
Role of Family in Indian Horse by Richard Wagamese

An individual who experiences trauma with family can prevent the start of a true relationship. When someone faces a traumatic experience with family, they will often push away and live a life of being alone. In the story Indian Horse, by Richard Wagamese, the main character, Saul, shows how family is the most important thing in life and losing someone who cares so much for you can affect your life down the road. Saul is lonely and feels unprotected from those around him. Often times when Saul is approached by a friendly figure he would push away and would prefer to stay alone. In different cultures and ideologies family lifestyles differ. However one aspect of family is that it is important in every society because it is the main foundation and structure to society itself.

Saul has feelings of being lonely and lacks emotional support from those around him, He believes that if he would become close with someone he would lose them again. Saul had many problems with the people he cared most about in his life, these started to occur when he lost the people that meant the most to him. "I tucked my head in against her chest. She helps me and we lay there in the darkness shivering. I could feel her tremble. Wrapped in the cracked canvas of an old tent, I huddled in the harmd of the old woman and felt the cold freeze her in place. I understood that she had left me and I lay there crying against the empty drum of her chest." Throughout the story, it displays the hardships that Saul goes through, by pushing away and trying to suppress the memories of his younger life and his life. "Even now I think back to that day, I can see the shimmer of the wake they left behind them, the vee of it and the divergent lines that lapped at the shoreline." Saul traumatic past represents the suppressed memories of his future self. Saul's past represents the trauma that he will eventually go through later in his lifetime. During Saul's time he suppresses memories of his childhood and past that had dramatically changed his future life:

"He stared down at the ice while I told him about Father Leboutillier. I told him about my family and how I'd come to be at St. Jerome's. I told him about the rage that built in me that I never understood and how corroded everything, even the game. I told him about the road, the jobs, the towns, and then I told him about the booze."

Saul's past was just the start of his story. He suppresses memories because of what he experiences in the residential schools. During his time at St. Jerome's Saul experiences and sees things that a child at his age should not experience. We as humans will often do whatever it takes to protect and provide for our families. When it becomes tough family is often a main contributor to the happiness of a person. During Saul's younger age he is filled with this feeling of protection and love from his family, when he is taken away and his family leaves him alone he

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loses this sense of protection. In the beginning of chapter 17, Saul describes Father Leboutillier as though he was another family figure in Saul's life. "He was my ally. When the nuns and the priests got too hard on me, he was there to mediate and defend me." The role of family plays a very important part in Indian Horse, Not only does it display the sense of loss but the harsh reality that you can lose someone that means so much to you so quickly. During Saul's time at St. Jerome's he discovers hockey. Wagamese describes Saul's happiness and joy in the sport it creates hope for Saul's previously sad and traumatic life. In the story it is described as though Saul uses hockey and escape to suppress his emotional stress and traumatic incidents from St. Jeromes as well as his younger self. In Richard Wagamese' Indian Horse Saul spends the next few years of his life living with the Kelly family, yet leaves later on which sends him on an alcoholic drift. This leads Saul to disconnect with his identity and the way of his life along with his family, he also loses the ability to connect with nature as he once previously did.

Saul continues to drink alcohol as a way with dealing with his trauma until he enters the New Dawn Center for recovery. Relief from alcohol had led Saul to relive his traumatic past, as stated previously Saul was a very talented hockey player, however once introduced into the 'Non-Indian League' he was exposed to racism once again. Whilst in this league players and members of the crowd criticized his culture and appearance, for example. "Thirteen must be the mascot! As well as "Indians are s'posed to wear war paint, not make-up." Eventually Sauls loses the essence and visions of hockey, eventually all of the racism and the comments in the end made him quit hockey, which was a part of why Saul attempted to drown his past life with alcohol. His past life had caught up to him after his detox of alcohol, During his younger ages Father Leboutillier and Saul had a trusting relationship, although this changed rather quickly once he realized the true extent of what the Father was doing to him over the time spent at Residential School. "I shook with anger as I recalled it. I was never free. He was my captor, the warder of my innocence. He had used me. I felt hate, acrid and hot." Saul had felt ashamed and betrayed once again to find that the one person that he had admired so much had been manipulating him the entire time.

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