in them. This fear is used cleverly to subjugate the Native children by the missionary boarding schools to assimilate them to the white American mainstream society. In *Indian Killer*, Truck Sultz defends this particular practice of the boarding schools. Truck, a radio talk show host mentions about the efforts of the U.S. Army and Marcus and Narcissa Whitman, “two of the first missionaries who ever, brought God’s word to the Indians” (*Indian Killer* 344).

According to Mrs. Brave Heart, apart from the genocide, the four major policies adopted by the U.S. Government in the name of assimilation have made tremendous effect on the Native psyche are Removal and Relocation, Reservations, Boarding Schools and Termination that has resulted in the historic trauma of the community.

The above mentioned policies have produced a soul wound on the collective and individual psyche of the Native communities and have been passed on as intergenerational trauma to successive generations. Though these policies are of the past the impact they created are eternal and devastating. Alexie recaptures this traumatic impact in multiple contexts in their works.

Alexie who “protests against the colonizing forces that devastate Native people across the America” (Peterson xiv) and who proclaims genocide and Holocaust as a part of Native history recaptures the impact of these historical policies in multiple contexts as well as through the memories of his characters who often refer to these issues at appropriate occasions in their lives.

The following section is a critical insight into assimilation policies adopted by the US Government that resulted in what the Native critics like Russel Thornton and Ward Churchill call ‘American Indian Holocaust’, through the works of Alexie which captures its impact through the predicament of his characters.

As the result of Relocation and Termination act of the federal government the Natives are uprooted from their native land and relocated in unfamiliar terrains usually the urban space which has never been conducive to the growth of the Natives. The tribes are violently split up and segregated, and their value systems is denied and regarded as those of savages. This disconnection from their ancestors, ancestral land and culture is then passed down to the next generation. Denied of all cultural moorings there develops an identity crisis. The trauma of identity crisis is captured by Alexie through the predicament of his characters under multiple removal contexts such as adoption of Native children into white families', reservation schools and migration to mainstream white society for education and job opportunities.

The whole life of John Smith, a Native American, in *Indian Killer* forms the metaphor for relocation and the resultant identity crisis. Adoption serves the purpose of his relocation to Smiths, the white American, family where John faces the total impact of being removed from his Native culture, identity and land. John Smith trapped in an urban wilderness, dealing with the perils of modern urban life is no better than an orphan in an alien land who ends up committing suicide unable to locate his cultural loyalty.

For John the city of Seattle is a place of war, a national monument to colonization. To him the city represents European victory and is built for whites alone. For him the city is a waste space and he sees the building he works as being pointless. John is absolutely aware that, "every building in Seattle contained the bones of fallen workers. Every building was a tomb" (*IK* 405). He knows that, "his search for identity in the city is futile because he believes only whites can make sense of themselves in an urban setting" (James 175).

Alexie's heroes right from Arnold to many others who migrate to the city out of their reservation are forced to undergo similar trauma where they feel themselves less than human beings or like an alien, and they are always suspected to be killers or thieves. While the narrator of "The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven"

returns to his reservation after many bitter experiences from the city, his family is not surprised to see him back. Because they know “Indians can reside in the city but they can never live there” (*LRTFH* 187). The experience of the narrator, a young school boy of “Witnesses Secret and Not” is “But as soon as I get off the reservation, among all white people, every Indian gets exaggerated. My father’s braids looked three miles long and black and shiny as a police issue revolver” (*LRTFH* 219). Junior Polatkin in “Junior Polatkin’s Wild West Show” remark about his stay in the city is a perfect example of what the Native community feels caught up in the wilderness of the white men’s city. When Lynn, his girlfriend warns him not to choose death by deciding to move back to reservation from his University, Junior replies, “I am dying at school too. So I guess it’s a matter of choosing my own grave” (*LRTFH* 242).

Among the innumerable strategies adopted to encroach to lands of Natives, the Termination and Relocation Act of 1950s was the last to be implemented by the U.S. government. Though Natives’ land was their motive the federal government persuaded that it has been successful in assimilating the Natives into the mainstream society and therefore reservations are unnecessary. “Termination procedures sought to abolish tribes’ power and gain reservation land. Termination ‘was coupled with the relocation Act; a statute passed in 1956 and designed to course reservation residents to disperse to various urban centres around the country’” (James 173).

The renowned Native critic, Vine Deloria refers to the Relocation Act of 1956 as one of the most disastrous policies ever invented. He believes, “It began as a policy of the Eisenhower administration as a means of getting Indians off the reservation and into the city slums where they could fade away” (*Custer Died for Your Sins* 157).

The Relocation policy removed the Indians from their native lands and confined to reservations that made the tribe economically, politically and culturally weak and similar devastation was re-enacted when Termination policy that relocated tribes from reservation to cities – “Can an Indian have a legacy in a white town?” (*ATDPI* 187).

Such constant relocations that devastated their communal and cultural stability has resulted in wounding of the Native American psyche. Alexie's characters feel that the city exacerbates their agony about identity and future. For them the cityscape itself is unreliable and any kind of link with it means death. "All those relocation program sent reservation Indians to the cities and sometimes swallowed up" (*LRTFH* 212).

After 1778, Congress established federal Indian Reservation by treaty or statute. "Reservations are not gift to Indians from the U.S. government: they are retained portions of the original tribal homelands – the parts that were not sold or taken" (Treuer 87). The white government forced native tribes to make treaties that affirmed major portions of the tribal homeland to the U.S. government:

For many Indians, the reservation they had been forced onto were alien, poor lands where they were expected to transform culturally from being hunters to farmers using inadequate equipment whilst surrounded by various threatening expansion – its interests. Systematic non-Indian destruction of wildlife made subsistence economics unviable. Such impossible conditions led to demoralized dependence on government agents for rations and further subversion of the main supports of tribal life. The Bureau of Indian Affairs ... gained considerable power over Indian life, administering federal programs and acting as a "trustee" for Indian resources. (Porter 52)

Though reservations are considered as living examples of Euro-American colonialism and nation building at the cost of indigenous people's social-life and culture, it is also considered that reservations are the last remaining strong hold of sovereignty and cultural tradition of the Natives.

The Spokane Indian Reservation has been established in the year 1888 and the current population is less than 2000. Alexie's Spokane Indian reservation is a place of collective depression and traumatized identity where poverty is all pervasive.

Arnold's *The Diary* reveals that the reservation is a place miles and miles away from all things positive and filled with losers. The young Arnold realizes, "reservations are meant to be prisons, you know? Indians were supposed to move onto reservations and die. We were supposed to disappear" (*ATDPI* 216).

Marie Polatkin in *Indian Killer* finds her intelligence and dedication as a means of escape from the reservation. She is afraid that she does not want to be drowned into the layers and layers of failures of her reservation. She is determined to reach her future outside the reservation though suspicious of her future. For John of *Indian Killer* who is incarcerated in the city, the reservation in his imagination is a Utopia. The reservation of his birth mother is an opposite of his hostile city that feeds his trauma.

The Urban Indians like Lynn of "Assimilation", the journalist of the "Toughest Indian in the World" and the narrator of "Emigration" all have a nostalgia for their reservation however sickening the place may be: "But, somehow, most every urban Indian still held closely to his or her birth tribe" (*IK* 38). Even the most ambitious persons like Arnold and Polatkin pursue their success in the white world, have a sense of deep attachment with their tribe and reservation. "Marie was Spokane, would always be Spokane" (*IK* 38). No matter whether they are urban or reservation Indians their reservation is their sovereign nation, their cultural strong hold.

The closely knitted kinship of the reservation dwellers is understood while Arnold of *The Diary* recollects, "On the rez, you know every kid's father, mother, grandparents, dog, cat and shoe size. I mean, yeah, Indians are screwed up, but we're really close to each other. We KNOW each other. Everybody knows everybody" (*ATDPI* 153). But the main identity of the reservation is its genocidal history which Alexie captures succinctly: "Oh Jesus I wake up from the bottom of that mass grave with the bones of generations of slaughter and I crawl and dig my way up through layers and layers of ..." (*LRTFH* 123). These are the words of the narrator of "Jesus

Christ's Half Brother is Well and Alive in the Spokane Indian Reservation" that at once brings the genocidal past of the Spokane's to one's mind's eye.

In his article "Historical and Cultural Context of Native American Literature" Porter states: "With Indians no longer a military threat, the United States set about attacking – Indian tribalism and Indian values at their core" (52). After implementing an array of policies that destroyed the Native American population and culture in the name of assimilation by the middle of the nineteenth century, the U.S. government implemented a colonial policy that aimed to obliterate American Indian culture through education.

It is considered as "one of the most pernicious dimensions of the war on Indian culture . . ." (qtd. by Truer 138). The Chief advocate of such a "brutal education program" (Porter 52) is Richard Hendry Pratt, a veteran of Indian wars. His motto is "Kill the Indian and save the man!" (qtd. by Porter 52). Pratt's policies are to strip the American Indian off his Indianness and to replace the traditional Native culture with the culture of the dominant white society.

