

Haa Jiyis Hèide Shiwduwataan

by

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## ABSTRACT

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The history of Native Nations unveils a story of great sorrow – broken promises, genocidal policies, and systemic racism. As a result, Native Nations face disproportionate health burdens and environmental health risks. Understanding historical trauma has become imperative when addressing the wellness of Native Nations. The assaults endured by the Standing Rock Sioux Nation and the support garnered from other Native Nations, reignited feelings and emotions about historical trauma in an age of technological advancements and globalized movements. Using the 2014 Standing Rock Protest my thesis addresses the question: what symptoms of historical trauma did Tribal Citizens display while at the Standing Rock Protest in North Dakota? The narratives of Lòol, Kanat'à, and T'òok; suggest that experiences from the past greatly influence individual's reactions to traumatic contemporary events and coping capabilities.

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## INTRODUCTION

*Yak'èi I xeidax at wutoo xaayi. Ax toowú, ax toowú k'èi nooch, ax dachxánx'i yán yá xoo anxalgéinin, yaa at naskwéin. Aadé haa ee at dultoow yé. Haa has du ee at latóowx'u.*

### **Dear Baby Girl,**

Tle tleix ixsixàn. Ch'k' ax tseyi. Àt axwdishèe ixwsateeni ch'a yòok'. There are still a few years until we meet, but, already I can't stop thinking about you. I imagine the feeling that you and I will share when our skin finally touches. I dream of what you, my Baby Girl, will look like. I envision you having beautiful kinky curls, sincere brown eyes, and warm mocha skin. I also visualize your stunning round eyes, slim body build, and gangly limbs. But, I wonder about your personality. Baby Girl, you come from a family possessing dynamic personalities – I'm curious, will you inherit your fathers' quiet demeanor, my child-like personality, or your grandmother's fiery spirit? I know, the moment you arrive into this world, I'll realize I couldn't dream of a sweeter dream than you because to me, you will always be the prettiest thing I've ever seen.

Baby Girl, I must admit, I'm also dreading this joyous day. It's not because I don't love you or have never wanted you, but, because I'm afraid of how the world will receive you. I'm bringing you into a world where people are quick to judge and slow to understand. I'm bringing you into a world where brown bodies are feared – I'm sorry you'll have to work twice as hard to prove your intelligence and worth – perhaps even your humanity because of the brown skin that houses your heart and soul. But, I'll do everything in my power to equip you with tools for success, regardless of your race. Honey, I dread the day you question your beauty and become angered by the thought that society may instill in you a sense of shame of who you are: Hawaiian, Native, and Black.



You'll learn fairly quickly that you're coming into a family strong in its faith and anchored in culture. As such, we will raise you to be a proud African-American, Hawaiian, Tlingit woman. You must understand that there are unwritten rules for brown bodies that will influence what you say, determine how you behave, and dictate how you dress. Baby Girl, you're going to be judged by your very own community by no fault of your own. Our community will judge you for echoing the voices of our ancestors, they'll be angered with your engagement in the culture, and they'll resent you and your success. Honey, I've felt that sting. I've been called a half-breed, I've been labeled a dirty mutt, and I've had to justify calling Angoon home. Baby Girl, I've been met with anger, hatred, and disgust countless times by our Tribal Nation. I continue to struggle with my identity at the age of 24 and have yet to find peace within myself. I wish I could fight this battle for you, but I can't. This has to be your experience, your story to tell.

As your mother, I'm compelled to help you make sense of being brown. Honey, I want you to know the history, but I don't want it to cripple you – the victim mentality will only limit you. During your education journey, I pray you don't lose yourself in all the noise. It's easy to get lost among the white walls, the white faces, and white noise – I know because I've been lost once before. Baby Girl, you're a descendant of warriors. You're more than just a pretty face. Baby Girl, your worth is not determined by the grades you receive, the money in your bank account, or the university you attend. Your worth is determined by the lives you have touched with your radiant smile and kind-hearted nature. Honey, you're smarter than you think. Don't let an oppressive system break your spirit. **Be bold** – don't be afraid to ask questions. **Be phenomenal** – don't be afraid to think outside the box. **Be you** – don't be afraid to be creative and vibrant.

A<sub>x</sub> tseyì, a<sub>x</sub> toowú yanèekw. Haa toowú yanèekw yee jiyìs. Your relatives are dying: the oceans, the rivers, and the trees. Baby Girl, I'm worried you won't be afforded the same relationship I had with the environment. Will you be able to examine a starfish free of lesions and deformed extremities? Will you find solace and comfort in a plastic ocean? Will there be an island left for you to call home? Will I be allowed to show you how to harvest yellow cedar for your first basket? Or will we be prohibited to harvest yellow cedar because of blood quantum requirements? Is it wrong of me to shelter you from our traditional foods? Should I feed you our traditional foods riddled with mercury, opioids, and plastics? Should I be tried for attempted murder for pushing you towards death by deliberately feeding you these foods filled with toxins? Tlè<sub>x</sub> waasiku.

Honey, we're fighting for your right to a clean environment. In 2014, the Lakota and Sioux Nation fought very hard to halt the construction of the 1,172-mile pipeline. They weren't alone in their fight against the pipeline – other Native Nations like ours traveled great distances to support their cause. The mainstream discussion of the Standing Rock Protest among academic scholars has been boiled down to two political points – it was a disagreement of safety between the Standing Rock Sioux Nation and the Energy Transfer Partners Company and it was a breakdown of government-to-government consultation. Haa kà<sub>x</sub> yèi has jeewanei. Haa kà<sub>x</sub> yèi<sub>x</sub> wusitee kà<sub>a</sub> kà<sub>x</sub> yoo x'atàngi. Tlèl aadò sà du yàanà<sub>x</sub> koodàal. Woosh yà<sub>x</sub> haa kdidàal Idakàt uhàan. Yan tutàn. Yan tugax<sub>t</sub>ootàan. Yaa tushigèi haa àani. Gunalchèesh yèi a<sub>x</sub> toowú yatee. Gunalchèesh yèi a<sub>x</sub> toowú yatee a<sub>x</sub> yàtk'i yis. Yee gu.aa yà<sub>x</sub> x'wàn. Although they didn't win the war isn't over. Baby Girl, there are many lessons to be learned in defeat and failure.

Ax̣ toowú àt wudiḳeen. Ax̣ toowú wudigaan. The assaults endured by Native Nations during the opposition of the Dakota Access Pipeline reignited feelings and emotions about historical trauma and resiliency within Native Nations. My motivation to answer the question, what symptoms did Tribal Citizens display while at the Standing Rock Protest in North Dakota extended beyond the Master of Environmental Studies thesis requirement. My motivation stemmed from my own experiences as a racially mixed child, blossomed from the hateful words, and inspired by creating a better world for you, Honey.

Baby Girl, I promise to keep trying to create a better world for you if you promise to never lose yourself in all the noise. Promise me you will continue to blossom into the radiant lily you were meant to be – I will pray each and every day that you will never wilt. I pray you'll love furiously, live ferociously, and laugh infectiously. Let your soul be radiant, let your brilliance shine, and may you never discover your limits my little lily. Honey, find strength in your fragility. I know exploring the pain, hurt, and suffering will take a toll on your body and soul, but I hope you use my love, strength, and guidance as a salve for the irritation. Just remember, I will always be here for you my little lily.

**Love Always,**

**Nicole M. George**



## LITERATURE REVIEW

“After all, when a stone is dropped into a pond, the water continues quivering even after the stone has sunk to the bottom.”<sup>1</sup>

Overwhelmed with emotion and torment Chòoshdatlâa sits in silence in an attempt to ground herself back into reality. Instead, the same damaging phrase keeps rushing in-and-out of her mind like relentless ocean waves violently crashing on the beach, “What does a half-breed like you know about helping my people? You’ve spent most of your young adult life learning the ways of the Westerners and have lost touch with who you are and where you come from.” With each unyielding wave a slew of dangerous memories foam: you will never amount to anything just like your people; the remaining Native Nations will never lay claim to their land; and if we kill you, and others like you, Juneau would be better off. **KAN! KAN! KAN! Kill! All! Natives!**<sup>2</sup>



### Introduction

Dleit kàach has du xoodàx has haa yaawatsàk. Wooch xoodàx haa kawdujik’àn. Tlingit kawdujik’àn. Haa kàx yoo has x’ali.àtk. Haa jiwduwanàk. Wooch yàx haa toowú ngatee. The history of Native Nations reveals a story of great sadness – stifled spirits, dismantled values, and severed family connections. *Stifled Spirits* – under article twelve of the Fort Laramie Treaty no cession of the Great Sioux Reservation would be valid unless approved by three-fourths of the United States Congress and Tribal Representatives.<sup>3</sup> Despite the Native Nation’s wishes, Congress seized their land for the purpose of gold mining.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Golden, Arthur. *Memoirs of a Geisha: A Novel*. Vintage, 2005.

