

Historical Trauma in Adoption in Indian Country
Sandy White Hawk

First Nations Repatriation Institute

1. Create a resource for First Nations people impacted by adoption or foster care to return home, reconnect, and reclaim their identity and citizenship.
2. Serves as a resource to enhance the knowledge and skills of practitioners who serve First Nations people.

Those who survived Boarding School gave birth to the Adoption Era

- Churches are used to remove and adopt out children
- Orphanages were established
- Hannahville, MI
- Indian Adoption Project headed by the Child Welfare League of America – 395 adopted through project
- The League set the precedent for Indian child removal and offered training to agencies
- 1 in 4 Indian children removed from their home in MN
American Indian Policy Institute

The Impact of Removal Through Adoption

- Individuals
Loss of identity for adoptee
Low self esteem for birth mother/father
Shame experienced by birth mothers/fathers
- Families
Loss of parental power
Near destruction of extended family system
- Tribal Communities
Loss of sense of community
- Tribal Nations
Weakened nations structure
Depleted numbers for enrollment

Historical Trauma

- Historical trauma is cumulative emotional and psychological wounding over the lifespan and across generations, emanating from massive group trauma.

Dr. Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart

What is Historical Trauma?

- The **collective** emotional and psychological injury both over the life span and **across generations**, resulting from a cataclysmic history of genocide.


Many adoptees experience traits of trauma survivors

- o Anxiety/Impulsivity
- o Intrusive Imagery/nightmares
- o Depression
- o Withdrawal/Isolation
- o Guilt
- o Unresolved Grief

Significant Abuse in Adoptive Homes

- o 23 of 95 experienced sexual abuse
- o 44 of 95 experienced physical abuse
- o 47 of 95 experienced emotional abuse

	Frequency	Percent
<i>Substance Abuse</i>		
Alcohol Addiction	22	26.2%
Alcohol Recovery	17	20.7%
Other Drug Addiction	9	10.7%
Other Drug Recovery	7	8.2%
<i>Mental Health</i>		
Eating Disorder	20	23.8%
Self Injury Without Suicidal Intention	24	28.6%
Depression	71	84.5%
Contemplated or Planned Suicide	43	50%
Attempted Suicide	20	23.3%
Hospitalized for Mental Health Condition	15	17.2%
<i>Other</i>		
Therapy for Abuse (Emot., Phys., Sexual)	51	69.9%
Felony or Gross Misdemeanor Conviction	7	8.2%
Served Time in Prison	5	6.1%

 1 in 10 Americans suffer from depression

Resource

- o **Research – Evan B. Donaldson:** The Adoption Institute was established in 1996 by the Board of Spence–Chapin Services to Families and Children (now Spence–Chapin), which identified the need for an independent and objective adoption research and policy organization that addressed the needs of all those touched by adoption – first/birth parents, adoptees and adoptive parents.
- o **Kinship by Design:** A History of Adoption in the Modern United States

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