Children right from the age of eight are compulsorily removed from their parents and are sent to far off boarding schools in order to totally discard parental and tribal contacts. One of Alexie's poems in *Reservation Blues* sums up the predicament of the children in the boarding schools:

My braids were cut off in the name of Jesus  
 To make me look so white  
 My tongue was cut out in the name of Jesus  
 So I would not speak what's right  
 My heart was cut out in the name of Jesus  
 So I would not try to feel  
 My eyes were cut out in the name of Jesus  
 So I could not see what's real

Apart from this the most pathetic aspect is thousands of children died from diseases due to poor nutrition and hygiene. Extreme corporal punishments, child abuse and paedophilia are rampant in residential schools. Students are mistreated, isolated and dehumanized that most of the students hesitate to speak of their experience even in their adulthood, which is a clear sign of extreme trauma.

The children who come out of these schools often feel they could neither fit into their tribal communities nor the white society, and this feeling of being a misfit in both these societies, along with dire poverty prevailing in their reservations fuel the growing social dysfunction on the reservations. Mr. Anton Truer unravels the most devastating consequences of these boarding schools:

The long-term effects of the residential boarding school system are profound. People learn how to parent by how they are parented, but with as many as three generations of Indians going through in BIA boardingschools, a critical piece of the social fabric was severely damaged. (*Everything YOU Wanted to KNOW about Indians But Were Afraid to Ask* 140)

The boarding school that came into function from 1879 has been closed in the year 1960s with totally damaging three generations of most valuable natural resources of the tribe. In conclusion it is clear that coercive education policies had not only failed but also actually continued the genocidal practices that marked the U.S. government's relationships with Natives people from the outset.

The reservation school of the Spokane community of Alexie in *The Diary* is a twentieth century version of Charlesle Boarding Schools. Mr. P the maths teacher of Arnold confesses that the teachers of the reservation school are instructed to beat the children in order to make the children "give up being Indian" (*ATDPI* 35). These teacher's arrogance and violence are exposed when Mr. P admits that he has hurt a lot of Indian kids and has broken a few children's bones.

Junior Polakin of “Indian Education” gives a list of such experiences with his teachers who often punished him for being Indian and intelligent. He is made to stand “eagle-armed with books in each hand” (*LRTFH* 173) in his second grade for no reason. Junior is made to crumble up and swallow his spelling test when he gets all the words right. His missionary teacher Betty Towel sends a letter to Junior’s parents asking to cut his braids or not to send their children to school.

Arnold, his sister Mary of *The Diary* and Junior of “Indian Education” are all smart and bright kids in the rez school who are punished for their creativity and intelligence because the motive of the school is not to empower the children with education but to take away their culture and to produce them as misfits and to inculcate in them a sense of inferiority and failure to sabotage their evolving personality. David Adams calls the boarding school experience as “education for extinction” (“Education for Extinction” 52). He adds, “Essentially, it was a new form of war, both ideological and psychological, waged against children” (“Education for Extinction” 52).

While Truer states the boarding school policy has resulted in a big tear in the social fabric, he captures the essence of the devastation wrought up on the community by completely denying total access to quite a normal human privilege of growing up, with parental love and familial and extended familial environment, that unconsciously nurtures and instills the quality of parenting in the succeeding generations. As a result, poor parenting became normalized in the Native community, and this formed the precursor for so many other existing problems in the Native community.

Sherman Alexie’s stories and novels are characterised by family dysfunction with the missing father. All the fathers of Alexie’s stories are binge drunkards who often disappear from their families. Some of the fathers like those of Victor’s and Arnold’s are good to their children even though they are drunkards, but the father’s like those of Rowdy’s of *The Diary*, and the narrator’s of “Scars” abuse their children. The theory of abused child is at the risk of re-enacting the violence is supported by

intergenerational trauma. These fathers who are victims of childhood trauma are perfect examples of their boarding school experience that finds expression in violence and alcohol, leading to family breakdown and social dysfunction. “I kept trying to figure out the main topic, the big theme, the overarching idea, the epicenter. And it is this: the sons in this book really love and hate their fathers” (*LRTFH* xxii) remarks Alexie in his introduction to *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven*.

According to United Nations convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed to destroy either the whole or a part of a national, ethnical, racial or religious groups as such:

- a. Killing members of the group
- b. Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group
- c. Deliberately inflicting on members of the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- d. Imposing measures intended to prevent birth within the group;
- e. Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group (qtd. by Churchill 367)

The history of the Spokane community of Alexie meets the UN definition of genocide. Alexie’s Indian characters have endured policies that exactly, fit the legal description of genocide, including the residential boarding school programs, the systematic removal of Indian children from their tribes in the name of adoption, relocations, termination, reservations, involuntary sterilisation of Indian women without their consent and many more atrocities, that has systematically reduced their population and devastated their culture, along with systematic disintegration of the social and economic structure of the community. These facts beyond dispute convince us that the Spokane community of Alexie has undergone genocide and genocidal policies of the federal government and therefore, they are the victims of historical trauma. The application of psychological trauma theory to understand the trauma of

the Spokane community will be an injustice and the historical trauma theory is the right tool to measure the trauma of the Native community, more particularly Alexie's Spokane community.

Of all the novels of Alexie the *Indian Killer* captures the essence of the psychological conflict of the historical trauma. The trauma of the novel arises from the removal and relocation of John an Indian baby immediately after his birth to an upper middle class white couple, Olivia and Daniel, who are incapable of having their own child. Alexie has portrayed Olivia and Daniel as gentle and loving, on the other hand totally ineffective parents who can be considered as metaphor for America's paternalistic attitude. Though driven by the good intention of bringing up the Indian child in Indian way of life they are neither capable of ignoring their adopted baby's Indian race nor capable of initiating John to proper Indian tradition and culture. As a result, John is introduced to Indian ways of life through books and films that represent the discourse of the dominant white society about Indians. John from his childhood inherits the Indian stereotypes that his parents has exposed him to and never has a chance to understand or experience the real Indian and their culture and tradition.

John's white parents can never provide any information about his biological parents and his birth tribe to which he belongs to, because the adoption agency never revealed these secrets to the parents. So, John could not know anything about his natural parents, other than his birth mother's age, which was fourteen. John considers himself to be an "Indian in the most generic sense" (*IK* 31) and "he was an Indian without a tribe" (*IK* 35).

With Black hair, brown skin, brown eyes, high cheek bones and prominent nose and with an ironic family name of Smith, John, the son of white parents inculcates the trauma of dislocation and rootlessness in his heart from a very young age. He grows up after the Indian stereotypes as a strong, silent type with a stoic face. Being the son of the wealthy Smith's, he is educated in St. Francis Catholic School where he has many white friends. Despite the advantage of being the son of

Smiths, John has always looked as an Indian. As a result, John feels ostracized from others. John's exclusion gradually develops a feeling of inferiority in contrast to the other white students, whom he deems to be more intelligent and complex than himself. To a great extent, the attitudes of the white society inculcate an inferiority complex in John Smith.

The parents of the girl children always warned their daughters to keep away from John. John would understand the nuances of the relationship that he experiences with his white friends and teachers that constantly reiterates his ethnicity in spite of his adopted status. This sense of rootlessness often makes him feel "less than real" (*IK* 17).

When John dates white girls their parents view John with suspicion and subtly disapprove of their budding relationships. Like Daniel and Olivia, John's teachers are often overwhelmingly acquiescent of his frequently erratic behavior, never realizing that their response to John also makes him feel further isolated... To some extent, his teachers have good intentions in that they realize that, being an orphan and an Indian in a predominantly white school, John has a much more difficult time than most but like Daniel and Olivia, John's teachers' seemingly good intentions actually towards Indians, whom they dehumanize in their generalized pity. What they don't realize or understand is that ... One cause of his social problems are actions like those of his teachers that make him actually aware of his ethnicity....(Grassian 301)

John's rootlessness that denies an authentic identity engenders rage within him. Daniel and John once go to watch basketball game at Indian Heritage gym played by Sioux team and the local team of Yakama Indians. For the first time John gets the opportunity of watching Indians closely:

So many Indians, so many tribes, many sharing similar features, but also differing in slight and important ways. The Makahs different than the Quinalts, the Lummi different from the Puyallup. There were Indians with dark skin and jet-black hair. There were Indians with brown hair and paler skin. Green-eyed Indians. Indians with black blood. Indians with Mexican blood... They were talking, telling jokes, and laughing loudly. (*IK 21*)

John's misguided ideologies about Indians as silent and stoic crumbles down, when he finds these Indians talking, cracking jokes and laughing loudly. John's perception of Indians as noble savages is reformed by the romanticizing descriptions of Indians and their culture in the books that John is provided with. John wishes their laughter but he is not aware that their laughter is "a ceremony used to drive away personal and collective demons" (*IK 21*). They are not stoic and magical the way he assumes them to be but these Indians watching the game, are highly expressive, moaning and groaning at each shot. "But always they were laughing. John had never seen so many happy people. He did not share their happiness" (*IK 21*).

