Healing Historical Trauma through Ecological Activism and Cultural Practices

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<u>Introduction</u>

I decided to write this article when two events affecting two communities, geographically far away from each other but both close to my heart were evolving. I am referring to the plans by a powerful corporation and governmental entities to install an oil pipeline through the Native lands of the Standing Rock reservation, and to the repeated episodes of earthquakes which have affected Italy, my country of origin. I have strong emotional ties with both populations as I was born in Abruzzi and have been married to my Native American wife for three decades. Although the two events have different historical, geographical, and social dimensions, they also are linked by a common denominator: the imminent threats to the ecology of the respective communities, and the similarities regarding the financial and political paradigms associated with them. By similarities I am referring to the injudicious liberal, economic and financial models, well-spread throughout the planet, which have not invested, but, on the contrary, neglected the environment and the life of communities around the world (Share, 2008).

For example, there are valid scientific hypotheses about the possible link of earthquakes, including the multiple seismic episodes affecting the Italian peninsula in the past few years, and the practice of fracking. The administration of the Emilia Romagna region in Italy, one of the territories most affected by seismic events in recent years, after studying this subject in depth raised the strong possibility of the understated link between the recent wave of earthquakes with injudicious and unfettered national governmental policies, inspired by the multinational powers (D'Orsogna, 2014).

Of course, the article is not about my feelings but it is primarily a review of the significance of nature and land as it relates to Native American ecological and environmental justice, and to the historical losses and trauma suffered by the Native American populations. The insurgency of Standing Rock is a political response to oppressive federal governmental and corporative dynamics and can be viewed as a healthy and therapeutic reaction to their detrimental psychological effects, which symbolizes and rekindles the Native American trauma caused by historical losses. I use the term insurgency, instead of protest, because it conveys a more precise meaning of the Natives' opposition against the lingering colonial policies and attitudes towards them. In this context, I will examine the recent and current events related to the Standing Rock reservation and the Dakota Access Pipeline, planned by the Dakota Access, LLC, a subsidiary of the Dallas, Texas Corporation Energy Transfer Partners, L.P.

According to reliable sources, the pipeline would put the Missouri River, the water source for the reservation, at risk as shown by previous episodes of contamination during and after the completion of similar projects. In recent history there have been two recent oil spills: the one involving the Kalamazoo River in Michigan, in 2010, which caused damages for over $1 billion due to severe contamination, and another one of massive proportions into the Yellowstone River in Montana (Gallucci, 2015). The Standing Rock Tribe is also concerned that the pipeline route will invade the sacred Native sites and landmarks (Becker, 2015; McBride, 2017).

As I stated, it can be argued that Native Americans' concerted effort to preserve the environment is a form of "communal therapy" and a way to overcome the negative sequels of Historical Trauma. Native American scholars view Historical Trauma as the psychological, physical, social and cultural result of colonialism and post colonialism to which Northern American Indigenous people have been subjected. Also, the definition has been applied to the effects of colonial and post-colonial dynamics to other Indigenous populations around the world, which will not be covered in this essay, but show remarkable similarities to the historical events in Native American history.

The work by Indigenous scholars validates the thesis of historical induced trauma and, at the same time, stresses the role of traditional values, including the respect and realignment with the land and "mother earth" as a healing path for the psychological damage inflicted on Native populations by colonial and post-colonial historical events (Wesley-Esquimaux & Smolewski, 2004). Moreover, as already implied, the "Standing Rock insurgency" can inspire other communities around the world to take a more active role in defending their own environment. Therefore, the significance of the recent events at Standing Rock is about reacting and rejecting the psychological wounds inflicted upon Native communities and it has implications for the wellbeing of all the world communities, which are subjected and have been subjected to exploitation by the similar ecological policies.