<sup>2</sup> Miller, Emily. *Racist Sign Triggers Soul-Searching at Juneau-Douglas High School*. Juneau Empire, 7 February 2004.

<sup>3</sup> Deloria, Phillip. *The Great Sioux Nation: Sitting in Judgment on American*. U of Nebraska Press, 2013.

<sup>4</sup> Lazarus, Edward. *Black Hills: White Justice: The Sioux Nation versus the United States*. U of Nebraska Press, 1999.

*Dismantled Values* – fall of 1882 beloved Deisheetaan Shaman Teel Klein was killed when a harpoon gun exploded during a whaling excursion.<sup>5</sup> The Deisheetaan Clan mourned for four days over the loss of their Shaman, Teel Klein. During the Deisheetaan’s mourning phase, the superintendent of the trading Company fled to Sitka, Alaska – informing the Navy General that the Indians planned to kill all the white people on the island if their demands of receiving 200 blankets were not met. The United States Navy sailed to Angoon and shelled the island. After shelling the island, the Navy Men came ashore and torched the village – destroying their homes, canoes, and winter supplies.<sup>6</sup> *Severed Family Connections* – the Aleut Nation were forcibly removed from their village 3 June 1942, after the Japanese invaded the Aleutian Islands.<sup>7</sup> Tribal Citizens of the Aleut Nation were relocated to grimy internment camps located in Southeast, Alaska – a mountainous temperate rainforest that felt claustrophobic to those accustomed to treeless windswept landscapes. They were left to perish by the United States Federal Government in a foreign land without running water, deprived of adequate nutrition, and medical attention. Many Aleuts succumbed to the deplorable conditions and were buried in unmarked graves throughout Southeast, Alaska.<sup>8</sup>

The trauma didn’t cease for Native Nations with the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. On the contrary, Native Nations continue to suffer – heart disease, cancer, and diabetes were the leading causes of death in 2015 for Tribal Citizens.<sup>9</sup> These health issues can be attributed to the introduction of processed foods, exposure, to alcohol and pollution.

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<sup>5</sup> Furlow, Nancy. *Balancing Values: Re-Viewing the 1882 Bombardment of Angoon, Alaska*. University of California, 2010.

<sup>6</sup> George, Cyril. *On the Bombardment of Angoon*. Sealaska Heritage Institute, 2011. <https://vimeo.com/17816090>.

<sup>7</sup> Madden Ryan. *The Forgotten People: The Relocation and Internment of Aleuts*. American Indian Culture and Research Journal 16, no. 4 (1992).

<sup>8</sup> Madden, Ryan. *The Forgotten People*. American Indian Culture and Research Journal 16, no. 4 (1992).

<sup>9</sup> Heron, Melonie. *Deaths: Leading Causes for 2015*. National Vital Statistics Reports 66, no. 5 (2017).

In addition, one in four Tribal Citizens lives in poverty – unable to afford basic needs such as food, water, shelter, and healthcare. The socio-economic status of Tribal Citizens can be associated with geographic location of the reservation and the historic relationship between the Native Nation and the United States Federal Government. Not only are 83% of Tribal Youth unable to continue their education after high school due to financial reasons, but, Tribal Youth also commit suicide at a higher rate than the national average.<sup>10</sup> The current health and social conditions of Native Nations, coupled with discrimination, act as constant reminders of, the historical traumas that persist in the thoughts of Tribal Citizens – ethnic cleansing, genocidal policies, community massacres, forced relocation, and much more.

Understanding historical trauma has become imperative when addressing the wellness of Native Nations. My literature review provides definitions and theoretical frameworks for historical trauma, historical trauma response, intergenerational trauma, and resiliency. It demonstrates my understanding of the topics and situates my study within the field. My literature review examines the strengths and weaknesses of previous methodologies embedded within public health, humanities, psychology, and social science academic journals in order to compare previous findings and identify knowledge gaps that demand further investigations.

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<sup>10</sup> Oliff, Helen. *Graduation Rates and American Indian Education*. Partnership with Native Americans, 2017.



Figure 1: The photo collage represents different moments of trauma for various Native Nations. Top Row Left to Right: the death of the Eyak Language, Aleut internment camps, and systemic environmental harm. Bottom Row Left to Right: Indian Boarding

## Historical Trauma

The study of historical trauma originated in the aftermath of the Holocaust – where research focused on documenting and enumerating symptoms of Jewish survivors and their off-spring.<sup>11</sup> Following the systemic murder of six-million Jews, the survivors and their off-spring exhibited the following symptoms: denial, depersonalization, isolation, somatization, memory loss, agitation, anxiety, guilt, depression, intrusive thoughts, nightmares, psychic numbing, and survivor guilt.<sup>12</sup> Researchers conceptualized this behavior as survivor syndrome – the mental condition that occurs when a person believes they have done something wrong by surviving a traumatic event when others did not. Scholars unveiled three types of survivors – those who felt guilty about staying alive; those who felt mortified about what they failed to do; and those who felt remorseful about their

<sup>11</sup> Niederland, William G. "The survivor syndrome: Further observations and dimensions." *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* 29, no. 2 (1981): 413-425.

<sup>12</sup> Rubenstein, Israel, Fred Cutter, and Donald I. Templer. "Multigenerational occurrence of survivor syndrome symptoms in families of Holocaust survivors." *OMEGA-Journal of Death and Dying* 20, no. 3 (1990): 239-244.

actions. Researchers also found that survivors often blame themselves for the deaths of others – including those who died while rescuing the survivor.<sup>13</sup>

This conceptualization of trauma seldom works for Native Nations because Tribal Citizens sense of loss aren't confined to a period of time. Quite the opposite, Native Nations are constantly faced with daily reminders of loss – language, culture, land, and values. The hurt Native Nations experience goes unrecognized as the United States acknowledgement of traumatic events perpetrated on Native Nations are limited.<sup>14</sup> When Tribal Citizens voice their suffering they're met with indifference, disbelief, and avoidance – furthering the suffering they're experiencing as the broader society ignores the painful histories.

When historical trauma is applied to Tribal Citizens it refers to the colonization of Native Nations and the subsequent experiences.<sup>15</sup> Colonization in this instance is the asymmetrical power relations, where the colonized have limited power and are dispossessed of their land for the settlers' economic gain and disposed of their lifeways as a means of subjugation – Allotment Act of 1877, Indian Boarding Schools, etc.<sup>16</sup> The segmentation of lands, prohibiting Native languages, outlawing cultural practices, and regulating subsistence hunting and gathering impacted Native Nations sense of identity and purpose. For Native Nations, historical trauma also represents severed connections to land and fragmented identities forged through decades of assimilation and compulsory education.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Leon, Gloria R., James N. Butcher, Max Kleinman, Alan Goldberg, and Moshe Almagor. "Survivors of the Holocaust and their children: Current status and adjustment." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 41, no. 3 (1981): 503.

<sup>14</sup> Evans-Campbell, Teresa. "Historical trauma in American Indian/Native Alaska communities: A multilevel framework for exploring impacts on individuals, families, and communities." *Journal of interpersonal violence* 23, no. 3 (2008): 316-338.

<sup>15</sup> Avalos Cisneros, Natalie. "Indigenous Visions of Self-Determination: Healing and Historical Trauma in Native America." *Global Societies Journal* 2 (2014).

<sup>16</sup> Avalos Cisneros, Natalie. "Indigenous Visions of Self-Determination." *Global Societies Journal* 2 (2014).

<sup>17</sup> Bassett, Deborah, Ursula Tsosie, and Sweetwater Nannauck. "'Our culture is medicine': perspectives of native healers on posttrauma recovery among American Indian and Alaska Native patients." *The Permanente Journal* 16, no. 1 (2012): 19.



Historical trauma is the cumulative emotional and psychological wounding across generations including the lifespan, which emanates from massive group trauma.<sup>18</sup> Historical trauma encompasses a complex series of events that are pervasive, cumulative, intentional trauma affecting a specific group.<sup>19</sup> Historical trauma is not limited or bounded by human initiated catastrophic events. Historically traumatic events can be caused by natural disasters or systemic destruction of the environment.<sup>20</sup> Tribal lands are subject to some of the most invasive, toxic, and destructive environmental practices – military testing, oil spills, coal mining operations, commercial fishing, timber harvesting, etc.

Historical trauma occurs in three phases – in the initial phase, the colonizer perpetuates mass trauma on a population – colonialism, slavery, war, or genocide. Following the initial phase, the effected population shows physical and psychological symptoms in response to the mass trauma. In the final phase, the colonized population passes the response of trauma to subsequent generations who in turn display similar symptoms.<sup>21</sup> Figure 2 visually depicts what historical trauma represents for Native Nations as well as the three initial phases. The unresolved grief of historically traumatic events continues to impact survivors and the subsequent generations. The criteria of traumatic stressors initiating historical trauma include: trauma experienced directly by the person or group; learning about historically traumatic events perpetuated on close family members, and subtle forms of racism.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Brave Heart, Maria Yellow Horse, Josephine Chase, Jennifer Elkins, and Deborah B. Altschul. "Historical trauma among indigenous peoples of the Americas: Concepts, research, and clinical considerations." *Journal of psychoactive drugs* 43, no. 4 (2011): 282-290.