Unable to reconcile between the real Indians and his idea of real Indians "John felt like crying. He did not recognize these Indians. They were nothing like the Indians he had read about, John felt betrayed" (*IK 22*).

John who can never become a white man and unable to be a real Indian who "could have called the wind", (*IK 24*) to strike his perceived enemies pathetically feels "like a fraud at urban powwows" (*IK 35*) and stumbles down in the maze of identity without a way out. Nancy Van Styvendale comments:

John's invisibility – his inability to see and recognize himself as a "real" Indian – propels him to search for and re-enact authenticity through a complex of colonial discourses of Indianness instilled in him by his adoptive parents and his mentor, the Spokane Jesuit Father Duncan. Through their performative reiteration of these discourses

function to reinstall authentic Indianness as not only unrecoverable but also unachievable and, consequently, to fuel John's murderous rage at a society that has refused him not only his roots but even his own pain. (Styvendale350)

John, who is a victim of identity crisis, undergoes trauma from his very small age due to the stark difference in the physical appearances of himself and that of his parents which is a nagging reminder of the irresolvable racial difference. His inability to identify himself as a real Indian with real Indians and to belong to the real Indian world that which is far removed from his idea of the real Indians.

John very well manages to suppress his anger because he believes he wants to be "a real person" (*IK* 19). Also "once or twice a week he felt the need to run and hide" (*IK*19). This unattended, uncontrolled grief and rage of John proves dangerous to himself because John's profound rage slowly undermines his mental stability and John "gently goes mad during the course of the book" states Alexie(Tomson 28). John is under constant agony and confusion and believes that a white man is responsible for all sins against Indians and decides he "need to kill a white man" (*IK* 25).John is not sure of which white man is responsible for everything that had gone wrong" (*IK* 27). John's rage is therefore, a result of "both of his being appropriated and of his appropriation of an available discourse of Nativeness" (Stevendale 351).

In the novel, John, right from his childhood is not portrayed as a normal child who enjoys the love and comfort of his parents as well as the comfort of his social milieu. John, at the age of five realizes that his parents are white and he is brown and understands that the difference in skin colour is important. He feels the cold and embarrassment when he understands that, "He did not look like his parents. He wanted to look like his parents. He rubbed at his face, wanting to wipe the brown away" (*IK* 306).

In an interview with Ase Nygren, Alexie states, "I feel that it is true that pain is carried in the DNA. And because it is carried in the DNA, pain can mutate through

generations” (Peterson 148). Scholars of Native American trauma studies who contend that the soul wound or “dark nucleus” (Wesley-Esquimaux and Smolewski 23) is transmitted from generation to generation through blood memory and via the familial environment resonate with Sherman Alexie’s thoughts. The somber nature of John Smith from his very childhood can be attributed to this blood memory which is carried in the DNA. There are no clues that whether John assumes a soft-spoken, introvert, lonely qualities after his realisation of the essential difference in the skin colour between his parents and of his own or he is made of those qualities by birth. But his internal conflict of agitation and confusion begins from the day of his realization of the racial difference and as a consequence John is driven by trauma. He slowly and steadily comes under the grip of psychological disorder which is evident by the noises in his head:

He was young, may be ten years old, when it first happened, this noise in his head. He was young may be, may be ten year old, when he heard strange music. It happened as he ran from school across the parking lot, towards the car where Olivia waited for him. He knew this music was written especially for him. Violin, bass guitar, piano, harmonica, drums. (*IK* 23)

As John grows from boyhood to adulthood his psychological discomforts too increases in dynamics and dimensions. An array of disorders characteristics of historical trauma symptoms sets in. John leaves Olivia and Daniel’s home shortly after high school graduation to become a construction worker. Ever since, reading an article on Mohawk Indian, steel workers who helped build the World Trade Centre, John has disclaimed about working on skyscrapers because he considers it to be the Indian thing to do. John’s mood swings are too drastic. He becomes increasingly withdrawn from his parents as well as the society. Frequently he resides in seclusion of his room with the accompaniment of loud powwow music until morning. Though it is considered at first as “little teenage rebellion”( *IK* 114) it changes into full-scale

wars. Alexie suggests John's loud playing of the music might be that, "he could not hear himself thinking about his mysterious origins" (*IK* 114). It is symptomatic of repetitive trauma to amplify and generalize the physiological symptoms of PTSD. Chronically traumatized people are "hyper vigilant, anxious and agitated without any recognizable baseline state of calm or comfort" (qtd. by Herman 380).

John fragmented and tortured from within due to repeated traumatization, is engulfed by drastic mood swings. Once, John in his twenty, strongly imagines himself to be pregnant and forces himself to throw up every morning in order to make others believe his pregnancy. John gets himself prepared for the delivery with all birth supportive arrangements on the delivery day he has been waiting for the baby. "He watched the digital clock, 7:51, 7:52, 7:53. But the baby would not come John felt his stomach, wished for labour pain, and heard the music growing louder and louder" (*IK* 98). Though John is terribly disappointed by the futile labour, he comes to term with reality and understands he has never been pregnant.

John's sense of suspicion exceeds all boundaries to the extent that he is scared of consuming the food and pills brought by Olivia and Daniel Smith to his apartment on their usual visits, which John dislikes and avoids. He could not make out between so many different pairs of Olivia and Daniel Smith in his imaginations. When they plead John to open his apartment door, he is not sure of which Olivia and Daniel came knocking at his door:

He believed five different sets of Olivias and Daniels came to visit him and he suspected there were many others, just waiting for him to weaken. One set of parents paid his rent thought John had plenty of money and he had come to fear them most. They threatened him to with words like "group home" and "medication". (*IK* 74)

Apart from Marie Polatkin a Spokane Indian, who is a student of the University of Washington and Spokane Indian Jesuit priest Father Duncan. John's trust worthy friends are the two black men Paul and Paul Too of the donuts shop

where John Smith frequently visits early in the morning at two. He sits in his customary chair on Paul Too's donuts shop because:

... strange chairs were dangerous for him. They shifted shape, became unrecognizable. Once he learned to trust a chair it stayed a chair.

People worked that way, too. If John learned to trust somebody like Paul and Paul Too in the donut shop, then those people became chairs, Comfortable, predictable. A safe chair and safe people were the most valuable things in the world. (*IK 303*)

John waits till Paul Too consumes the food to testify that the food is not poisonous. John's range of suspicion exceeds the limit that he is even suspicious of what he himself considers to be comfortable.

Along the years, the sound inside John's head has grown and it is at times the voice of Father Duncan, at times the noise of the crowd and at times the sound of the music of band of instruments. The heat and noise in his head grows loud and painful. At first he is able to control his sudden outburst of impulses, fearing others would notice him but as years move by John starts talking to himself. Already shy and scared John withdraws from his family and his social milieu and dissociates himself by totally stopping to talk and staying silent for a couple of weeks at a stretch at times.

John often fills his void by indulging in imagination about his birth mother and his life in reservation. In those imaginations John leads a Utopian life where everything is perfect. He is surrounded by his mother, uncles, aunts, cousins and grandparents. His reservation life is filled with love and security of his mother and his extended family members who live in the same house. There is plenty of food at dinner along with plenty of stories by his grandparents and other family members. John imagines himself to be an ideal son of his mother and he has grown into a handsome man, tall and strong. Above all he is smart and generous, good to children and the tribal elders. He often visits the reservation home for the aged along with his mother who drives the tribal lunch van that delivers meals to the elders. John

accompanies her and by this way they both learned to speak the tribal language.

John's mother is "terrified of the life that awaits him in the white world" (*IK* 288).

John, driven by fantasy and imagination, "often visited reservations searching for his mother, answers, some kind of family" (*IK* 126). His frequent visits to many reservations could not fetch him any result but contributes to his growing frustration. John's identity crisis stems from his internalisation of the Indian stereotypes as well as due to being an Indian without definitive tribal identity in a predominantly white society. Unable to resolve his sense of rootlessness, John is traumatized from a very early age.

His unresolved grief fuels immense and terrific rage that he himself confesses to Father Phil:

All the anger in the world has come to my house. It's there in my closet. In my refrigerator, in the water, in the sheets. It's in my clothes. Can you smell it? I can never run away from it. It's in my hair. I can feel it between my teeth. Can you taste it? I hear it all the time, all the time the anger is talking to me. It's the devil. I'm the devil. If I could I'd crawl into a hole if I knew God was in there. Where's the hole? (*IK* 200)

The profundity of John's rage provokes him to decide that he needs "to kill a white man" (*IK* 25) in order to redress everything that has gone wrong. John believes that "White people no longer feared Indians. Somehow, near the end of the twentieth century, Indians had become invisible, docile" (*IK* 30). John wanted to change that. "He wanted to see fear in every pair of blue eyes" (*IK* 30). Prompted by such a desire he imagines holding his boss, a construction foreman, over the edge of the last skyscraper in Seattle. "He would hold unto the foreman as long as possible and stare down into these terrified blue eyes. Then he'd let him fall" (*IK* 25). Ironically at the end of the novel it is John who ends up falling from the skyscraper. His internalised rage and disparity ends up in his suicide.