To validate the impressive social value of communities, I will mention briefly the experience of the Italian American community of Roseto in the United State. Roseto was a very cohesive and healthy community that followed traditional ways of providing support for its members, consistent with the norm of old European and Italian villages. Its members were united for a long time as a cohesive sharing and supportive communal entity. As shown by a well-known sociological study, they enjoyed good health in particular good cardiovascular health, and wellbeing. That is until its members started moving out to fulfill the "American dream" of the good suburban life, in line with the American trend in the late fifties and sixties. This was a defining point for its people. Their health status began to deteriorate after a few years, and the benefits stemming from community cohesion progressively faded away and totally disappeared with the subsequent generations. The study showed that the most important variable contributing to the wellbeing of the community was what, more recently, would be defined as social capital, basically a measure of community cohesiveness (Egolf, Lasker, Wolf, & Potvin, 1992). Similar observations have been made about other communities around the world (Buettner, 2012).

As a premise to my narrative, I want to stress one of its philosophical central pieces: I am not trying to speak on behalf of all the Natives, part of them, or any Natives in particular. They do not need me as an advocate. My intent is to report my observations on issues about which Native American scholars, individuals, tribal members, and professionals have talked and written extensively, and from which I learned a lot. Therefore, I am divesting myself of the expert's role in Native American affairs, and trying hard to not contribute to the dynamics of post-colonial Historical Trauma, which the narratives of the "Western experts", scholars, and novelists, even when they acted according to the self-perception of Native advocacy, have perpetuated. To understand the current vicissitudes of the Standing Rock Sioux Nation, it is necessary to explore

some essential aspects of its history in the context of Native American history as viewed and interpreted by Native people.

Most of the Native Americans that I have had conversations about history with, have conveyed to me clearly and firmly that they do not want to be passive subjects of their historical narrative, but the protagonists, as should be legitimately expected. This prospective has been emphasized by a large number of Indigenous scholars, writers, activists, and leaders (Crum, 1993). In this vein, Devon A. Mihesuah, a Native scholar, in her 1998 book "Natives and Academics" states that white scholars usually do not care about consulting with Native communities to develop their understanding of Native American history, because of their bias about the level of insight and knowledge of Native Americans, especially if they did not receive a formal Western oriented education. As a consequence, they tend to choose "Native sources" which may not be representative of the Native American reality, but are more in line with Western academic orientations (Mihesuah, 1998). The same phenomenon seems to happen with the topic of Native spirituality. When white scholars address the issue of Native culture and spirituality they tend to provide a "new age" view as they focus on the mechanics of rituals and not on the essential meanings intertwined with it, which are so dense with cultural, social, and spiritual aspects, profoundly different from the Western models.

My own writing is heavily influenced by my Native American mentors, friends, and acquaintances, who have provided me with valuable insights about my writings on Native American history and public health issues. In particular, my thanks go to the Native professionals and scholars at the University of New Mexico's Center for Native American Health (CNAH), which, as a group, have been one of my most solid and consistent sources of knowledge and insight regarding Native communities in New Mexico and across the United States.

In the following section I will explore some pivotal historic, cultural, and socioeconomic aspects regarding the Standing Rock Sioux tribe, whose knowledge is a "condition sine qua non" to grasp both the concrete meaning of its opposition to the Dakota Access Pipeline and, equally important, the larger contextual historical and cultural issues including the Native concept and meaning of land and the related aspects of Historical trauma.

The Standing Rock Sioux Tribe: Relevant History and Events

The Standing Rock Sioux reservation is situated in North and South Dakota and like many other Native reservations and communities, has a complex history. According to the tribal website, which I consulted very carefully, the total land area of the Standing Rock is 2.3 million acres and of that 1,408,061 million is tribally owned. These lands have a huge historical, social, economic, and spiritual impact on its people's lives (StandingRock.org, n.d.a).

As well known, tribal entities interact as sovereign nations with the United States government. The status of sovereign nations also applies to The Great Sioux Nation, which includes the Standing Rock reservation as sanctioned by the treaties signed in 1851 and in 1868 by both the U.S. government and the tribe (StandingRock.org, n.d.a). However, as usually happens issues

related to land ownership, occupancy and utilizations of Native natural resources have been constantly part of the controversial relationship between Native tribes and US governmental entities throughout the flux of history. The twists and turns of these disputes are so complex, and in many cases so duplicitous due to the strategies historically implemented by the US government to buy and/or expropriate huge portions of Native lands, that it is almost impossible to follow them with the needed depth. Also, it is paramount to state that the expropriation of lands through policies and reversal of treaties has been equally or even more damaging to Native populations than the intense warfare to which they were subjected by the old colonial powers and the U.S. government.