<sup>19</sup> Nicolai, Shanley Swanson, and Merete Saus. "Acknowledging the past while looking to the future: Conceptualizing Indigenous child trauma." *Child welfare* 92, no. 4 (2013): 55.

<sup>20</sup> Evans-Campbell, Teresa. "Historical trauma in American Indian/Native Alaska communities." *Journal of interpersonal violence* 23, no. 3 (2008): 316-338.

<sup>21</sup> Pember, Mary Annette. "Intergenerational Trauma: Understanding Natives' Inherited Pain." (2016).

<sup>22</sup> Pember, Mary Annette. "Intergenerational Trauma: Understanding Natives' Inherited Pain." (2016).



Figure 2: The diagram represents the complexity of historical trauma as it relates to Native Nations. It also reminds the reader that historical trauma is more than emotional and physical wounding for Tribal Citizens. For Tribal Citizens, the trauma is constant and effects the present, past, and future inflicting spiritual wounding. The initial phase diagram visually represents the clash of Native Nations and European Nations; phase two represents the initial trauma; and phase three represents the transmission of trauma from the survivor to their off-spring.

### Historical Trauma Responses

Historical trauma is best understood as having significant impacts at three levels: individual, family, and community. Standard historical trauma responses at the individual level include sadness, depression, anger, intrusiveness of thoughts, discomfort around white people, and fearful of white peoples' intentions.<sup>23</sup> Other historical trauma responses observed at the individual level include post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, grief, and

<sup>23</sup> Whitbeck, Les B., Gary W. Adams, Dan R. Hoyt, and Xiaojin Chen. "Conceptualizing and measuring historical trauma among American Indian people." *American journal of community psychology* 33, no. 3-4 (2004): 119-130.

depressive symptomology.<sup>24</sup> Observed familial historical trauma responses include the breakdown in family communication and anxiety about parenting. For Tribal Citizens, this familial historical trauma response stemmed from the Indian Boarding School era.<sup>25</sup> Tribal Citizens who attended Indian Boarding Schools didn't have the opportunity to learn or observe proper parenting techniques and communication. Instead, most of their energy was put toward killing the Indian within them – learning to speak proper English, wearing appropriate clothing, learning western customs, etc.<sup>26</sup> The breakdown of traditional cultures, the loss of traditional practices, high rates of alcoholism, the increase in physical illness, and internalized racism represent historical traumatic responses at the community level.<sup>27</sup> Historical trauma responses at the individual, familial, and community level manifest in response to mass traumatic events that result in a range of emotional and physical responses. Historical trauma research within Native Nations illustrates that the overwhelming nature of painful ancestral experiences and its longstanding effects.

Historical trauma response is also referred to as colonial trauma response – both terms represent the contemporary manifestations resulting from historical and contemporary traumatic events.<sup>28</sup> Similar to historical trauma response, standard colonial trauma responses include anxiety, guilt, depression, spiritual wounding, physical illness, and emotional instability.<sup>29</sup> Unresolved grief caused by colonization manifest into high rates of

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<sup>24</sup> Evans-Campbell, Teresa. "Historical trauma in American Indian/Native Alaska communities." *Journal of interpersonal violence* 23, no. 3 (2008): 316-338.

<sup>25</sup> Elias, Brenda, Javier Mignone, Madelyn Hall, Say P. Hong, Lyna Hart, and Jitender Sareen. "Trauma and suicide behavior histories among a Canadian indigenous population: An empirical exploration of the potential role of Canada's residential school system." *Social science & medicine* 74, no. 10 (2012): 1560-1569.

<sup>26</sup> Marr, Carolyn J. "Assimilation through education: Indian boarding schools in the Pacific Northwest." *Retrieved on February 6* (2004): 2004.

<sup>27</sup> Evans-Campbell, Teresa. "Historical trauma in American Indian/Native Alaska communities." *Journal of interpersonal violence* 23, no. 3 (2008): 316-338.

<sup>28</sup> Lloyd, David. "Colonial Trauma/Postcolonial Recovery?" *Interventions* 2, no. 2 (2000): 212-228.

<sup>29</sup> Walters, K. L. "Historical trauma, microaggressions, and colonial trauma response: indigenous concepts in search of a measure." In *2nd international Indigenous health knowledge development conference*. 2005.

depression, anxiety, suicidal behavior, substance abuse, disrupted relationships, diagnosable disorders, and difficulty recognizing and expressing emotions. The only noticeable difference between historical trauma response and colonial trauma response is the terminology used to represent the symptoms. Both terms represent the same physical and emotional symptoms caused by historically traumatic events.

### **INTERGENERATIONAL TRAUMA**

Intergenerational transmission of trauma occurs at two levels: interpersonal and societal.<sup>30</sup> Due to the close-knit nature of Native Nations the transmission of trauma is fairly easy – the transmission of trauma can occur directly or indirectly.<sup>31</sup> Historically traumatic events are transmitted through the following channels: impaired parenting practices, distressing narratives, or genetics. Off-spring of survivors may vicariously experience historically traumatic events by hearing stories about the survivor's experiences. Consequently, off-spring of the survivors will suffer from anxiety, suicidal thoughts, guilt, frustration, and fear. Figure 3, sheds light on the intergenerational transmission of trauma at the individual, family, community, and national level.

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<sup>30</sup> Bombay, Amy, Kim Matheson, and Hymie Anisman. "Intergenerational Trauma." *Journal de la santé autochtone* (2009).

<sup>31</sup> Connolly, Angela. "Healing the wounds of our fathers: intergenerational trauma, memory, symbolization and narrative." *Journal of Analytical Psychology* 56, no. 5 (2011): 607-626.



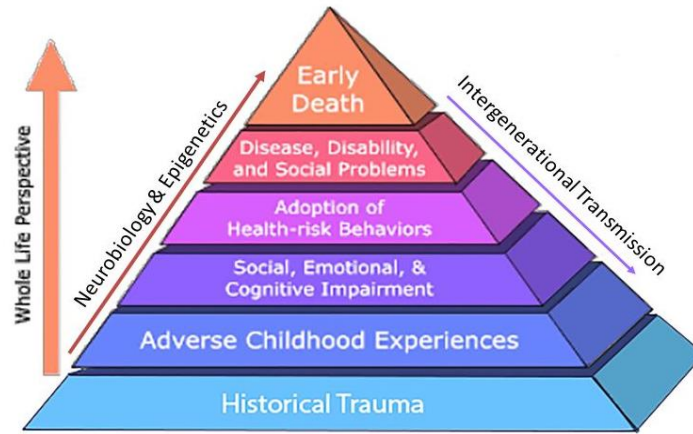


Figure 4: This is another way in which to visually depict historical trauma and historical trauma responses. This diagram is helpful because it visually depicts the stages in which the trauma is transmitted from the survivor to their off-spring. It also shows the stages in which the very DNA of the survivor and the off-spring is altered.

Trauma survivors often have difficulties communicating their experience effectively in a manner that is both tangible and conveys significance.<sup>32</sup> Reflection on past traumatic events is experienced not only by primary trauma survivors but those who hear or read accounts of what the survivor experienced. Individuals who hear or read narratives of the primary trauma survivor become a secondary witness to the experiences as well. Once this transmission of trauma begins, individuals cannot stand outside its address because testimony is always directed towards others.

Secondary witnesses must bear support to the primary trauma survivor and endure the emotional burden of acknowledging memories of violence and injustices. Secondary witnesses also have the responsibility of transporting and translating stories of past injustices beyond their moment enunciation. This responsibility stems from the idea of recognizing those who have been hurt. For Tribal Citizens, the act of retelling stories is a

<sup>32</sup> Waldram, James B. "Healing history? Aboriginal healing, historical trauma, and personal responsibility." *Transcultural psychiatry* 51, no. 3 (2014): 370-386.

sign of respect of their ancestors and shows an understanding of who they are and where they come from. An attitude that living life happily would somehow betray or dishonor ancestors who suffered is a common trauma response of secondary witnesses.<sup>33</sup>

The act of remembering includes both the individual's will and social determinants: memory plays a major role in structuring national and self-identity.<sup>34</sup> The act of remembering highlights the political and emotional value of remembering an event. Memories are also disruptive because they call for a solidarity with others on the basis of common suffering. Memories have two dimensions: one of hope and one of suffering.