It is noteworthy that John's inability to fulfil the warrior or savage Indian stereotype by killing a white man is in a way a further proof of unachievable authenticity, but at the same time, it can also be considered yet another proof of achieving the authentic, in the sense, a statement of character, that re-enacts Father Duncan's earlier views that Indians "didn't have the heart" (*IK* 14) to kill all the white people while the white people killed most of the Indians.

John's unquenchable rage to kill a white man, his mysterious behaviors and his appearance of a cinematic warrior, helps to identify him as a potential suspect as the Indian killer. Though, John is not the Indian killer, sought after in the story for murdering a series of white Seattle men and kidnapping a white kid. Though, John is violently tormented by his internal drastic mood swings, he never projects his internal turmoil upon others in the form of violence, both physically and verbally. Throughout the novel, though he is provoked by racist arrogance at many instances in Seattle by white characters, John never enters into the realm of violence. On the contrary he is taken aback withdraws himself away from such situations. Alexie portrays John scared, withdrawn and harmless like a lost child in a strange world. There are false clues that construct parallels between the killer and John. For example, when Alexie describes, "The Killer saw the fear in the white man's blue eyes. The man's fear inspired the Killer's confidence" (*IK* 52). It clearly coincides with John Smith's burning desire to see fear in blue eyes. It is obvious from Alexie's description of the Indian killer that such a character cannot be singularly defined and therefore there are striking parallels between the traits and activities of the Indian killer with those of the novel's main characters apart from John Smith – Marrie Polatkin, Reggie and Jack Wilson. In the novel, Alexie uses the genderless pronoun "it" to refer to the Indian killer in the chapter "Testimony" through the mouth of Mark, the little white boy who is the only person, who has seen the Indian killer. Such a description of the killer helps in providing multiple imaginary forms to the killer which can be equated to an inexpressible, ineffable form to the pain and rage felt by Alexie's Indian characters as

individuals. Thus, the killer can also be considered as an incarnation of a collective trauma that is larger than the share of any individual. Unlike John, the Indian killer externalises his pain that turns out to be a series of grotesque and gruesome murders – stabbing and scalping, and devouring of white men’s heart.

Nancy Van Styvendale accentuates that, “The very name, which can be read as either “killer of Indians” (like Custer, the most notorious “Indian killer”) or “killer Indian” or both, involves the inter implication of colonial genocide and Native vengeance, and suggests that this character encompasses a history larger than its individual parts” (Styvendale 352). Alexie has created John Smith and the Indian killer in order to illustrate the traumatic historical conditions that are inclusive of a collective intergenerational anger. Alexie in an interview with Tomson Highway explains the purpose of creating the character of John Smith:

I’ve met a lot of people like him “lost birds” – Indians adopted out by non-Indian families – we call them lost birds. One of my cousins was adopted out. I wanted to write a book about a character like that to get this out into the public. The Indian Child Welfare Act in the States in 1974 prevented such adoptions. The social problem and dysfunction of these Indians adopted out are tremendous. Their suicide rates are off the chart, their drug and alcohol abuse rates are off the chart. (Peterson 28)

The removal and relocation of indigenous children by white colonizers, generally referred to as the stolen generation is considered as a greatest injustice committed against the indigenous population in settler controlled states. Hollinger in his article “Beyond the Best Interests of the Tribe: The Indian Welfare Act and the Adoption of Indian Children”, states that the implementation of ICW Act recognizes the theft, removal and relocation of Indian children from their communities as a neocolonial assault on the “most valuable natural resources”(qtd. by Styvendale 350) of Native communities says Hollinger. Alexie has carved out John to be the perfect

paradigm of such relocated children whose rootlessness results in psychological trauma. In an interview with Tomson Highway, Alexie remarks that John “Gently goes mad during the course of the book” (Peterson 28). John’s apparent schizophrenia can be considered as a metaphor for the fragmented and tortured psyche inculcated by deracination. Van Stevendale aptly refers to Sam Durant’s ideology that the immoderate grief of John Smith “needs to be recognized as a precisely proportionate response to history, a way of bearing witness to losses that exceed the proportions of the individual subject” (qtd. by Styvendale 354). In *Indian Killer*, the traumatic event of adopting out of Native children can be seen as material incarnation of a repetitive trauma that takes place throughout history in multiple historical times instead of being an event that has taken place once in a fixed historical time.

John, the protagonist of *Indian Killer* who is adopted into white family is born in late 1960. The adoption of Indian children into white families has begun in mid-twentieth century from 1940’s and reached “a high point in the 1950’s and 1960’s declining in the 1970’s when Indian and Black organizations began to attack the practice”(qtd. by James 180). This clearly indicates that the trauma of adopting Native children in the name of assimilation is not a single event that confines to a clearly definable time period of the past which defies the idea that event is singular and chronologically bound.

In *Indian Killer*, a long history of removal and relocation in a more general sense and adoption of Native children into white families in particular, haunts and devastates John Smith’s life. John’s entire life is propelled by his search for something essential that is grabbed away from him and which he tries to seek through his frequent visits to various reservations, his birth mother and family and answers for many incongruities in reality. With all the available knowledge of the historic conditions of the Native communities, nothing prevents us from concluding that John’s traumatic pain is the symptom of a larger historical loss as well as its contemporary expression than considering it as individual psychological trauma.

*The Absolute True Diary of a Part Time Indian* is a narrative of trauma that bears witness to American Indian history and experience and seeks witnesses to the characters ongoing suffering. Arnold, the fourteen years old Spokane reservation dweller narrates the excruciating pain of growing up in an American reservation that is located approximately millions of miles away from importance and happiness. It is “sad, sad, sad reservation” (*ATDPI* 43) filled with drunkards and drug addicts, whose “fathers and mothers have given up too, and their grandparents given up their grandparents before them” (*ATDPI* 42).

Arnold, a young boy born with a hydrocephalus head and many physical abnormalities, constructs a narrative that heals through the “talking cure” (Radstone 20) that is the foundation of the psychoanalysis. Alexie makes the readers become the witness to Junior’s recovery, establishing a relationship that is necessary for the testimony of trauma to exist.

Junior draws cartoons because he believes “words are too unpredictable” (*ATDPI* 5). His cartoons are understandable to everyone unlike his speech that is characterized by stutters and lisp which he considers as life threatening speech impediment, which hampers his communication between him and others. Arnold is clever enough to find a means of escape from a desperate reservation by becoming an artist, in order to become rich and famous. Young Junior’s desire to become rich and famous cannot be considered similar to the ambition of a young boy of a normal community, because Junior’s desperate urge has to be understood as the “desire for respect and understanding” and “as a direct expression of disenfranchised grief –the sense that no one recognizes or cares about the suffering of native people” (Johnson 231). When Junior is absolutely depressed, at the murder of his pet dog by his father, he wants to vanish away forever, but Rowdy clearly articulates that “It’s not like anybody’s going to notice, if you go away” (*ATDPI* 15). Arnold accepts “I am a zero in the rez and if you subtract zero from zero you still have zero. So what is the point

of subtracting when the answer is always the same?" (*ATDPI* 16). The above reflection of young Arnold Spirits Jr. underscores the idea that lives of the Natives have lost its due importance in their colonized world. Moreover, young Arnold considers the world to be series of broken dams and floods and his cartoons are tiny lifeboats that save his life. To see the world as series of natural and human made disasters very well captures the wounding of the psyche of the Native communities and as a result "Harmony has become discord and the community's unconscious perception was that the world was unfriendly and hostile" (qtd. in "Trauma of History" 64).

The Native American's soul wound is not just because of their struggle to retain their land, lives and culture, but their grief and rage that result from their awareness of the ongoing reality of the colonisation and the dominant culture's denial of it. In the novel *Junior* narrates the unfulfilled dreams of his parents, who are capable of successfully stabling themselves in the larger world. His mother, if given a chance would have pursued her collegiate education and his father would have been a musician. Arnold is fully aware of his condition as a colonized, who is denied of choices, chances and dreams. The reservation Indian is an utter hopeless person, who does not have any right for a dignified survival.

Arnold describes the community's despondency and inexorability in his theory of Indian poverty, which believes to be eternal. He believes that right from his parents to all the way back to the very first Indian to be poor and one cannot escape Indian poverty, because according to *Junior*, God created Indians as poor. As a consequence of adverse experience his appraisal of being a poor Indian is:

You start believing that you are poor because you are stupid and ugly.  
And then you start believing you are stupid and ugly because you are  
Indian. And because you are Indian you start believing you are

destined to be poor. It is an ugly circle and there is nothing you can do about it. (*ATDPI* 13)

Adverse childhood experiences lead to “poor appraisals... Overtime children may internalize the belief that these adverse events are stable, have negative consequences and are attributable to aspect of themselves” (Bombay et al. 17-18).