Many actions and measures taken by the US government throughout history have broken legally established treaties with Native people. One of the many, violating two fundamental treaties signed in 1868 and 1874, was perpetrated by General Custer who reached the Black Hills located on Sioux Nation's lands, with his 7th cavalry to expropriate and to exploit the vast gold deposits on the land. Sitting Bull, a spiritual leader of the Sioux Nation opposed to the exploitation and the expropriation of the sacred land on the Black Hills, led a historical resistance to the U.S. army. In the battle of the Little Big Horn in 1876, the Sioux nation had a major victory over General Custer (StandingRock.org, n.d.a).

Nevertheless, the US government managed to take the Black Hills from the Great Sioux nation in 1887. Along with that the US Government implemented a policy that divided the land in allotment and assigned them to individuals, with the goal of destroying the social fabric, and the culture of the tribe (General Allotment Act, 1887; StandingRock.org, n.d.a). The policy was astutely based on the strategy that it would be easier for the US government to exploit the Natives by dealing with them individually, rather than establishing a discourse about policies regarding tribal land and natural resources with a sovereign tribal entity (General Allotment Act, 1887).

An additional policy included in the act of 1889 broke up the great Sioux Nation into smaller reservations and that is how the Standing Rock Reservation came about. Sitting Bull objected and reacted to these policies and tried to inspire the Natives by tapping into the power of the Ghost Dance, a ritual from which Natives typically gathered inspiration for resistance, survival, and progress. Sitting Bull's reaction was suppressed by federal agents, who killed him on December 15, 1890 (Sitting Bull, n.d.). The 7th cavalry, as expected, reacted very aggressively in preventing the Indian renaissance championed by Sitting Bull and decided to go after a large band of Natives. And the US Army cruelly suppressed the Ghost Dance movement by perpetrating the huge massacre of Wounded Knee on December 29, 1890 (Sitting Bull, n.d.).

This is a clear example of the historical injuries to the land, society and culture of the Standing Rock Sioux tribe. Forwarding the historical narrative to contemporary times, the Standing Rock Sioux tribal government still maintains its sovereignty and jurisdiction on all reservation lands, including all rights-of-way, waterways, watercourses and streams running through any part of the reservation. It is with enormous pride that the Standing Rock Sioux tribe emphasizes self-reliance, financial progress for its people and its land by continuing traditional economic models like cattle ranching and farming while, at the same time, exploring other venues for progress in

synchrony with traditional beliefs of respect for the land and traditions (StandingRock.org, n.d.a).The Standing Rock Sioux tribe, like all the Indian tribes, wants to ensure the continuity of their culture and traditions. Their members want their children to continue to preserve the traditional knowledge, including their language. A major role of the tribal elders is to pass on to the younger generations their tribal history and it is pivotal to a future that will inevitably propose innovations, which are aligned with the tribal traditional cultural context (StandingRock.org, n.d.a).

Historically, the tribe has experienced issues with both quality and inadequate supply of water. The water supply has been often threatened by pollution and contamination with noxious minerals. Therefore, additional threats of contamination to the water supplied by the Missouri River by the Dakota pipeline may sound like a death toll for the inhabitants of those lands. A clear example of a threat happened in 1996 when tribal employee identified found out that illegal dumping sites on the reservation were polluting large areas including groundwater reservoirs (StandingRock.org, n.d.a). The ongoing battle for the safeguard of the territories and the sacred lands which has been part of the Native American life finds a natural and logical synthesis in the recent events of the Dakota access pipeline, which can be interpreted as having three main meanings: protecting the environment and their livelihood; inspiring the communities around the world to take similar steps, when necessary; and overcoming the wounds of Historical Trauma by engaging in a cohesive fight against corporative entities representing the new colonizing forces of neoliberalism.