Figure 5: This picture represents Sealaska Heritage Institute staff sharing their educational experiences as Alaska Native students. Their experiences were shared with local Juneau educators at the Sealaska Heritage Institute clan house. This picture is significant because it captures how stories would be culturally passed on from one generation to the next. In this instance, educators have an opportunity to format historically traumatic events.

<sup>33</sup> Simon, Roger I., and Claudia Eppert. "Remembering obligation: Pedagogy and the witnessing of testimony of historical trauma." *Canadian Journal of Education/Revue canadienne de l'éducation* (1997): 175-191.

<sup>34</sup> Weaver, Hilary N., and Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heartz. "Examining two facets of American Indian identity: Exposure to other cultures and the influence of historical trauma." *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment* 2, no. 1-2 (1999): 19-33.



Figure 6: Other forms of communication for Southeast, Alaska Native Nations include song, dance, regalia, totem poles, and clan house screens. The artwork and language of Southeast, Alaska Native Nations is complex: it's important to observe every detail.

## Resiliency

Resiliency is defined as the ability for individuals or communities to overcome stress and regain mental health and well-being after experiencing traumatic events.<sup>35</sup> Healing can occur at the individual, community, and national level. At the individual level, those who had given testimonies were found to have improved mental health compared to those who had not given testimonies. It's mentally beneficial to provide trauma survivors a safe environment to openly and honestly discuss their traumatic experiences. Individuals can also continue the healing process by renewing their relationships that give them strength: spiritual, environmental, or personal relationships. Community resilience entails relational and collective processes where individuals, families, community, and the larger environment are interconnected yielding protective factors to counter adversities.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Denham, Aaron R. "Rethinking historical trauma: Narratives of resilience." *Transcultural psychiatry* 45, no. 3 (2008): 391-414.

<sup>36</sup> Goodkind, Jessica R., Julia Meredith Hess, Beverly Gorman, and Danielle P. Parker. "'We're Still in a Struggle' Diné Resilience, Survival, Historical Trauma, and Healing." *Qualitative health research* 22, no. 8 (2012): 1019-1036.



Community resilience also includes reimagining collective histories that value and celebrate Tribal identities – the revitalization of languages, cultural activities, collective agency, and activism.<sup>37</sup> These renewed relationships would allow individuals to mend their fragmented identities and establish a new sense of purpose and belonging.

By providing a space for Tribal Citizens to tell their own story they have the opportunity to look towards the past, acknowledge the lifeways of their people, and choose to embody it in a new way in the present – eliminating the narratives of the disappearing Indian. Healing historical trauma for Native Nations is not simply about treating an individual person but instead seeks to restore broken relationship to others and practices.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Kirmayer, Laurence J., Joseph P. Gone, and Joshua Moses. "Rethinking historical trauma." (2014): 299-319.

<sup>38</sup> Kirmayer, Laurence J., Stéphane Dandeneau, Elizabeth Marshall, Morgan Kahentonni Phillips, and Karla Jessen Williamson. "Rethinking resilience from indigenous perspectives." *The Canadian Journal of Psychiatry* 56, no. 2 (2011): 84-91.



Figure 7: These pictures represent different forms of healing for the Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian Nations of Southeast, Alaska. Elders of Southeast, Alaska and the community as a whole cherish the youth and their involvement in cultural activities. In this collage you will see pictures of youth speaking their Native language, young adults reconnecting with their culture through song and dance, and youth engaging in sports. Healing also occurs when one obtains an education, prepares traditional food, advocating for the Native Nation, and reconnecting with the land. Again, healing for Native Nations doesn't have to occur in a counselor's office – it can occur amongst family, friends, colleges, gymnasiums, smoke houses, classrooms, etc.

## Summary

The field of historical trauma has expanded significantly since the 1960's Holocaust research. Despite the advancement in historical trauma scholarship many questions still remain. For example, there's a lack of understanding on whether or not researchers are dealing with actual historical issues or more proximate grief and trauma for daily lives of Tribal Citizens. Researchers still question whether or not the observed trauma in Tribal Citizens are the manifestation of historically traumatic events or the result of overt and institutionalized discrimination, severe health issues, or high mortality rates. This leads into another unanswered question, whether or not contemporary stressors such as poverty, discrimination, racism, and health disparities amplify the effects of historically traumatic events. Are there observed historical trauma responses differences and resiliency tactics of different Native Nations?

My research explored the relationship between contemporary stressors such as poverty, discrimination, racism, and health disparities and the effects of historical trauma. My research also explored resiliency tactics and coping strategies of three Tlingit Tribal Citizens. The purpose of my research was not to generalize my findings in order to apply to other Native Nations. The purpose of my research was to provide a place of healing for those who participated in the study, provide an opportunity to begin my own healing journey, and to educate about the hurt endured by Native Nations. The intent of revealing painful histories is not to instill guilt but to build a platform of understanding – if we are to combat the injustices of society we must come from a place of understanding and acknowledgement.

## METHODOLOGY

*“The most potent weapon of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed.”*<sup>39</sup>

Chòoshdatlàa’s eyes were hard but she refused to shed a tear as she stood at the water’s edge of her thoughts. She stood there silently reading and rereading her email:

### **Chòoshdatlàa:**

We would like to congratulate you on a job well done. You’ve made excellent progress in your academic career. Unfortunately, your efforts have fallen short and you have reached your academic capacity. We are terminating your candidacy in the western education system because you have failed to demonstrate the necessary skills and mindset needed to complete a master’s program.

– Sincerely,

### **The Western Education System**

The ocean began to roar as the waves churned violently, thrashing her thoughts onto the cold unforgiving beach – she’s just a dumb native who can’t read, she struggles to grasp and analyze simple concepts and processes, and her writing style is too informal and descriptive nature.



### **Setting and Approach**

The Dakota Access Pipeline transports crude oil from the Bakken Oil fields in North Dakota to refineries in Patoka, Illinois – crossing treaty lands of the Oceti Sakowin native prairie lands, crucial waterways, and passing along the northern borders of the Standing Rock Sioux Nation.<sup>40</sup> Figure 8 visually depicts the route of the pipeline, outlines the Great Sioux Nation Reservation, highlights the protest site, and displays crucial waterways. Since 2016, the Sioux Nation with support from other Native Nations, fought against the pipeline.

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<sup>39</sup> Brokenleg, Martin. “Transforming Cultural Trauma into Resilience.” *Reclaiming Children and Youth*, 21, no 3 (2012): 11.

<sup>40</sup> Kennedy, Michael. “The Dakota Access Pipeline.” <https://earthjustice.org>.

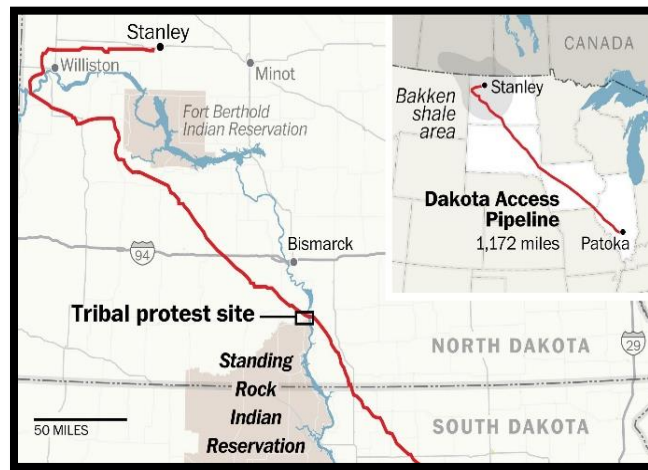


Figure 8: This map depicts the route of the Dakota Access Pipeline and the proximity of the pipeline to the Great Sioux Reservation. The route of the pipeline stirred up controversy as it was rerouted from Bismarck to the current crossing. This reroute through sacred Native Lands has been called an act of environmental racism.

Figure 9 illustrates one of many ways Native Nations supported the Standing Rock Sioux Nation. The assaults endured by the Standing Rock Sioux Nation and the support garnered from other Native Nations, reignited feelings and emotions about historical trauma in an age of technological advancement and globalized movements.



Figure 9: This picture shows the Tlingit Nation canoeing with other Native Nations towards the protest site in order to support the Great Sioux Nation in their opposition of the pipeline.

At its core, historical trauma is multi-faceted and very dynamic. When historical trauma is written from an objective point of view it's perceived as one-dimensional and it loses its essence: human emotions and complexity. My research was informed by Tribal Critical Race Theory – a theoretical framework that addresses the relationship between Native Nations and the United States Federal Government. It also explores the dynamics of Native Nations as racial and legal communities.<sup>41</sup> By aligning with the values articulated in Tribal Critical Race Theory, my research sought to provide a better understanding of historical trauma by bringing emotions back into the discussion. Additionally, the structure of this thesis seeks to reinforce the notion that stories are not separate from theory – in order to accurately and respectfully portray the Tlingit Culture of the research participants and the researcher.<sup>42</sup> Finally, I expect that concepts of culture, knowledge, power, and experience will take on new meanings when examined through a Tlingit Indigenous lens.

