

**STAGE 1 – DESIRED RESULTS**

**Unit Two Title: Rewriting Our Story: A Hero’s Journey**

This is the second unit in the course entitled, Biskanewin Ishkode, “fire that is beginning to stand”. The question is: Can we reclaim our “fire” our “center” that has been destroyed over the past 500 hundred years? We will explore the possibilities together in order to make ourselves whole again.

The focus of this unit is to understand the historical trauma of the Native People in the United States. The theory of historical trauma has been considered clinically applicable to Native American individuals by counselors, psychologists, and psychiatrists. The current problems facing the Native American people may be the result of a “legacy of chronic trauma and unresolved grief across generations.” This unit explores the research validating historical trauma and the repercussions of past historical trauma on present day populations of Native People.

Humor has long been the “medicine” used by Native Peoples to cope with traumatic events. The “medicine” for the spirit will be Sherman Alexie’s novel, *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*. The characters in the story and the author are examples of transcending the trauma of the past and healing through laughter and taking a “hero’s journey” by accepting a call to explore the unknown in order to heal and be whole again.

**Instructional Goals:**

- To examine the theoretical framework of historical trauma.
- To confront the historical past by understanding the trauma and means of healing.
- To transcend trauma through laughter and the medicine of Native Humor.
- To personalize the Hero’s Journey as a means of letting go of the past.

**Understandings:** *Students will understand that...*

- An examination of the traumatic history of their ancestors brings them closer to healing.
- Historic unresolved grief is manifested in many ways: depression, anxiety, anger, low self-esteem, difficulty with self-identity and substance abuse.
- In many respects the road toward healing is a very personal journey and we can use humor and traditional teachings to help when necessary.

**Essential Questions:**

- Is confronting the past part of the healing process? Explain your response.
- With such a traumatic past is it possible to move onto healing?
- What personal choices can I make to begin the healing process?

**Students will know:**

- Painful and powerful lessons can be learned from the past.
- What happened in the past is not separate from what is going on today on Rocky Boy Reservation.

**Students will be able to:**

- Do close reading with comprehension.
- Read and understand academic research writings and use their imaginations as a way of personalizing the information.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• That laughter is part of healing even though it sometimes hides underlying trauma.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relate the Hero’s quest to the historical trauma narrative and generalize this quest template to current issues.</li> </ul>
--	--

**STAGE 2 – ASSESSMENT EVIDENCE**

<p><b>Performance Tasks:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Write two journal entries. <b>(10 points)</b></li> <li>• Point of View Reading Guide is fun and allows you to put yourself in the place of different people who participated in the long arduous journey of Rocky Boy and his people. <b>(15 points).</b></li> <li>• Sharing a poem/reading. <b>(5 points)</b></li> <li>• Hierarchical Study Guide <b>(10 points)</b></li> <li>• Chronology of Events Responses <b>(10 points)</b></li> <li>• Winter Count Project <b>(25 points)</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>Other Evidence:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular attendance and participation in discussion, especially of the major events that are identified in the <b>Chronology of Events</b> table.</li> <li>• Optional for more points: Other creative ways you can think about to represent the story of Rocky Boy’s history: a sewing project, a play, a series of photographs....</li> </ul> <p>Attendance and Participation: (25 Points)</p> <p>Total Possible: 100 points</p>
--	---

<p><b>Key Criteria:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Work is turned in on time.</li> <li>2. Thoughtful and creative responses are expected.</li> <li>3. Responses are complete with specific examples given to respond to the questions.</li> <li>4. The content of the response shows that close reading was done and that student was present at the class discussions.</li> <li>5. Papers use Standard English with very few grammatical errors.</li> <li>6. If absent during a key discussion, student will confer with the instructor on make-up assignments.</li> </ol> <p>93-100=A    92-86=B    74-85=C    73-60=D    60 and below =Not Pass</p>
---