Chronic and repeated adverse childhood experiences are common to the young inhabitants of Alexie’s Spokane reservation. Because nothing has changed for the past 500 years and as a consequence generation after generations they undergo adverse childhood conditions and imbibe all negative attitudes towards life which compounds the situation as such because of intergenerational trauma.

For Native Americans historical trauma is not merely a matter of painful legacies but their suffering is ongoing and maintained by contemporary forms of colonialism, including the Indian education system that Alexie adeptly brings through his characters with utmost responsibility. Junior comes to face colonialism, both historical and ongoing, through geometry teacher Mr. P. After Arnold is suspended from school Mr. P confesses to Junior: “The only thing you kids are being taught is how to give up” (*ATDPI* 42). Mr. P. tells Junior, “We were supposed to kill the Indian to save the child ... We were supposed to make you give up being Indian, your songs and stories and language and dancing. Everything. We were trying to kill Indian culture” (*ATDPI* 35). Mr. P. is invoking the educational philosophy of Richard Pratt, founder of Carlisle Indian School, who believed assimilation could only happen with the destruction of Indian culture.

Junior is saddened and angered at seeing the age old geometry book which bears the maiden name of his mother and his rage and frustration finds no bounds. It hits him with the force of nuclear bomb and he asks “What do you do when the world has declared nuclear war on you?” (*ATDPI* 31). Junior, at this very point of his life realizes the ongoing colonialism denies quality education to the colonized, which

emancipate them. He comes to terms with a prime aspect of the historical trauma that has befallen his tribe – the Residential Boarding Schools. The educational policies adapted out to Indians on the reservations are modelled on the Indian boarding schools.

Mr. P advises Junior to take his hope and to go to white society in order to “multiply hope by hope” (*ATDPI* 43). His maths teacher assures that he is to find more and more hope the “farther and farther” he walks away from the desolate reservation. ““If you stay in this rez’ Mr.P said ‘they are going to kill you. You can fight us forever’” (*ATDPI* 43).

While Mr. P adds that “All Indians should get smashed in the face too” (*ATDPI* 42), he warns that the treat to Junior resides not only in the ongoing colonisation of the Native peoples but in Junior’s own community too that is unwilling to come out of the reservation of its mind. Tammy Wahpeconiah asserts that, “The horrors historically perpetrated on the Spokane are now perpetrated by the Spokane. This residue of destruction is the intergenerational phantom re-emerging in what seems to be an inescapable pattern of endless repetition” (47). Junior, though a young adult realizes the burden that he is destined to carry the five hundred years of historical trauma of his community. It is the pain and despair of the historical trauma that is all pervasive in his reservation as well as in the mind and body of his people for which he himself stands a best example with unusual number of teeth, hydrocephalus head. Junior understands why his father, sister and the whole family is depressed.

Junior, along with very few, stands apart from the rest of his community because he decides not to give up in the fight of intergenerational trauma. Junior, who is modelled after Alexie himself, is one of the few characters of Alexie who understand the conspiracy of both the wound and the ongoing colonisation of their community. Though not very much optimistic of the result of his fight, he determines to take up the fight and so Junior stands in sharp contrast to majority of Alexie’s heroes who give up in their life.

Junior tries to escape out of his reservation death trap where the mechanism is devised to produce eternal failures generation after generation. He escapes to Reardon, the all-white school that two miles away from rez, a not too far of destination of hope from pandemonium of a rez. Junior on his journey to Reardon finds friendship and acceptance from people who are a “little bit racist” and yet “pretty dam amazing” (*ATDPI* 129), but his initial experience is one that of mimic and representation of the ongoing domestic colonisation of Native people. On the very first day junior is the object of a racist and contemptuous gaze by his fellow Reardan. “Those white kids could not believe their eyes. They stared at me like I was, a Bigfoot or a UFO. What was I doing at Reardon, whose mascot was an Indian, thereby making me the only other Indian in town” (*ATDPI* 56). Pennilope “a movie star pretty” (*ATDPI* 61) white classmate of Junior is both surprised and finds him funny because of his sing song reservation accent. He becomes the target of racist insults in the name of jokes and called by racist nicknames like ‘Chief’ and ‘Tonto’. Junior feels “worthless and stupid” (*ATDPI* 58) amidst his white classmates. Junior’s predicament is that he wakes up on the reservation as an Indian and “somewhere on the road to Reardon” (*ATDPI* 83) he becomes something less than Indian. The young boy Junior on the pursuit of his redemption encounters the effects of domestic colonisation that reduces the Native community to stereotypes and vanishing Indian who exists no longer in the national consciousness except as an object of disgrace and disdain.

Alexie’s stories and novels of the Spokane Indian reservation provide him context for staging multiple historical trauma source that consistently erode the life world of the Spoken community. The Spokane reservation is a place ravaged by racism poverty, colonialism despair as well as alcoholism and substance abuse. Alcohol, which has been cleverly introduced by the colonizers to weaken the Native societies, has been adopted by the Native as a self-medication for the pain of losing their language, land and culture. In “A conceptual Model of Historical Trauma”

Sotero states that, “the symptom of historical trauma are the maladaptive social and behavioural patterns that were created in response to the trauma experience, absorbed into the culture and transmitted as learned behavioural from generation to generation” (96).

Alcohol forms the worst kind of maladaptive behaviour that the Spokane community of Alexie has taken refuge to as an ultimate healing panacea for their collective trauma. But the consequences are pathetic and add on as an additional stressor to the prevailing intergenerational trauma. Junior in the novel loses his sister and her husband in a trailer fire after heavy consumption of alcohol. He also loses his grandmother Etta, a respected grandlady of the community who has never drunk a drop in her lifetime. At short intervals, Junior loses his grandmother, uncle Eugene and his sister and the reason behind all these deaths is alcohol (*ATDPI* 200). Arnold Jr. states that “About 90 percent of the deaths have been because of alcohol” (*ATDPI* 200) and this point is highly valid because “compared to the U.S. average, American Indians are 70% more likely to die from alcoholism” (Sotero 101). Arnold Jr.’s helplessness and frustration in his community’s alcohol addiction and alcohol related death make him to draw a comparison between the number of funerals attended by him and his white friends in Rearden: “All my white friends can count their deaths on one hand. I can count my fingers, toes, arms, legs, eye, ears, nose, penis, butt cheeks and nipples and still not get close to my deaths” (*ATDPI* 200). Junior’s excruciating pain and tears are not only for the death of his family members, but he is crying for his tribe, too. He cries because he knows “five or ten or fifteen more Spokane would die during the next year and that most of them would die because of booze” (*ATDPI* 216). He could not imagine them ending up their lives in alcohol. He wants them to sober up and to be stronger from within, in order to fight their mind out of self-imposed colonisation and to live their life.

Arnold awakened by Mr. P and his association with his Rearden community grows into maturity to identify alcohol and hopelessness as the plague affecting his

tribe and reservation and believes conscious working through this trauma and interaction with people who are not burdened by these afflictions will allow him to create a better life for himself. “One of the strongest messages in *The Diary* soul wound in relation to healing the soul wound comes from Arnold’s dying grandmother who utters the word “forgive him” after being hit and fatally injured by a drunk driver” (Johnson 235). The idea of forgiveness has a great impact in the thought pattern of Junior who starts to understand the inevitability of empathy and compassion, and thinks about being forgiven by his tribe for leaving them, and he himself hopes to forgive himself for leaving his community. Jan Johnson in the concluding part of his article recalls West’s black Nihilism:

Nihilism is . . . the lived experience of coping with a life of horrifying meaningless, hopelessness and (most important) lovelessness. The frightening result is a numbing detachment from others and a self-destructive disposition towards the world. Life without meaning, hope and love breeds a cold hearted mean spirited outlook that destroys both the individual and others. (qtd. in “Healing the Soul Wound” 234)

The author believes that the principle of nihilism would work well with the Native American communities haunted by soulwound. Alexie mediates the message through his *The Diary*. “Any disease of the soul must be conquered by a turning of one’s soul. This turning is done through one’s own affirmation of one’s worth – an affirmation fuelled by the concern of others” (qtd. by Johnson 235).

One can notice a major marked evolution of Alexie as a writer from youth to maturity with his shift from his earlier view of life in reservation has been Survival = anger x imagination in his first collection of short stories, *The Lone Ranger and Toto Fistfight in Heaven*. He has grown out “from a singular focus on self and individual ethnicity to a multifaceted, compassionate and often sharply comedic exploration of human nature building from that ethnic focus” (Wilson 67).

Historical trauma disrupts adaptive social and cultural patterns and transforms them into maladaptive ones. These maladaptive social behaviours manifest themselves in symptoms are “Higher levels of depression, withdrawal, various forms of anxiety, suicidal ideation and behaviour, substance abuse, anger, violence, guilt behaviour and and adopting a victim identity” (Denham 397).