My research utilized semi-structured interviews to provide a platform for Indigenous voices, with the primary focus of understanding different aspects of historical trauma in my own cultural community and highlighting the social impacts of energy infrastructure so often ignored in the development planning process. The interview questions were derived from previous research studies and created from my own understanding of Tlingit Culture.<sup>43</sup> The interview questions were designed to examine an individual's childhood experiences, the dynamic of the community in which they are embedded, cultural engagement, and their personal experiences at the Standing Rock Protest – all to address historical trauma experienced outside the individual's local community.

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<sup>41</sup> Brayboy, Bryan McKinley. "Toward a Tribal Critical Race Theory in Education." *The Urban Review*, 37, no. 5 (2005): 432.

<sup>42</sup> Brayboy. "Toward a Tribal Critical Race Theory in Education." *The Urban Review*, 37, no. 5 (2005): 435.

<sup>43</sup> Kirmayer, Laurence, Joseph, Gone, and Moses, Joshua. "Rethinking Historical Trauma." (2014).

## **Participants**

Advertisement for this study was marketed on my Facebook page with the following message:

Hello Facebook Friends!

I'm a graduate student in the Evergreen State College's Master of Environmental Studies Program. I am conducting a research project to explore Native American/Alaska Native historical trauma in contemporary times. Information gathered during this project will be used for my master's thesis and presentation.

I NEED YOUR HELP! Are you or someone you know Native American/Alaska Native? Did you or someone you know participate at Standing Rock? If you answered yes to both questions you are invited to participate in an interview regarding your experiences at Standing Rock!

Please send me a personal message if you are interested!

Within two days of launching the Facebook post it had received a lot of attention – it had garnered 10 shares, 36 likes, and 40 comments. From February 15, 2018 February 20, 2018 I had 30 people comment or send a personal message expressing their interest in the study. Tribal Citizens were formally invited to participate in the study based on the following criteria: the participant 2as 18-years-of-age or older, identified as Native American/Alaska Native or enrolled in a federally recognized Native Nation, and participated at the Standing Rock Protest. By February 28, 2018, I had three interviews with individuals who identified with the Tlingit Nation.

## **Ethical Issues**

The nature of this study put Tribal Citizens at risk because the questions were both personal and intrusive. During the interview, Tribal Citizens could have experienced psychological distress and inner turmoil if the interview questions triggered painful memories. This study also put Tribal Citizens at risk of falsely or correctly identifying themselves as having a disorder, disturbance, or inferiority. In addition, this research study was at risk of deterring Tribal Citizens from participating because of their awareness that similar research studies tend to conclude that they're deficient or undesirable.

To minimize risks to Tribal Citizens, I designed open-ended interview questions, ensuring Tribal Citizens controlled how much of their story they shared. Below, are examples of interview questions:

1. What was your up-bringing like?
2. How did you learn about your culture and traditional values?
3. What do you remember during your participation at Standing Rock?
4. How did your engagement with your community and culture make you feel?

I reminded Tribal Citizens they weren't obligated to answer any or all of the interview questions. Throughout the interview, participants were also reminded that they could withdraw from the interview at any point.



## **Interview Protocol**

The interview was semi-structured in nature and involved three moving parts. During the first portion of the interview I asked the participant to discuss their childhood experiences. The purpose of this section was to gauge the level of trauma experienced by the participant and expose trauma transmission pathways by discussing observed dynamics of the community they were embedded in. The discussion of their cultural engagement allowed for more discussion about trauma exposure and resiliency techniques used by the interview participant. The last portion of the interview addressed Tribal Citizen's experiences at the Standing Rock Protest in North Dakota.

With consent from the participants, I recorded interviews on my work phone. Recording the interviews on my work phone mitigated the cost of purchasing expensive recording equipment. Also, audio recording equipment can stand out and may cause the participant to get nervous. Whereas phones are commonplace and unobtrusive that their impact on the participant is minimal. Figure 10 compares the difference between a traditional voice recorder and an iPhone.

Recordings on my phone were protected by a security code and touch identification. The audio recordings allowed for accurate representation of the individual and their story and provided an opportunity for me to actively engage in the conversation. Throughout the interview, I assured the participants that their comments would remain anonymous and that the information would be compiled and represented without any reference to the participant by providing ancestral pseudo names such as *Lòol*, *Kanat'à*, and *T'òok'*.



Figure 10: Voice recorders can emanate a businesslike atmosphere whereas iPhones will not. With recorders they can also cause stress on the researcher if they're not accustomed to using tape recorders.

### **Coding and Analysis**

Each interview was transcribed by hand in order to gain familiarity with the data. By March 8, 2018, all three interviews were transcribed. Following transcription, I conducted open coding looking for concepts and categories, including poverty, health problems, cultural revitalization, and hope. The second phase of analysis included confirming the concepts and categories accurately represented the interview responses and exploring how concepts and categories are related.

The Southeast Traditional Tribal Values were utilized to analyze the participants responses. The Southeast Traditional Tribal Values were developed by a committee of Native Scholars in 2004. The following questions were also used to further analyze the responses: Is there a relationship between their childhood experiences and their experiences at the Standing Rock Protest? Were there instances where their past influenced the future either good or bad? What can be gathered from their responses when analyzed through a Tlingit Indigenous lens? Is there an observable difference between generations that can be

operationalized? Is there something observable in response to allude to a generation difference between the researcher and the participant?

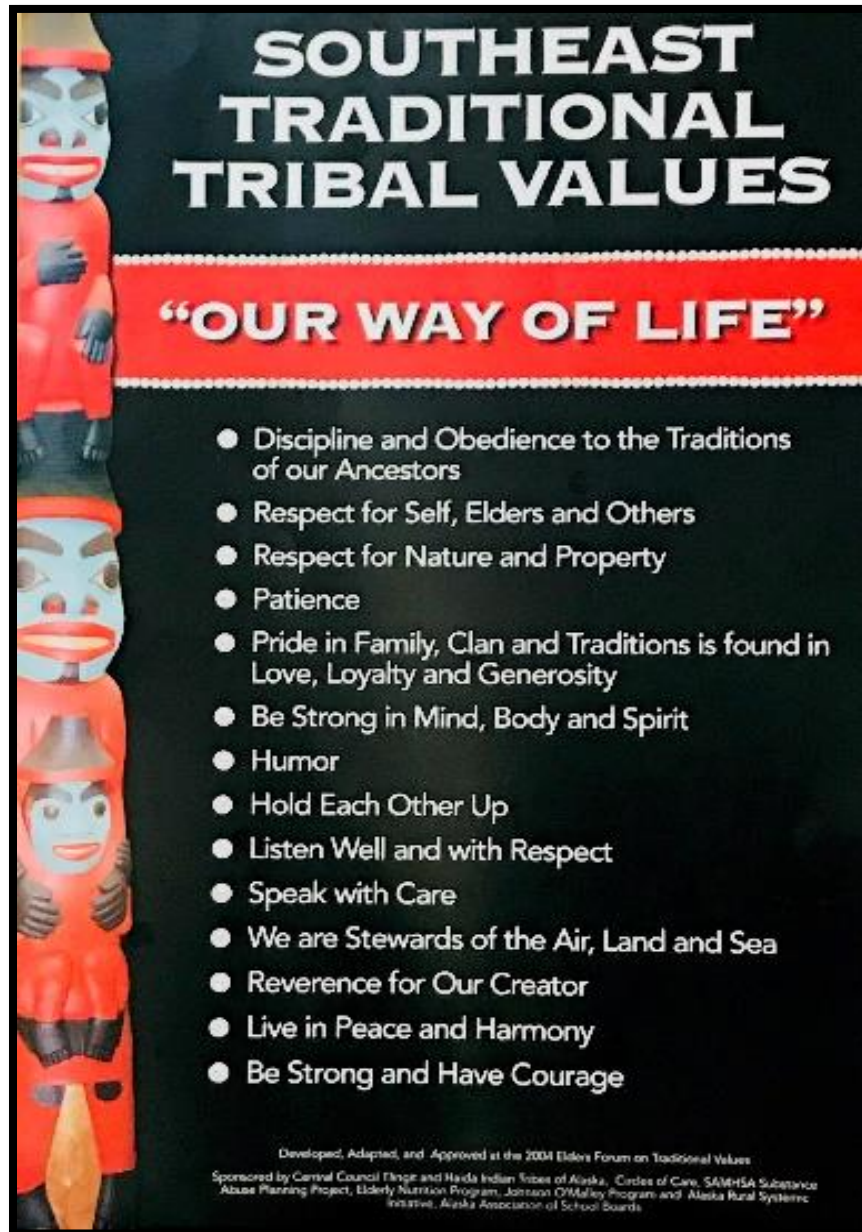


Figure 11: The Southeast Traditional Tribal Values were used to analyze the interview participant’s responses. These values are critical because it represents the very essence of what it means to be a Southeast, Alaska Native.