**STAGE 3 – LEARNING PLAN**

<p><b>Summary of Learning Activities:</b> The different “lessons” are grouped into one hour long sessions. The instructor has the option of grouping the various “lessons” together to create longer sessions. The primary readings are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>Examining the Theory of Historical Trauma among Native Americans</i> by Kathleen Brown-Rice, 2013. (See handout)</li> <li>2. <i>The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian</i> by Sherman Alexie, 2007.</li> </ol> <p>The course content is interdisciplinary, employing various approaches to create an experiential and reflective learning experience for the students. A variety of instructional strategies are used along with multiple media formats (readings, video clips, PPT’s, Prezi,art...), collaborative tasks, reflective assignments, with a mix of paper-pencil and performance-based assessments. This is the second unit addressing the overall theme of Historical Trauma but, always with the goal of learning from the past in order to create meaningful and healthy relationships in one’s life and the community of Rocky Boy.</p> <p><b>Lesson One: Introduction: Phase One: Understanding Historical Trauma</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. (Distribute copies of page one of the unit.) Point out the following:</li> </ol>
---

- ❖ **Big Understandings** are the key concepts they will come to understand in this unit.
- ❖ **Instructional Goals** are the things they’ll accomplish.
- ❖ **Essential Questions:** They will be asked these key questions as a means of getting them to reflect on the deeper questions not limited to this course but related to all aspects of their lives. For example, they can relate these questions to any subject they are taking: **“Is confronting the past part of the healing process?”** They could study this in English when they’re reading an emotionally-charged piece of literature; or in social studies when studying any aspect of history from a human point of view; or in psychology where the past is studied to learn about present behaviors. [Post these questions...so they can be viewed for every class.]
- ❖ **Students will know:** By the end of the unit the students are expected to know this information.
- ❖ **Students will be able to:** These are the basic skills the students need in order to complete the unit assignments.

2. **Prior Knowledge:** In Unit One we were introduced to “historical trauma” as it played out in the ordeal of Rocky Boy, Big Bear, Little Bear, and the Metis as they collaborated to establish Rocky Boy Reservation. It was an ordeal that lasted for more than four decades. What do you think the effects were of living a life on the “edge” with no place to live, no food and the destruction of everything you believed in?
3. Ask the students to give highlights of Rocky Boy’s trek to get the Reservation established. What stood out most for them? Have them describe the highlights that they included in their final project of their Winter Count (in Unit One) of Rocky Boy’s journey.
4. Remember, the definition of HT? “Historical Trauma as the cumulative emotional and psychological wounding over one’s lifetime and from generation to generation following loss of lives, land and vital aspects of culture.” What do you think is meant by the word CUMULATIVE? So, is this saying that the suffering and pain of the past adds up? What do you think? Discuss with students.

Looking back at the past few centuries of America’s westward expansion, we can witness a long history of cataclysmic events inflicted upon generations of American Indians. Our country’s growth was at the expense of the continent’s indigenous peoples who suffered genocide, dislocation, and other unspeakable patterns of violence on physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual levels.

The adverse effect of this history carried down from generation to generation is known as historical trauma. Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart, widely regarded as the “mother of historical trauma” by Native Americans, describes **historical trauma as the cumulative emotional and psychological wounding over one’s lifetime and from generation to generation following loss of lives, land and vital aspects of culture.**

The descendants of Native People continue today to suffer from massive group trauma across many generations. This group trauma manifests itself today in myriad ways, from alcoholism and drug addiction, to domestic violence and sexual abuse.

The list of historical traumas is long and painful. First contact with people from Europe caused sometimes as high as 85% of Indian people to die from smallpox, tuberculosis and other infectious diseases. These diseases were in fact used as biological warfare to clear the way for foreign communities, plants and animals. Many know of the massacres of Wounded Knee and Sand Creek, but do not know that there were dozens of others.<sup>1</sup> For example, the historical plight of Rocky Boy and his people who valiantly fought for a homeland and often found themselves with “Nowhere Left to Go”.