Most of these maladaptive behavioural symptoms are very common to Alexie’s Spokane community and each of his short stories and novels capture the pain of historical trauma that is deeply ingrained in their lives. The trauma of loss of people, land, language, religion and culture is not acknowledged by the dominant culture and there is no intervention in any form to reduce their pain. Their disenfranchised grief takes so many forms either internalised or externalized.

The unresolved grief of the Spokane community manifests itself as violence when externalized. The short story “Every Little Hurricane” stands as a perfect witness to the unappeased anger and the resultant violence that surfaces at random and spontaneous, Victor the nine-year-old boy stands witness to the community’s New Year’s Eve party that suddenly changes into a battle field. Victor is knocked out of his bed by the sound and fury of the violent encounter between his uncle Adolph and Arnold, upstairs, from the party. While the two Indians raged across each other violently attacking each other, nobody from the party moved to change the situation. Their violent encounter produces intense fear and helplessness in Victor and he runs anxiously to watch the source of the sound. This violent encounter reminds him of the huge Hurricane violently uproots everything on its way.

The noise of yelling, grappling and violent punches suddenly vanishes as it appeared, without warning. “But the storm that has caused their momentary anger had not died” (*LRTFH* 8). The wild rage in the psyche of the community surfaces up in the party. Each one is reminded of their own personal hurricane. There are endless painful memories in each one of them that has all the potential for a sudden outbreak

of hurricane that can uproot entire cities. Victor's father is reminded of his father being spat by a white; his mother is reminded of the pain of a forced sterilization by the Indian Health Service:

Other Indians at the party remembered their own pain. This pain grew, expanded. One person lost her temper when she accidentally brushed the skin of another. The forecast was not good. Indians continued to drink, harder and harder, as if anticipating. There's a fifty percent chance of torrential rain, blizzard like condition, seismic activity. Then there's sixty percent chance, then seventy, eighty. (*LRTFH 8*)

The unresolved grief of violating their human rights from the time of colonization across generations form a shared collective and cumulative experience of the community which results in rage and violence.

Victor's position in "Every Little Hurricane" demands our attention because of his terrific fear and helplessness as a little boy of nine years. Victor has not just been knocked from his bed by the loud noise from the party but he is knocked "from his latest nightmare" (*LRTFH 1*). The narrator says Victor's dreams at times become nightmares and as well his "everyday realities" (*LRTFH 6*) are other nightmares. Victor's reaction to the loud music and outburst of fury and violence is a terrific fear accompanied by intense pain. Victor helplessly runs to find the reason for the sudden voice and noise. When he finds his uncles slugging each other and making guttural noises he is disappointed "He squeezed his hands into fists and pressed his face tightly against the glass" (*LRTFH 3*), which reveals his pain and helplessness. It is not new to Victor to watch such violent activities: "They always fought. Had been fighting since the very beginning" (*LRTFH 2*). Atkinson puts forth her views on family violence:

The endemic nature of family violence over a number of generations has resulted in a situation 'where violent behaviours become the norm in families where there has been cumulative intergenerational impact

of trauma on trauma on trauma, expressing themselves in present generations as violence on self and others'. (Atkinson et al. 139)

The ideology is very well applicable to a larger context of a community to understand the prevalence of violence. Alexie often times brings to the forefront the unintentional and sudden outburst of as well as intentional violence of his intergenerationally traumatised community.

The reservation life is considered monotonous and uneventful, but the boredom ends when:

...one man would eventually pull a pistol from a secret place and shoot another man in the face, or before a group of women would drag another woman out of her house and beat her left eye clean out of her skull. After that first act of violence rival families would issue calls for revenge and organize the retaliatory beating. Afterwards, three or four people would wash the blood from their hands and hide in the hills...

*(Blasphemy 187)*

This succinctly captures the violence and rage that are part of Native Americans' life which is an everyday affairs. For the little boy Victor, such acts of violence are "one of his other nightmares, in his everyday reality..." (*LRTFH 6*). In every generation the children are exposed to violence at a very early age and at frequent intervals as they grow into adulthood. Moreover, the Native American living conditions remain the same ever since their colonization. And therefore every generation is exposed to such violence from their childhood and they are victims of childhood trauma, while they also acquire their community's maladaptive social behaviours and its learned helplessness.

The most noticeable thing about Victor is that he is not a normal child of his age but he is often affected by nightmares, his everyday life is a nightmare and at times his dreams turn into nightmare. He is constantly under the grip of fear because,

“There was so much that Victor feared so much his intense imagination created” (*LRTFH* 7). He is feared of drowning in rain waters; falling from the top of slides and an appearance of a sudden whirlpool beneath him. These facts states that Victor is already under the spell of intergenerational trauma of his community and also exposed to alcohol, violence and poverty the other traumas of his community. The soul wound never heals but becomes ever cumulative and makes life more and more traumatic even for the child like Victor.

Victor’s condition has to be understood as the metaphor for childhood conditions of the Native community ever since their colonization. Victor’s friends: Thomas and Junior Arnold of *The Diary*, his friends Rowdy, Lester, Adrian and so many heroes of Alexie and their father and their father’s father down the generation must have been under similar pathetic condition. Undoubtedly they are victims of childhood trauma of multiple stressors.

Van der Kolk sums up the destructive effects of experiencing trauma in childhood that includes unchecked aggression, adolescent suicide, alcoholism and other substance misuse etc. Alexie’s heroes possess many of these negative variables which can be considered as their collective identity. Enactment of violence and aggression is seen from very young age in these heroes. In “This Is What It Means To Say Phoenix, Arizona”, we find such violence between Victor and his close friend Thomas. Victor is drunk and beats Thomas for no reason, “The beating might have gone on until Thomas was dead if Norma Many Horses hadn’t come along and stopped it” (*LRTFH* 65).

In *The Diary* Arnold who is consider a “retard” because of his hydrocephalus head and stutter and lisp is a pathetic victim of violence of his classmates, and friends. He is beaten up badly and his head is stuffed into the toilet. He is often bullied by his playmates in the reservation. Arnold says “I belong to the Black-Eye-of-the-Month Club” (*ATDPI* 4). Similarly, the young school boy “Junior of Indian Education”

narrates his classmates bullying him by burying him in the snow until he could not breathe. He recollects “my Indian name was Junior Falls Down. Sometimes it was Bloody Nose or steal-His-lunch” (*LRTFH* 172).

It is not only those children of the same age involved in violence along with their friends but we find thirty years old Andrus brothers violently attacking already physically damaged Arnold Junior in *The Diary* for no reason. Arnold narrates, “What kind of men beat up a fourteen-year-old boy? Major-league assholes” (*ATDPL* 21). Arnold speaks of the eleven “Unofficial and Unwritten Spoken Indian Rules of Fisticuffs” (*ATDPI* 21) that are followed by all the members of the rez.

Historical trauma expert Atkinson affirms the link between being a victim of childhood trauma and being the perpetrator of higher level of violence in adulthood. This construct reminds us of Reggie Polatkin a half Indian who is the son of Bird Lawerance, a white man. He is traumatized from his childhood both physically and emotionally. He is brutally brainwashed by his father to acquire white values and to disown anything that is Native. Reggie’s childhood can be compared to the boarding school experience which has emotionally crippled Reggie and turned him into a greatest abuser. He carries out the most brutal attacks against the whites along with his friends Ty and Harley.

The Indian killer, a masked villain of the novel *Indian Killer*, who carries out the most grotesque and gruesome violence – scalping, murdering and eating a white man’s heart – that can be considered as the epitome of Natives’ rage that compels us to consider him to be the incarnation, of five centuries of abuses, who re-enacts the original violence.

One poignant and violent episodes of trauma is seen in the life of Junior, a drug dealer and a fancy dancer in “Cry Cry Cry”. Junior, who starts fancy dancing at the age of twenty-five, also sells drugs and therefore imprisoned. But his experience

in jail, due to abuse and rape by the racially divided prison inmates leaves a deep scare in his psyche. It is a proved fact in the fields of psychology that the abused becomes the abuser. Junior, who is traumatised by his prison experience turns violent and becomes an abuser of his girlfriend Jeri, a white woman who works as a nurse in Indian Health Service clinic.

When Jerry ends her relationship with Junior and starts an affair with Dr. Bob, Junior brutally murders Dr. Bob by distorting his body. The narrator, a friend of Junior feels, “there was some battered train track stretching between Juniors torture in prison and that violation of Dr. Bob’s body” (*Blasphemy* 11). Alexie makes use of the life of Junior to underscore the havoc of colonization in the lives of the colonised that has become a strong source of trauma and it is enacted in multiple contexts in multiple forms in multiple times across history and therefore ever cumulative and relentless. The brutal violence of Junior reveals, “It was hatred and revenge not love. Maybe at that point, all Junior could see was the Aryan who’d raped him a thousand times. May be Junior could only see the white lightning of colonialism” (*Blasphemy* 11).

