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Blood Memory: An Intersubjective Look At Native American Children's Generational Shame through the text of Sherman Alexie's *Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*

How does unprocessed shame permeate lives individually and communally? How does oppression become deeply ingrained in the self's and the group's view of their value? Labeling Native American culture as “uncivilized” and approaching their acclimation as a “problem to be solved” has placed them in a “less than” position of value in relation to other groups. The adults have internalized this shaming process and passed down the resulting feelings of worthlessness, creating a cycle which the children are widely unable to break out of—as one cannot use tools they do not know exist. In my presentation, I will explore life on reservations as an ignored fourth world population, amidst the widely unaware first world nation surrounding them. Focusing on Sherman Alexie's *Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, I'll highlight the sharp decline of bright futures for struggling children within a group suffering from inordinately high levels of poverty, depression, drug abuse, diabetes, alcoholism, and suicide. With the help of a historical lens, the psychology of shame, and Robert D. Stolorow's Intersubjective-Systems Theory, I will show how generational shame breaks down hope and can stagnate an entire group—and for a very lucky few result in an overriding resilience.

Keywords: Children's Literature, Native Americans, Poverty, Shame, Intersubjective Systems Theory.