<sup>1</sup> The Northwest Perspective Toward Healing: <http://discoveringourstory.wisdomoftheelders.org/resources/spirit-historical-trauma>  
Source: Understanding by Design, Unit Design Planning Template (Wiggins/McTighe 2005)

**5. Show PPT: Biskanewin Ishkode: Historical Trauma.** Discuss the main points of the PPT: Emphasize these points: That past trauma is present today and these traumatic events have to be processed and released. The PPT highlights various phases of HT: 1) Confronting Historical Trauma, 2) Understanding the Trauma, 3) Releasing the Trauma, and 4) Transcending the Trauma. This Unit 2 is organized according to these phases of Historical Trauma.

**6. Assignment#1:** Write a 2 page journal entry (diary style) of your understanding of HT.

### Lesson Two: Phase One: Understanding Trauma: How the Brain Works

- 1. Pre-Reading Activity.** In order to prepare them for the main reading by Kathleen Brown-Rice, it's important to understand some basics about the human brain. Worksheet #1 gives them the text of the short video they will be viewing and also serves as their assignment.
- 2. Distribute WORKSHEET #1** for the short YouTube video (4:44) **Your Brain on Stress and Anxiety** by Dr. John Kenworthy. (Handout) Point out that the handout is the text of the video they will be viewing on the impact of emotions and the brain. Notice how the amygdala plays such a key role. The amygdala goes on an automatic flight or fight mode even when it doesn't make any sense. In other words, the "danger" cannot be seen but resides somewhere in the memory. We'll be studying more about HT and the premise that ancestral memories are passed on and reside in the "memories" of succeeding generations until these memories are processed. Processing means that one has to go back and "re-live" the pain, as painful as that may seem, in order to heal.
- 3.** The video we are viewing is very helpful in understanding how the brain processes stimuli and makes either automatic or reflective decisions to fight or take flight. View the video together in class.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gmwiJ6ghLIM&list=PLw8x\\_XMi3VwWNRvf-1\\_D1lbRVoK0p-jVd&index=1](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gmwiJ6ghLIM&list=PLw8x_XMi3VwWNRvf-1_D1lbRVoK0p-jVd&index=1)

- 4. Assignment#2:** Read the presentation by Dr. Kenworthy and answer the five questions on **WORKSHEET #1.**

### Lesson Three: Confronting Historical Trauma

- 1. Review the main points** of the Brain video and ask students to gather into groups of two to discuss their responses on Worksheet #1. Collect Worksheets for grading.
- 2. Discuss Essential Question#2: With such a traumatic past is it possible to move onto healing?** Use Concept Map (Handout) to structure the discussion. Have each student think about the question and fill out their reasons. Follow up with students sharing their opinions in large or small group(s). Collect the papers to learn more about what students are processing.
- 3. Introduce the Reading:** Students are expected to do close reading (reading with understanding). Explain that the article *Examining the Theory of Historical Trauma among Native Americans* by Kathleen Brown-Rice is a fairly technical article with citations in parentheses. This can sometimes be very distracting if one is not used to this format. In order to make the reading of this article more reader-friendly, the students will be reading an abbreviated version with highlights or markings to indicate the main ideas.
- 4. Overview/Summary of Reading:** *Kathleen Brown-Rice* makes the argument that the trauma experienced by the Native Peoples as long ago as the 1600's is evident in the behavior of the Native Peoples today. One of the theories has to do with the memory centers of the human brain,

namely the Amygdala—the FEAR and emotional center of the brain. If historical trauma does exist, the effects are that the brain is “stuck” in a fight or flight mode brought on by embedded fears stored in the Amygdala. The amygdala is now in a supersensitive state of fight or flight due to these embedded memories (from the historical past) that can set off a series of emotions on a continuum from depression, panic attacks, heightened sensitivity, anger, bullying, and other physiological and psychological symptoms of imbalance, emotional or mental. After having studied hundreds of articles by historians, psychologists, and neurologists, the author hypothesizes that Native People have stored traumatic memories from the past and are now having to process these traumatic memories by

- **confronting the trauma,**
- **understanding the trauma,**
- **releasing the trauma, and**
- **transcending the trauma**

5. **Assignment#3:** Read the assigned article (pages 1-5) Complete pages 1-2 in **WORKSHEET #2** Hierarchical Study Guide for Unit Two.