## RESULTS

*“He who does not understand your silence will probably not understand your words.”*

It was a cold crisp night as Chòshdatlàa waited in anticipation. Her bedroom walls became paper thin, her ceiling ceased to exist, and she prayed to a God she never really believed in. Her bones began to rattle, and her color seemed to drain, as she heard what she waited for coming forth, “Fuck you! I know you’re still screwing that nigger. Why don’t you leave and take Chòshdatlàa with you!” What seemed like five hours of pure agony was only a mere few minutes. After the storm had passed Chòshdatlàa proceeded to examine the damage.

She spotted her mother curled on the couch sitting there as if she started from the beginning: the stage of a helpless child. Chòshdatlàa rubbed her mother’s back and felt the chill of her mother’s skin – frightened from the fiasco it was forced to experience. Her mother sobbed on her little shoulder, her tears hitting like bullets as the salty desperation penetrated Chòshdatlàa’s skin. At that moment, Chòshdatlàa felt like she was bearing the weight of the world. She realized that night, she had the responsibility to take care of this child even though she did not bear it. She was only six-years-old when her world came crashing down and she was forced to pick up the pieces.



### Summary of Results

Not surprisingly, I found a diversity of responses related to an individual’s upbringing, cultural engagement, and experiences at the Standing Rock Protest. I identified many themes that are consistent across the narratives sch as *mistrust in authority, racism and*

*hardships*, and *resiliency*. I also discovered themes that a didn't appear in the academic literature: *harmful transitions*, *teachable moments*, and *don't steal my pause*.

### **Mistrust in Authority**

Lòol and Kanat'à tended to have fairly limited narratives about mistrust in authorities from a young age. Their upbringing may explain the absence of mistrust in authority for Lòol and Kanat'à. They were raised in an environment where elders and community members stressed the importance of cultural values – speak with care; have respect for elders, self, and others; never go to bed angry because you never know what the future holds; and when elders are speaking you are to be seen and not heard. These lessons and values that Lòol and Kanat'à grew-up with informed their behaviors and actions – when they speak, they are mindful of their words because they understand that their words can serve as weapons.

Other factors that may have played a role in the absence of mistrust in authorities from a young age for Lòol and Kanat'à include: they didn't feel comfortable disclosing their experiences with authorities knowing their statements were digitally recorded; they had a fear their statements would be misrepresented; they didn't develop mistrust in authorities until they were young adults; or the age difference between Lòol, Kanat'à, and myself caused them to censor their answers. When Lòol and Kanat'à reflect on their experiences with authority figures their comments tend to be passive and subtle in nature. They rarely use possessive words or policy statements – asserting their own beliefs. For example, the following exchange occurred during an interview with Lòol:

I had a mean teacher in first grade and all of the parents were afraid of her. She would yell at us every-day. I was a very shy kid and ummm it was like she knew umm that I was very shy, and she would yell at me. She would put me down in front of all the other kids. I was playing with my paper fan and was

lost in thought and she got mad because I wasn't pay attention to her. She made sly remarks and made me stand in the hallway with my face towards the wall in front of the other classrooms. I just about died.

T'òok' didn't hesitate to provide examples of mistrust in authorities from a young age – they determined that their mistrust in authorities was a result of three factors. First, their mistrust in authorities stemmed from intergenerational trauma, “You know what she did? She didn't abuse me. She did the best she could for my generation. Just to keep that mistreatment out she broke the cycle so I could be who I am today.” Second, the environment in which they grew-up in influenced their behaviors and actions, “Growing up in the environment of Seattle was very activist and resiliency based from my experience. That was you know, I was steeped in that and surrounded in that. It was a normal thing to organize and make a move and change some shit down the line.” Third, they received progressive teachings from their family members, “My mom was real with me in regard to ways that her specific experience has been with white people. With people who are culturally deprived or culturally ignorant.”

In comparison to Lòol and Kanat'à, T'òok's comments are direct and authoritative in nature – they tend to assert their own beliefs. For example, T'òok' recounts a lesson they learned from their uncle:

I was thankful for my uncles – my dad's brothers who were a part of the American Indian Movement. Activist back in the day uuugh you know? They would sit me down and say, “Hey nephew. Do you stand-up for the pledge of allegiance?” And I was like, “Yeah, everybody does.” He would say, “I don't.” I would say, “What do you mean?” And he was like, “Well, uugh when the fly that flag each of those stripes and each of those stars are the blood of our people. So that flag doesn't stand for us it stands for our defeat.” He was very in tune. He was telling me what time it was.

In this instance, T'òok's uncle is transferring their relationship with authority figures and symbols onto them. Their uncle is teaching T'òok' how to question authority figures and encouraging them to understand and be critical of national symbols like the United States American Flag.

Lòol, Kanat'à, and T'òok' all provided examples of mistrust in authorities at the Standing Rock Protest. During each account, Lòol, Kanat'à, and T'òok' briefly described their reactions to government decisions regarding the Dakota Access Pipeline as well as their interactions with security officers, police officers, and state troopers. For example, the following exchange occurred in an interview with Kanat'à:

So were pulling in and they made an announcement. Everyone is in a circle holding hands because they just made the announcement that they were not going to do it. Or we won apparently. That was kind of weird.

Kanat'à's comment represents a reaction to a government decision regarding the Dakota Access Pipeline – in particular, Kanat'à's statement, “that was kind of weird” or “we won apparently” represents their mistrust in authority that as accumulated over their lifetime: problematic blood quantum requirements, the fish wars of the 70's, Veteran Allotment Act, and the Indian Civil Rights Act of 1968 to name a few examples. Again, it's important to note that Kanat'à avoided aggressive language and instead used deferential language. Kanat'à's use of deferential language could represent their politeness and acknowledgement of their place in western society – where the educated are ranked higher in society.

In comparison, T'òok' had strong opinions about the federal government that were both direct and assertive in nature:

Guarantee if the President went to that space and put his body there, shit would stop. It would stop. You could put forward some fake ass phony legislation and

make people feel good for temporary. You can distract them from the devastation that is continuing to happen, but when it comes down to it he did nothing. And that's the MO of the position in this government as it stands against Indigenous People and their own rights.

For Lòol and T'òok' their mistrust in authorities extended to their own Native Corporation. For example, the following exchanges occurred during an interview with Lòol and T'òok':

**Lòol:** Oh, and another thing Nicole. *Yes.* Keep this mind. Keep this in mind. If something like this ever comes up again ask yourself what kind of accountability these folks have. You couldn't tell how much money actually went to the cause. You have seen this happen to our Tribe with Corporations.

**T'òok':** We uuugh well it's not in Alaska. But we have our own fucking issues up there you know what I mean? We have uuugh all the clear cutting, we have all the mining, and you know what I mean? All that kind of stuff. People are way into Robert's Rule of Law and practicing someone else's way. You know? The corporate mentality, you know? I don't think that is necessarily the healthiest thing for us you know?

Lòol and T'òok' are very critical about the Native Corporations in Alaska. In this instance, Lòol and T'òok' are comparing native leaders to Western leaders – sharing the feeling that once an individual gains position of authority they abuse it. Their mistrust in their own corporate leaders stems from the nepotism that is often seen in various Native Organizations and the abuse of Robert's Rule of Law. During Native Organization elections grievances such as travel compensation, bonuses, and the timing of business meetings call into question the accountability and integrity of Native Organizations and leaders.

Lòol's comments of accountability stems from the grievances that have been perpetuated over the years from multiple Native Organizations. Lòol described their disappointment in the Native Organization and their terrible investment choices. They also discussed their disappointment in the corporate leaders lack of cultural awareness and



understanding. They also discussed their disappointment in the corporate leaders lust for money and power.

### **Racism and Hardships**

The way in which participants discussed poverty, alcohol, domestic violence, assaults, racism, and parenting practices may be seen almost as a stand in for the disruption and effects of colonization. When Lòol and Kanat'à described their experiences of racism and hardships they didn't explicitly associate those experiences with colonialism – but the experiences Lòol and Kanat'à narrated are results of traumas experienced by their ancestors. For example, Kanat'à relayed the following narrative about their mother and her relation to the community and culture:

My mother (coughs) was a half-breed from Angoon. And uuuugghh growing up she was, she grew-up in a convent and she was shunned away from the culture, right? So, she couldn't talk Lingit or anything. It was uuuugghh she didn't know anything about her culture at all.

This narrative represents the consequences of the boarding school era. Kanat'à's mother grew-up in an era where the government created boarding schools in order to quickly and forcefully assimilate young Tribal Citizens into Western society. The boarding school era brought Tribal Citizens one-step closer to the end of their Tribal identity and this is evident in Kanat'à's reflection of their mother.