One main characteristic of Alexie’s stories is the “missing father”. Alexie’s fathers are usually drunkards, randomly employed blue collar employees who are inefficient family heads and unreliable fathers and some are worst fathers. They often go on binge drinking leaving behind their family and they fail to support their family economically as well as emotionally. “Victor watched his father cry huge, gasping tears. Indian tears” (*LRTFH* 5), because of his father’s inability to support his family on Christmas occasion. Victor the small boy waits every nights hoping for his father to turn up at late night in “Because My Father Always said He Was The Only Indian Who Saw Jimi Hendrix Play “The Star Spangled Banner” At Woodstock”. The small boy Victor recollects “Then on the night I missed my father most, when I lay in bed

and cried, with the photography of him... I imagined his motorcycle pulling up outside. I knew I was dreaming it all but let it be real for a moment” (*LRTFH* 35).

The hero of “War Dances” who is a man in his middle ages, a father of two sons recollects his experience with his sick father during his last few days in hospital. The narrator feels “I miss him, the drunk bastard. I would always feel closest to the man who had most disappointed me” (*Blasphemy* 74). These fathers are of the kind that they are not harsh or violent in their behaviours, they are loving father but because of their addiction to alcohol, a self-medication for their own wounds they often do not return home but go on a legendary drinking binge for weeks together. Their children go in search of their missing father as in the case of Arnold’s father. Johnson in his article “Healing the Soul Wound” explains that the fathers of Alexie do not have the strength or confidence to raise their sons and perhaps, they fear that they will inflict the same abuse on their children that they received either from their boarding school educated fathers or directly through boarding schools.

Alexie’s stories host the other kind of fathers too who inflict the abuse and neglect on their children that they received in their childhood. They are always wild and cruel to their children as the case of Rowdy’s father in *The Dairy* and the father of the narrator of the short stories “Scare”. In *The Dairy* Rowdy’s father is portrayed as indespicable and violent. Arnold stands witness to Rowdy’s father’s atrocities and inhuman behaviours. “His father is drinking hard and throwing hard punches, so Rowdy and his mother are always walking around with bruised and bloody faces” (*The Dairy* 16). At one instance a bandage in Rowdy’s face reveal that his father got wild because he thought his ears were poor to listen and so he tried to make his ear a little bigger. All these brutal attitudes towards a kid reveal the tough life of a kid who misses love and safety of his own house and parents. He often spends life with Arnold’s family who considers him “a family member, an extra brother and son” (*ATDPI* 17).

The violence that has become part of Rowdy's life makes him an abnormal kid who is too tough for expressing emotions though he is not a zombie. Arnold and Rowdy are the best friends and are emotional support to each other. They are born on the same day while Arnold is born "all broken and twisted while Rowdy is born "mad" (*ATDPI17*).

Rowdy fought everybody,

He fought boys and girls,

Men and women.

He fought stray dogs

Hell, he fought the weather

He'd throw wild punches at rain. (*ATDPI18*)

From his very young age he is full of rage and pain. He feels "a fake life inside a cartoon is a lot better than his real life" (*ATDPI 23*).

The hero of "Scars" is another victim of childhood to his father's cruelty and brutal treatment. He is filled with scars both physically and mentally. Mike's "right ear is cauliflowered like a boxer's" (*Blasphemy 23*), just for dropping an orange juice at the age of seven by his father. Mike recalls, "Dad kept hitting the same ear,... He kept hitting me whenever he was pissed. And he was pissed all the time. Hit me may be fifty times over the years" (*Blasphemy 23*). The young man Mike who has been suffering from his father's brutality since childhood attacks him when he replays his brutality. Mike ends up slaughtering his father. He is imprisoned for man's laughter but released early for his good behaviour. He gets his graduation in education but unable to fulfil his dream of becoming a teacher. He laments, "But no way in hell they'll let an ex-con teach white kids so I moved back to rez" (*Blasphemy 24*). The mothers of Rowdy and Mike are withdrawn and detached, another symptom of

traumatized victims who are unable to be source of support and love for their children amidst pain and violence.

The excruciatingly painful life of Rowdy and Mike reveal their father's pent up and unsolved rage and grief of their boarding school life. Indian children who attended boarding schools were subjected to starvation, incarceration, physical and sexual abuse and prolonged separation from their families and even death. Mrs. Brave Heart explains:

As many Native people were raised in boarding schools, the traditional roles and ways of parenting by both Native men and woman were lost. The attitude and norms, which then sprang up in parenting styles, such as harsh physical punishments, emotional abandonment, lack of parental involvement and insensitivity to children's need added to imbalance in the family. As generations continued with these ways of parenting the trauma was passed down until many believes it has become a cycle of despair and desperation. (qtd. by Esquimaux and Smolewski 65)

This irreparable blow to the Native community is rightly regarded as a big tear in the social fabric of the community by Native scholars. This disaster at once reminds us of what Jeffery C. Alexander calls as cultural trauma. He defines: "Cultural trauma occurs when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways" (1). The renowned neurobiologist Van der Kolk observes the consequence of children facing acute trauma in their childhood as "...childhood trauma violated a child's sense of safety and trust and reduced their sense of worth, that is established and/or increases their level of emotional distress, shame and grief,

and increases the proportion of destructive behavior in the child's normal repertoire” (qtd. by Atkinson 136).

Alexie's heroes exactly reflect Van der Kolk's observation of negative variables. Their optimism, self-worth and perseverance are also damaged by the prevailing poor living conditions, uncertain future and their subordination to the white world. The legacy of intergenerational trauma along with their socio-cultural conditions often keeps them depressed. Arnold of *The Diary* clearly states that his father, sister and the “whole family to be depressed” (*ATDPI* 40). Since they are depressed, a slightest blow defeats them, and no one ever fights to achieve their dreams. The entire community is depressed without hope. In the short story “The Only Traffic Signal on the Reservation Does Not Flash Red Anymore”, Victor recalls how he gave up the dream of becoming a basketball player. A first aid manual that contains horrible pictures of injuries weakens the soul of the entire basketball team. Victor recalls, while I looked at those close ups of death and destruction, I lost ... I missed every spot I took. I missed everything” (*LRTFH* 47).

The young Victor in “Indian Education” states the reason for the death of Wally Jim who commits suicide by dashing against a pine tree. The accident has not been due to alcohol and there is no reason for him to commit suicide since he is well settled in life. The boy says: “...but when we look in the mirror, see the history of our tribe in our eyes, taste failure in tap water and shake with old tears, we understand completely. Believe me, everything looks like a nose if your stare at it long enough” (*LRTFH* 178). At times such acute depression leads to suicide while life becomes meaningless amidst the losses of so many identities. The suicide attempt of Victor and Adrian for fun in “The Only Traffic Signal on the Reservation Does Not Flash Red Anymore” is another example of depression. An inherent sense of suicide makes them to act out their inner wish atleast in the form of a game. Holding a pistol to his temple Victor feels the urge to be drunk enough to pull the trigger, because, it is impossible

to be optimistic on a reservation with so many losses and ongoing colonial heritage. Arnold, who is carrying the burden of his race, feels “I figured any nightmare would be better than my reality” (*ATDPI*208).

One of the main features of Alexie’s heroes is that they invariably have low self-esteem. Arnold believes that, “he was the loser Indian father, of a looser Indian son living in a world built for winners” (*ATDPI*55). All of Alexie’s heroes strongly reflect this sentiment, because, the effect of losing their land, language and cultural identity is deeply embedded in their psyche. These historical facts are part of their contemporary identity and hence they often consider themselves as losers. The Indian guy, who provides a blanket to the hero’s father in “War Dances” utters casually, “I am a loser, . . . my whole family is filled with losers” (*Blasphemy* 49). Their general belief is “If God really loved Indians, he would have made us white people” (*Blasphemy* 72).

Arnold a young school boy feels “It sucks to be poor and it sucks to feel that you somehow deserve to be poor. You start believing that you are stupid and ugly because you are Indian. And because you are Indian you start believing you are destined to be poor. It is ugly circle and there is nothing you can do about it” (*ATDPI*13). This kind of attitude occurs when an individual “Perceives that his or her behaviour cannot control events and that no action on his or her part will control the outcomes in future” (Esquimaux and Smolewski 66) and, it is considered as characteristics of people who have endured genocide in all forms. This attitude is labelled as “Learned helplessness” (“Historical Trauma and Aboriginal Healing” 66) by social psychologists says Esquinaux. When the traumatic experience remains an everlasting phenomenon it creates expectations for failure in the future. Eventually, the learned helpless phenomenon becomes instrumental in engraving the trauma in the mental makeup of the people. They are invariably pessimistic in their attitude because of generations of learned helplessness. When the narrator of *The Lone Ranger* says “I

know how all my dreams end anyway” (190) it resonates the deep rooted pessimism of the community. When learned helplessness is internalized it results in decreased self and social esteems says Esquinaux, which is true of Alexie’s heroes.