#### **Lesson Four: Understanding the Trauma**

1. **Discussion:** Students gather in small groups to discuss what they read in the Brown-Rice article. Divide the students into groups of 3 and assign each group either questions 1,2, or 3 from pages 1-2 in Worksheet#2: Hierarchical Study Guide for Biskanewin Ishkode Unit Two. Also, students will respond to **ESSENTIAL QUESTION#1 —Is confronting the past part of the healing process?** Explain their responses with specific details/examples. Students will discuss their assigned question and essential question#1 and put their main points on a large Post-it. They will, then, use the Post-it as a visual for reporting back to the large group.
2. **Assignment#4:** Continue reading the Brown-Rice article and complete the Study Guide: Worksheet #2. (pp 3-4).

#### **Lesson Five: Understanding the Trauma (continued)**

1. **Discussion Starter: Gather students in a Circle:** Collect Assignment #2. Randomly read responses to the essay question. Get students reactions to the different responses.
2. **Close Reading** of pages 10, 11, 12, 13. Read aloud page 11, pausing to call on students to paraphrase the main points: eg., Three means by which trauma is transmitted to subsequent generations; Parenting Style impacted by trauma. Read aloud highlights from pages 12-13 calling on students to paraphrase...and give specific examples of trauma.
3. **Read poem:** Distribute NOWHERE LEFT TO GO poem by vpa and read it aloud. (Handout)
4. **General Discussion of the Poem.** While in a circle, ask the students what they felt when listening to/reading the poem. When is this poem taking place? Is in the present time or in 1890 at the Wounded Knee Massacre? What does the author mean by the Ghosts Dance? Is she speaking of the historical past or present? Ask each student in turn to read a line that speaks of the effects of historical trauma.
5. **Setting up Assignment?** Many of you have already read *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* by Sherman Alexie. What did you think of it? Did he have an easy life? I’d like you to re-read it once again. We’re going to look at it differently than you did when you were reading it for some of your other classes. If you’ve read it already, skim it so you can recall the highlights for discussion in our next class.

6. **Assignment#5:** Re-read The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian by Sherman Alexie. (Read minimally to page 132.)

### Lesson Six: Releasing the Trauma

1. **Pre-Reading:** The author of The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian is Sherman Alexie, who's a member of the Spokane Tribe in Washington. Does anyone know anything about this tribe?

Let's view this Prezi presentation on some general information about the Spokane.

<http://prezi.com/315o9cbd-vla/spokane-indian-history/>

#### Transcript of Spokane Indian History

The Spokane Tribe of Indians inhabited northeast Washington, Northern Idaho and Western Montana for many centuries. They are known as "The Children Of The Sun". They have lived around the Spokane River to be able to fish, hunt and gather. Now, the Spokane Indians live on a Spokane Indian Reservation located in Eastern Washington almost entirely in Stevens County. The good thing is that in the Reservation they have a part of the Spokane River, one of their most valuable resources because the Spokane rely on the river waterways for nourishment, and use it for medicinal and spiritual purposes.

#### <sup>2</sup>Additional Facts:

The Spokane Tribe of Indians and the Spokane Tribal Headquarters is now located in Wellpinit, Washington. Wellpinit is approximately 50 miles northwest of Spokane, Washington on the Spokane Indian Reservation. In earlier times, the Spokane Tribe lived on, protected, and respected over 3 million acres of land. Tribal members fished the Spokane River, the Columbia River, and utilized the grand Spokane Falls as a gathering place of family and friends. The Spokanes lived along the river in three bands known as the Upper, Middle and Lower Spokane Indians. Traditional campsites were lived in depending upon the Seasons of the year.