Their mother was stripped of her identity and as a result concealed Kanat'à's Tribal identity from them, "...and when I grew-up I didn't even know that I was Indian. I didn't know I was Tlingit until I was thirteen-years-old." The fact that Kanat'à's mother concealed their identity may have resulted due to the following reasons: the atmosphere of the 50's and 60's didn't welcome or celebrate Tribal identities; Kanat'à's mother wanted to protect her child from the abuse and ridicule of being a half-breed; or the controversial

conversation around what constitutes an Indian forced them to conceal their Tribal identities.

Another trauma that appeared in the narratives focused on the destruction of the Great Sioux Nation's sacred site. Kàa Eetì Gaaxì. Lòol described how they felt visiting the demolished burial site and how the assaulted of the sacred site impacted their overall well-being:

Ummm, it was ummm, it was right next to the freeway. It was bad enough that it was done. It was sad that umm that people could see them doing that because it was right on the side of the freeway. And ummm it was so sad. When I drove by you could see the earth that was pitted, where it was dug up. Everyone knew what they had done and the sadness in the air was overwhelming.

The desecration of the sacred site was devastating because those grounds not only served as the final resting place for the Sioux Nation but served as a prayer site as well. For Tribal Citizens, the desecration of the sacred site echoed the notion that sacred sites and burial grounds aren't significant. The heinous defilement of the sacred site sends a clear heartbreaking message – your ancestors and sacred sites don't matter if they hinder the advancement of the United States.

*Oh, by the way. Did you hear about the graveyards that they dug up? Yeah, I heard that they dug up a graveyard and destroyed a sacred site of the Sioux Nation. Yup, it was horrible. It was disheartening to hear. I was there shortly after they've dug up. I was driving in the evening passing the graveyard and it was soo sad and soo eerie. There were holes in the ground. (Very long pause) I don't know how anyone can dig up someone's loved one. Can you imagine them doing that in Angoon? I was thinking the same thing. Could you imagine them digging up the grave site by the ferry terminal? Or the trail behind the high school that serves as the last resting place of an important Shaman? Ummm hmm.*

This message is continuously reaffirmed by the fact that hundreds of museums worldwide possess artifacts and bones of Tribal Citizens. It's also reaffirmed as the United States continues to systematically destroy Tribal lands.

T'òok' on the other hand associated their experiences with colonialism. This was evident in their discussion of the lessons they learned at the Standing Rock Protest.

It's a desperate situation. That was the realization that I came to, you know? So, we try to play along with their rules. We go inside their courtrooms and try to pass legislation and do these sort of things, but they are making small and insignificant changes – and they will likely never completely empower Indigenous Nations to be who they once were because the relationship between oppressor and oppressed remains intact and they want it to stay that way. They want it to stay white people in charge. They didn't come here to take our land just to give it back. They want to keep the power in their own hands and for people in Europe. This is just the reality of the situation, right? You know, the realization just became firmer seeing the government support corporate interest. The money shows who is in charge at that point.

They reflected on the colonial judicial and legislative processes that maintain the status quo for the United States and Native Nations. The statement, “So we try to play along with their rules” highlights the fact that Native Nations surrendered a portion of their sovereignty in order to avoid completely surrendering their authority. The process of acknowledging the sovereignty of both the United States and Native Nations and the trading of sovereignty amongst the two resulted in Native Nations relinquishing some of its cultural values.

The statement, “You know the realization just became firmer seeing the government support corporate interest,” coupled with the outcome of the Dakota Access Pipeline reveals the difference in environmental values held by the United States and Native Nations. Due to a number of factors the United States believe they have dominion over the land while Native Nations believe they are stewards of the land. The clash of values calls into question management of land versus management of people practices.

The theme of contemporary racism was articulated during the interviews of Lòol, Kanat'à, and T'òok'. The narratives provided by Lòol, Kanat'à, and T'òok' provide a glimpse of the effects of contemporary responses to historically traumatic events.

**Kanat'à:** The racism in North Dakota is extremely disgusting and open – if you go there you will see it. They're terrible people. They didn't treat Natives well – we couldn't buy anything, and they denied us propane in town at the uuummm even the veterans because they knew we were buying for Standing Rock.

**Lòol:** There was a lot of people who shouldn't have been there, but they were. They treated it like a rainbow gathering or a burning man event. They had no respect for our culture, but they took from it. I call them culture vultures. They were learning as much as they could about ceremony and taking it with them to exploit it for monetary gain or visibility. You know to give them status. I swear half of the hippies in town were saying *ho ho*.

**T'òok':** But at the time people were saying that people were coming from this burning man festival you know, they are changing the feeling and the dynamic of what we are trying to do here. So that sort of changed the way things were taking place.

The on-going barrage of micro-aggressions experienced by Lòol, Kanat'à, and T'òok while at Standing Rock undermined their identity and Tribal Nations. This can be seen in all three accounts, “They were learning as much as they could about ceremony and taking it with them to exploit for monetary gain and visibility” and “they are changing the feeling and the dynamic of what we are trying to do here.” All three narratives unveil a failed attempt at assimilation, “We couldn't buy anything and they denied us propane in town even ummm the veterans.”

The last theme of poverty and alcohol appeared in all three narratives – this frame is important because it reveals the interaction between historical trauma and contemporary stressors. Alcohol is significant because Tribal Citizens are five-times more likely to die from alcohol-related causes.

**Lòol:** And umm he offered to take us to dinner and we were so hungry for ugh for umm...you never know what you're going to get at camp and umm so we stood in line at the banquet, I mean ugh an all you can eat restaurant buffet. And we passed up or dinner at camp and you have to get there early enough so there's enough. So, we get to the register after standing in the buffet line to pay and his card was declined. *Oh no!* And he wasn't surprised and he wasn't shocked. He kind of just shrugged his shoulder and said, "Huh." It was as if he knew what was going to happen and ugh we had to go to the dollar store because we had to get food there. And all they had there was the small mac-and-cheese and the tv dinners – all processed.

**Kanat'à:** We grew up in poverty. *Yeah?* Yeah, my mom was a half-breed with five little boys. We grew-up all alone in Seattle basically. Her family was here but I don't know, it didn't help out much back then.

**T'òok':** And you know she uuugh she was going to school at the same time and at the same time she had issues with drugs and alcohol. You know, off and on throughout my youth. My earliest memories are the sounds of my family and their alcoholic voices. When people use drugs and alcohol you know, I think alcohol is worse than a lot of other drugs because of its availability. *Yeah!* You know, you can go around the corner and its right there and whatever you need to get and boom it's easily accessible. Ugh, ugh, ugh, an easy way to escape any kind of pain and any issues you may have. *For sure.* You have to look inside yourself to fix those issues.

Poverty and alcohol go hand-in-hand and T'òok' captured it, "...an easy way to escape any kind of pain and any issues you may have." Most Tribal Citizens live in poverty unable to afford basic needs such as housing, food, transportation, and medical care. More often than not, Tribal Citizens turn to alcohol to numb the pain.

Both poverty and alcohol harm Tribal Citizens both physically, mentally, and emotionally, "My earliest memories are the sounds of my family and their alcohol voices." Alcohol is problematic for most Tribal Citizens because they are predisposed to alcoholism because they way in which the alcohol is metabolized. Society also imposes emotional and mental harm to Tribal Citizens through reinforcing the stigmatism that Tribal Citizens are nothing but alcoholics that rely on the government and the welfare system.

## Resiliency

Resiliency was an interesting frame because Lòol, Kanat'à, and T'òok' didn't explicitly described their strategies of resiliency and coping mechanisms. During the interview coping tactics and resiliency strategies were revealed through the Tribal Citizen's tone and overall demeanor. Below, are examples of coping tactics, resiliency strategies, and cultural engagement.

**Lòol:** I heard in the summer there were drumming at the camps. It was so cool! All these camp fires and languages was filtering in the air from these different Nations. And I heard, I think maybe Ooskì. I never met him but I remember that song, a Tlingit song.

**T'òok':** After we did that kind of work she would start teaching me one word at a time. I would mess up and she would laugh at me. (*Chuckle*) I would laugh too! It was I mean one of the most transformative parts of my life with my grandma. She spoon fed me with love and care with our ancestral language.

**Kanat'à:** We got there just in time because they were handing out eagle feathers to all the veterans. That was a very powerful ceremony from the Standing Rock Sioux Nation and they did a dance. We danced with them and it was incredible.

The joy the participants felt while engaging with the culture is represented in their narratives. From their testimony, “She spoon fed me with love and care with our ancestral language” there is something to be said about reverting back to the language. Engaging with the language is important because it serves as a reminder of the vibrancy and intellect of their people. Speaking the language is a privilege – Native Nations will have to address this with the left-out generation (the off-spring of the boarding school generation).