In the “War Dances” the Doctor warns the hero about the side effects of prednisone which includes, “insomnia, weight gain, night sweats and depression” (*Blasphemy* 64) to which the hero replies that “those side effects might make up most of my personality already” (*Blasphemy* 64). These qualities are the main characteristics of Alexie’s hero who measure their “insomnia by seconds” (*LRTFH* 85) at bed. Nightmares are common and often one nightmare leads to the other and at times they feel their nightmares better than everyday realities.

The maladaptive social behaviour or the coping style that is most prevalent is addiction to alcohol. The alcoholic legacy of the community that has been already dealt in the previous chapter gives a detailed idea of the consequence of the alcohol in the community with respect to individual characters who are both teetotalers and drunkards and its consequence on the entire society. Their addiction has only resulted in exacerbating their traumatic condition and never provides any solution to heal their wounds.

In “Jesus Christ’s Half Brother is Alive and Well in the Spokane Indian Reservation” the narrator’s adopted Indian child feels “the world hurts” (128) and “He says the first thing he wanted after he was born was a short whiskey” (*LRTEH* 128). What else could a better proof for an utterly dissolute condition of the life of a Native American than the statement of a child of six years that is still in its early childhood? A ravaged past, a painful present and a desolate future constitute their life, a product of transgenerational trauma which is a constant reality.

One more notable thing about the Spokane community is that the number of deaths by suicide is very few when compared to death by alcohol – the drunkards

passing out on rail roads, on a pool of rain water and sudden impulsive firing on a drinking buddy over the last drink at a bar and drunken drivers killing others by causing accidents. “Compared to the U. S. average, American Indians are 770% more likely to die from alcoholism,... 280% more likely to die from accidents, 190% more likely to commit suicide...” (qtd. by Sotero 101).

Alcohol is used by the Native community as a self-medication to numb their historical pain. According to Brave Heart, the historically unresolved grief includes “yearning, pining, preoccupation with thoughts of ancestors lost in massacres...” (montana.edu). In her article “Gender Differences in the Historical Trauma Response among the Lakota” she further explains “Survivors of massive trauma often develop identification with the dead in their unresolved grief, sometimes manifested in suicidal behavior” (5).

The Spokane community has great reverence and love for their elders and this quality is often expressed by Alexie’s characters. In *Indian Killer*, John in his imaginary reservation has a great respect and love for his tribal elders, whose service he spends his free time. For John respect and love for elders is the Spokane way of life. Arnold of *The Diary* turns to his grandmother for guidance, when he is confused. Grandmother Etta is an elderly lady whom the tribe respects a lot and at her funeral “two thousand Indians (and a few white folks) sat and stood on the football field” to say “good bye to the greatest Spokane Indian in History” (*ATDPI* 161).

Victor in “The Drug Called Tradition” believes the Big Mom of the Spokane tribe has “much good medicine” and “she may have been the one who created the earth” (*LRTEH* 23). Such sentiments of Alexie’s heroes are the evidence of their great love and respect for their elders. Such sentiment is the proof of their love for their ancestors who have with stood and deceased much of the trauma of genocide and losses. The community believes that their present condition to be much better than the

predicament of their ancestors. Their feeling instils a sense of guilt in the heart of the survivors for not taking part in their sufferings and for enjoying a better life at the cost of their sacrifice. As a mark of loyalty to their ancestors they internalize their ancestral sufferings. “Vitality in own life seen as a betrayal to ancestors who suffered so much” (montana.edu). Arnold’s act of leaving the rez to a white school is considered as a betrayal to their ancestors and this forms the reason for Rowdy to scream in pain. Arnold himself feels guilty of leaving the tribe and hopes his tribe will forgive him one day for leaving them.

Brave Heart opines that survivors of massive trauma often identified with the pain of their ancestors which “sometimes manifested in suicidal behavior” (Gender Differences in the Historical Trauma Response among the Lakota 5) and she also adds that, “Among American Indians, substance abuse is associated with suicide” (6). So as a response to their survivors’ guilt the members of the community take on to alcohol, which is a slow process of suicide than directly committing suicide.

In addition to historical losses, a barrage of socio-economic condition and the ongoing colonization, of racism, stereotyping and marginalization and denial of opportunities, survivor’s guilt also has its equal share in the suicidal maladaptive behaviours.

Alcohol that is considered as a maladaptive symptom of historical trauma. Because of its complete reign over the Spokane community, it is upgraded from the symptom of a social disorder to a trauma by itself promoting and producing so many other forms of social disorders – violence, death, poverty, familial dysfunction and communal dysfunction.

After a close look at the trauma of the Spokane community as depicted in the works of Alexie one can understand the difference between the trauma, as defined by the trauma exponents Cathy Caruth et al. as well as the PTSD of American Psychiatric Association, when compared with the trauma of the Native people. Both

these trauma construct as discussed earlier in the beginning of this chapter are only concerned with the event based, individual oriented, psychological trauma which is chronologically bound. Both, the trauma theory of Cathy Caruth and PTSD do not bother to explain the layers and layers of trauma that has been normalized in the Native American communities that has undergone genocide in all possible arenas.

Though one of the cultural trauma theory exponents Kai Erikson discuss of collective trauma, his focus is only on a single “blow to the basic tissue of social life...” (*Trauma* 187) and his argument does not include the multiple event based trauma of a community that is unique to the Native communities. On the other hand, PTSD fails to address the trauma of genocide and forced assimilation and colonization.

The trauma of the Spokane community is a product of genocide, colonisation, forced assimilation as well as the ongoing political and cultural oppression. Their collective trauma is immeasurably cumulative with multiple source of trauma that which is repeated in multiple context in multiple epochs and it defies our conventional idea that trauma is singularly located in the past. Generally historical trauma is understood “as the subjective experiencing and remembering of events in the mind of an individual or the life of a community, passed from adult to children in cyclic processes...” (qtd. by Atkinson 138).

But from this study, it is clear that Spokane community’s trauma is not just located in the past with its impact in the present but ever impact itself forms another source of trauma and relentlessly produces pain and sufferings. For example, the trauma of relocation in the present context takes the form of adoption of Native children and Native’s relocation to urban areas in search of education and opportunities results in the trauma of alienation and loss of identity. Then trauma of loss of identity results in the trauma of psychological conflict, racial disparities,

violence, suicide and addiction to alcohol which reflects the life of John Smith, Arnold, Victor and many of the heroes of Alexie. So it can be traced that what arises as the symptom of a trauma later forms a source of trauma by itself, and the source of trauma gets multiplied and intensified in every generation. Another apt example to be considered is the effects of boarding school, an eternal source of trauma which has undermined the community's culture and thereby their family system. This trauma produces and perpetuates an endless and repeated trauma of dysfunctional families, domestic violence, poor parenting and substance abuse in subsequent generations.

Their collective and cumulative trauma as well as their symptoms that are equally traumatic have been normalised within the community and has resulted in the emotional and psychological injury that persists to be relentless and external. Their community too fails to be a source of comfort, instead, serves to be a source of excruciating pain, maladaptive behaviours and learned helplessness. To put it in the words of Alexie, trauma is never added to trauma but it multiplies and this has been proved beyond doubt with regard to the lives of the characters of Alexie's Spokane community.

In most of the works of Alexie, we do not find any kind of healing in their lives to reduce their pain except the case of Arnold of *The Diary* who adopts the talking cure to consciously work through his trauma. The U. S. government, the perpetrator of their trauma has never intervened to dress up their soulwound. Alexie reflects the reality of the life of their community in his works and his is not interested in illusionary poetic justice which is never found in their lives. In an interview with Ase Nygren, he affirms:

As for the characters – I make them suffer. I specifically designed them to be suffering. John Smith for instance, there is no redemption, there is no healing, there is no talking cure. For a lot of the characters

there is no cure. All there is, is suffering. The whole point of their live is suffering. The whole point of their identity is suffering... (Peterson 153)

Alexie's characters are not only inheritors of intergeneration trauma and they are also victims of childhood trauma, racial subjugation, poverty and many more right from their childhood. This condition never gets changed in their community and so every generation for the past five centuries is a victim of multiple traumas and trauma types which aggravate their sufferings. In a way Styvendale is right when she says, "As a descriptor of intergenerational trauma of Native communities, the word 'trans historical' thus fails to do justice to the complexity of this trauma" (341).

An in-depth analysis of Alexie's Spokane community brings to the fore that the historical trauma matrix is the predominant factor in reducing the community to a highly dysfunctional and pathetically traumatized state. On the other hand, another important factor that appears throughout Alexie's fictional Spokane community is the resistive quality of the community. Beyond dispute resistance is exhibited by most, but resilience is adopted by very few characters. A complete analysis of both these traits is inevitable to form a homogenous picture of the community. Particularly, the resilient characters demand our attention and respect because their rage and pain have not reduced them to victims of trauma. But they have been directed in a positive direction in resisting oppression of all kinds which shape them to be resilient in the pursuit of success and new identity. The following chapter will explore the positive and negative aspects of the resistance and resilience factors of the Spokane community to obtain a holistic picture of the community.