In January 1881, President Rutherford B. Hayes formally declared the Spokane Indian Reservation the new and smaller home of the Spokane Indians. The three bands of Indians were split up and some found new homes, which are now known as the Coeur d'Alene Indian Reservation, the Flathead Indian Reservation, and the Colville Indian Reservation. Today the Spokane Indian Reservation is 157,376 acres in size. As of January 2006, tribal membership includes 2441 people; we are strong and growing.

2. **Distribute copies** of Sherman Alexie's biography and ask the students to read silently and mark down highlights in the margin. (Handout) Discuss main points.
3. **Poem** by Sherman. Ask students what is the mood of the writer? Is this a familiar scene?

#### Poverty of Mirrors

You wake these mornings alone and nothing  
 can be forgiven; you drink the last  
 swallow of warm beer from the can  
 beside the bed, tell the stranger sleeping  
 on the floor to go home. It's too easy

to be no one with nothing to do, only  
 slightly worried about the light bill  
 more concerned with how dark day gets.

You walk alone on moist pavement wondering

<sup>2</sup> The Spokane Tribe Web Site.

what color rain is in the country.

Does the world out there revolve around rooms  
without doors or windows? Centering the mirror  
you found in the trash, walls seem closer  
and you can never find the right way

out, so you open the fridge again

for a beer, find only rancid milk and drink it

whole. This all tastes too familiar Poem Last September 16th, I was walking in downtown Seattle when this  
pick-up truck pulls up in front of me. Guy leans out the window and yells, "Go back to your own country," and  
I was laughing so hard because it wasn't so much a hate crime as a crime of  
Sherman Alexie

Have students comment on  
the irony.

- 4. Discussion:** Identity and Self-Esteem (evident from quotes from the book.) Divide the students into groups of 2-3 and assign a quote to each group. They are to discuss the quote and report to the group on the context of the quote and what it signifies.

'I am zero on the rez. And if you subtract zero from zero, you still have zero.' (p. 16)

'There's probably no place more isolated than my reservation, which is located approximately one million miles north of Important and two billion miles west of Happy.' (p. 30)

"I want you to say that you deserve better." I couldn't say it. It wasn't true. I mean, I wanted to have it better, but I didn't deserve it.' (pp. 40-1)  
'He was the loser Indian father of a loser Indian son living in a world built for winners.' (p. 55)

'Reardan was the opposite of the rez. It was the opposite of my family. It was the opposite of me. I didn't deserve to be there. I knew it; all of those kids knew it. Indians don't deserve shit.' (p. 56)

'. . . I woke up on the reservation as an Indian, and somewhere on the road to Reardan, I became something less than Indian. And once I arrived at Reardan, I became something less than less than less than Indian.' (p. 83)

'I was half Indian in one place and half white in the other. It was like being Indian was my job, but it was only a part-time job.' (p. 118)

'Well, life is a constant struggle between being an individual and being a member of the community.' (p. 132)

Junior finds it difficult to feel optimistic about himself and his culture during the novel. His poor self-esteem is connected with the idea of being poor and even believing that he deserves to be poor. It is not until Mr. P. points out that he deserves better and is worth more than he actually starts to believe it. Even so, when he first attends Reardan he will not believe for a second that 'those white people aren't better than [him]'. (p. 55) In fact, he is so used to believing that because he is Indian he is inferior in some way to the people around him. Junior is considered to be a traitor by his people and when he gets to Reardan, he is considered inferior for being Indian. His experience is reminiscent of the migrant experience the world over, the feeling of not belonging to either

culture or being completely accepted by either culture. He battles to find his individual identity within his cultural identity.