Other coping tactics included humor, “I would mess up and she would laugh at me. (*Chuckle*) I would laugh too;” song and dance, “All these camp fires and languages were filtering in the air from these different Nations,” and engaging in ceremony, “We got there just in time because they were handing out eagle feathers to all the veterans.”

## Harmful Transitions

This frame was not found within the literature – scholars failed to discuss and highlight the transition from protesting back to the everyday hustle and bustle of life. This frame may not seem surprising to most, but, it's in fact astounding because this frame highlights a plethora of traumas: identity issues, systemic racism, and poverty. T'òok' describes their experience coming back to Washington from North Dakota:

You know, a big shock for me was coming back. *Coming back?! Yeah, you know I have to come back and pay rent, yeah, I got to pay my electricity bills, yeah, I got to pay my phone bills, yah I have to pay my taxes! Where does that tax money go? Oh yeah! It goes to supporting the military oppression of other peoples and countries. It fucking sucks! I don't like being a part of this system. What is this? It felt really ugh foreign to me to be back in this system. With all the noise. It was hard to readjust back into it when I first went.*

Lòol and Kanat'à didn't share the same sentiment as T'òok' – each stated they had a fairly easy transition from North Dakota to Washington. This highlights the identity issue that varies among generations – Lòol and Kanat'à grew-up in a time period where it was encouraged to conceal your Tribal identity as opposed to celebrating it. Where T'òok' was raised in an environment where Tribal identities are celebrated. Unlike Lòol and Kanat'à, T'òok' is exploring their identity and what it means to be a Tlingit in contemporary times.

The listing of all the responsibilities: paying rent, electricity bills, phone bills, and taxes allude to the on-going concern about financial stability. It also relates to an oppressive system in which Tribal Citizens like T'òok' are forced to occupy. Within this system Tribal Citizens like T'òok' are trapped in a vicious cycle – a system that discourages and silences Tribal identities and cultural engagement as well as creates financial burdens for Tribal Citizens. For T'òok', this transition back to the everyday hustle and bustle reminds them of their role in the oppression of other countries. It leaves them emotionally damaged.

## Teachable Moments

The generational gap between myself and the participants was unveiled within this frame. In the Tlingit Culture youth are typically in the audience and are expected to be seen and not heard. For this study, the roles were reversed. I took on a more authoritative role. The participants managed to fulfill their roles as elders – by providing teachable moments. Below, are some examples of lessons Lòol, Kanat'à, and T'òok' attempted to instill in me.

**Lòol:** You have to be careful of some of the Natives in Oregon Nicole. Especially the Native men.

**Kanat'à:** The racism in North Dakota is extremely disgusting and open. If you go there you see it. I wouldn't suggest it if you don't have to go to North Dakota. Just don't go there. They're terrible people.

**T'òok':** You know, what I think you are doing is good and it is important and its valuable. It will benefit the people that will look at you know the information that is provided and ummm you know I think that umm as you continue to hear the stories that it will transform you in many different ways. I encourage you to stay strong in it and remain positive and open to the experiences that you are going to hear about. Gunalchèesh.

Their messages varied but none the less were still teachable moments. Lòol offered wisdom and advice about the dangers of men. They recommended airing on the side of caution. This lesson may have stemmed from the following events: the missing women movement, exposure to domestic violence, or the increase in sexual assaults. This lesson also highlights an important cultural value – valuing women, the child bearers. In the Tlingit Culture, the greatest expression of love is Ch'k'. This word resembles the noise that a baby makes when it's getting nourishment from its mother.

Kanat'à provided a reminder of the harsh realities for brown bodies, “The racism in North Dakota is extremely disgusting and open.” They provided the lesson that racism comes in many forms: subtle and overt or blatant and obvious.



T'òok' provided the greatest lesson of all – a reminder about the significance of historical trauma research. They acknowledged the fact that the researcher is not immune from the research. They had one clear message, “I encourage you to stay strong in it and remain positive and open to the experiences that you are going to hear about.” T'òok' called into question objectivity.

Other lessons found throughout their testimonies included humor, bravery, respect, and education. For example, Lòol showcased the importance of finding humor, “And basically, I joke about it, but, it's not a joke. Count all the fingers. Count all the toes.” Here, Lòol finds humor in the violent nature of protests. Kanat'à discussed the importance of respect, “Just don't go there. They're terrible people.” In this instance, Kanat'à reflects on their experience shopping in North Dakota. They painfully recounted their experience trying to shop for groceries in North Dakota. They describe the disrespect and hatred they received from the North Dakota community. They were saddened by this experience and angered by the fact that they would show disrespect to a military veteran.

The testimony provided by Lòol, Kanat'à, and T'òok' revealed a lesson that has yet to be established: cultural engagement and the left-out generation. Will the off-spring of the boarding school survivors fulfill their role as cultural bearers? Will their feelings of neglect, betrayal, and hurt be amplified? What will the relationship between the left-out generation and their off-spring look like? Will the left-out generation develop new responses to trauma that wasn't previously observed?

## Don't Steal My Pause

Silence appears in many forms – it can be expressed through ughs, ums, laughter, or silence. Too often our culture is uncomfortable with silence. Silence provides a space for self-reflection and has shown to offer significant health advantages that boost overall well-being. More research is needed to explore the pauses when individual's recount their traumatic experiences. Below, are examples of pauses seen in Lòol, Kanat'à, and T'òok's testimony.

**Lòol:** So, I did. Nicole, I have to tell you I'm an auntie to people in Eugene. I'm an auntie for the entire Indian community in Eugene. (Pause) *That's good that you're supporting your community*

**Kanat'à:** I don't know, ugh, at that point I felt like we were outcasts. I just felt like we were outcasts. I just felt weird until she told me that and then everything fell into place. *Oh okay. What made you feel weird?* It was just ugh, my mom was trying to ugh pass us as Hawaiian, I think back then.

**T'òok':** You know diversity and opportunity surrounds us. I still experience racism on a lot of levels and prejudice. Like for instance, you know. I would be walking around right? It would be around a neighborhood at night. It was my thing. I like to go for walks and exploring and as a result for that I know umm Seattle very well. I know the different areas, streets, and bike paths. Umm I would get stopped by police and ugh you know for just walking down the street. I would get profiled. They would pull me over and ask hey where are you going? Let me see your ID. What are you doing out here? And ugh we have word that there's a suspect fitting your description and we wanted to make sure it's not you know, at that time I was experiencing that sort of thing and man (Long Pause) my upbringing (Long Pause) my mom was real with me in regard to ways that her specific experience has been with white people and with people who are culturally deprived or culturally ignorant.

Silence provides an individual a moment to create – what were Lòol, Kanat'à, and T'òok' trying to create during the moments of silence? Did their pause allow them the opportunity to create solutions to address their trauma? In their moment of silence are they imagining a future in which they are no longer burdened? Is there silence just a mere time for reflection? Are they using this time of silence to compose themselves – chocking back the emotions and censoring themselves?

## CONCLUSION

*“There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you.”*

Aatlein Gunalchèesh. Gunalchèesh aḵ een yèi jeeniyì. Woosh tin yéi jigaxtooné. Sh tóonḵ haa gaḵtoolyéiḵ. Héł ikawdaké. It warms my heart to stand before you today, June 15, 2018. Congratulations class of 2018 you did it. We’re gathered here today to celebrate your successes and your triumphs. I stand before you to deliver an important message. You’ve recently completed your thesis and many of you will have mixed emotions: joy, anger, sadness, emptiness, and frustration from the lack-luster finish. I’m here to tell you to not get caught up in the end result. Find happiness and pride in the journey that got you here. Find pleasure in the fact that you get to relearn how to be in the moment again.



Gunalchèesh yèi aḵ toowú yatee aḵ tlàa. Yat’éeex’i át áyá yá kḵust. Haa eetí káa. Héł i náḵ gaḵtoo.aat. This thesis explored the effects of historical trauma on contemporary experiences. Through this study three lessons were derived: truths can be found at home, research should be culturally relevant, and further research is needed. Coping tactics and resiliency strategies can be found in Native Nation communities – embedded in the language, immersed in the art, and woven in the stories. More research is needed in the field of historical trauma – future studies should consider analyzing the pauses observed in the interview interactions, exploring the effects of identity and transitions back into western society, and the healing benefits of cultural activism.

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## APPENDICES

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What was your up-brining like?
  - a. Can you describe your childhood experiences?
  - b. Did you experience any hardships growing up as a Native child?
  - c. What lessons or cultural values did you learn as a child?
2. How did you learn about your culture and what were you taught?
  - a. How often did you engage in cultural activities?
  - b. When your immersed in the cultural activity how do you feel?
3. What do you remember from your participation at the Standing Rock Protest?
  - a. What time of year did you attend the protest? Who did you go with?
  - b. Did you participate in any of the cultural activities at Standing Rock?
  - c. Was the transition back to your home community easy and smooth?