5. **Further Discussion:** Go onto discuss the extensive poverty on the Reservation. Use the following quotes as starters. Invite comments.

### Poverty

- ‘Poverty = empty refrigerator + empty stomach’ (p. 8)
- ‘My parents came from poor people who came from poor people who came from poor people, all the way back to the very first poor people.’ (p. 11)
- ‘It sucks to be poor, and it sucks to feel that you somehow *deserve* to be poor . . . It’s an ugly circle and *there’s nothing you can do about it.*’ (p. 13)
- ‘I lied about how poor I was.’ (p. 119)

6. **Assignment#6:** Finish reading *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*

### LESSON SEVEN: THE HERO QUEST: TRANSCENDING THE TRAUMA

1. **Making Predictions:** (Assuming the students have all read the book.) Ask students if they see any relationships between the *Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* and the readings they’ve been doing on historical trauma. (See Graphic Organizer—handout, page 103) Have them fill in the Graphic Organizer in pairs. Share their insights as a large group. Collect the papers—to see the connections they made to create meaning.
2. **Hero Quest:** We’re going to look at Arnold Jr in a different way than we have in the past. We’re going to look at him as a role model and hero, relying heavily on the works of Joseph Campbell in his book, *The Hero of a Thousand Faces*. Joseph Campbell explains that there is a template of patterns that a hero follows as they begin their heroic journey of transformation. Here’s a short video clip to get us started.
3. Watch the short video clip: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hhk4N9A0oCA>
4. Watch the Prezi Presentation which outlines the journey. Be sure to play the embedded film clips.  
<http://prezi.com/k6bxm9naoxbb/the-heros-journey/>
5. Discuss the Hero’s Journey thoroughly because the students will be applying the template to Arnold’s Journey.
6. **Assignment #7:** Complete **Worksheet #3:** Arnold’s Hero Journey

### Lesson 8 & 9: Transforming the Trauma: Healing Within

1. **Checking for Comprehension:** In doing your assignment from the previous class you followed Arnold’s journey of the Hero Quest. Amazing how the author, either consciously or unconsciously, developed a character that followed the Hero Quest template/archetype. What do you think? Is he a hero for you? Are there things that he’s done that you can imitate? In getting to know Arnold we realize that he’s a real person in a real world situation but he is tenacious (explain meaning) and persistent (explain). Would you agree?
2. **Discussion:** In small groups students share their ideas of the Hero Quest and how Arnold fulfilled the criteria of being a hero. In spite of his very difficult life he managed to be humorous and very clear on what he had to do to be the best person he could be.

**3. Final Project:** The final project is a reflective and fun project where you’ll have choices on what to do. In reading the novel more than likely you enjoyed the comic strips. These were done by Ellen Forney. Did you think they contributed to the story? I’m sure you have favorites.

**Illustrator: Ellen Forney.** Ellen Forney's many illustrations offer comical insight into whatever Arnold is experiencing at the moment. Forney uses three different drawing styles for Arnold's pictures: one in which the comics are scribbled, one in which the cartoons look a bit more realistic, and a third style that has a more finished look. Can you identify which style is which? For an example of the first style, see figure 1.2. For the second, see 24.2. For the third, see figure 15.5. What can each drawing style tell us about the picture's subject matter? Also: what is the relationship in this book between words and text? Do the pictures sometimes tell you things that Arnold's words cannot? If so, what? She teaches comics studio classes at Cornish College of the Arts in Seattle. All of her life she has struggled with a bi-polar disorder and finds her art helps her cope with this disorder. She is 44 years old and has come to realize that her emotional challenges feed her creativity. She sees a “silver lining” in this illness. She and Sherman Alexie worked closely on the Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian. She wanted the illustrations to shed light on Arnold’s character.



**4. PPT to Illustrate (Model) Final Project:** Show PPT as an example of using illustrations from the book to show how trauma can be transcended.

**5. Diary Project is another option. (Handout)**