The Dakota Access Pipeline Insurgency: The Chronicle

The Dakota Access Pipeline Insurgency is a truly grassroots Native American movement that emerged during the spring of 2016 in reaction to the proposed construction of Energy Transfer Partners' Dakota Access Pipeline, which in its path would cross beneath the Missouri and Mississippi rivers, as well as part of Lake Oahe near the Standing Rock Indian Reservation. The pipeline, which has been strongly advocated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers was due for delivery on January 1, 2017 (Eastman, 2016). The insurgents are strongly objecting to the fact that the assessment of the possible environmental impact conducted by The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers was very superficial ignoring the likelihood of potential damages (IndigenousRising.org, 2016).

These dynamics are in line with the historical events concerning the long standing conflicts about land issues between sovereign tribes and governmental entities. Also, they are a possible source of historical re-traumatization for the Standing Rock Sioux and all the Indigenous communities in the U.S. since it reenacts colonial and postcolonial instances of exploitation. In line with the postcolonial dynamics, the tribe was not consulted during the pivotal phases of the development of the project. Neglecting the input of the tribe, has contributed to underestimating the possibility and the consequences that a spill could have on the quality of the waters, which the tribal population relies on (IndianCountryMediaNetwork.com, 2016). It is worthwhile mentioning that the Department of Interior (DOI), a governmental entity charged with the trust responsibility for

tribal lands and resources, expressed concerns about the pipeline's proximity to the tribe's water source, stating that "… a spill could impact the waters that the Tribe and individual tribal members residing in that area rely upon for drinking and other purposes" (Begay, 2016).

As consequence, of the ongoing neglect of Tribal concerns raised during the previous months regarding the likely encroaching impact of the pipeline impacts on sacred sites and culturally important landscapes, the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe filed suit against the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, accusing the agency of violating the National Historic Preservation Act and other pertinent laws (Ohiya Casino, 2016). In April 2016, a Standing Rock Sioux elder established a camp as a center for cultural preservation and spiritual resistance to the pipeline. Over the summer the camp grew to include thousands of people (WikiVisually, n.d.). Unfortunately, while the protests have drawn international attention and have been said to be "reshaping the national conversation for any environmental project that would cross the Native American land", there was limited mainstream media coverage of the events until early September, 2016 (WikiVisually, n.d.).

Peaceful protests continued and drew Indigenous People from throughout North America, as well as other supporters. A number of fierce arrests occurred along with multiple episodes of violence against the peaceful Insurgents. In late October 2016, armed soldiers and police cleared an encampment that was directly in the proposed pipeline's path (WikiVisually, n.d.). When peaceful protesters crossed the fence to stop the bulldozers, the guards used pepper spray and unleashed guard dogs against the protesters. As of mid-October there had been over 140 arrests among the protesters (WikiVisually, n.d.).

Many Native American organizations, tribal delegations tribal, politicians, environmental and civil rights groups have joined the effort in North Dakota, including the "Black Lives Matter" movement, Indigenous leaders from the Amazon Basin of South America, Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders, the 2016 Green Party presidential candidate Jill Stein and her running mate Ajamu Baraka, and many others (IndigenousRising.org., 2016). In September 2016, Ojibwe activist and former Green Party vice presidential candidate Winona LaDuke said, "North Dakota regulators are really, I would say, in bed with the oil industry and so they have looked the other way" (Goodman, 2016, n.p.). Black Lives Matter founder Alicia Garza remarking on the fierce reaction by the Federal entities, and police, said "If you're white, you can occupy federal property ... and get found not guilty. No teargas, no tanks, no rubber bullets ... If you're indigenous and fighting to protect our earth, and the water we depend on to survive, you get tear gassed, media blackouts, tanks and all that" (Eversley, 2016).

Moreover, many Sioux Tribes have passed resolutions in support of the Standing Rock Sioux, including the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, Crow Creek Tribe, the Oglala Sioux Tribe, and the Rosebud Sioux Tribe (StandingRock.org, n.d.b). Oklahoma tribes have also expressed support for the pipeline protest movement. In August Principal Chief Bill John Baker of the Cherokee Nation said, "As Indian people, we have a right to protect our lands and protect our water rights. That's our responsibility to the next seven generations" (StandingRock.org, n.d.b).

During the same month, Senator Bernie Sanders spoke to a crowd of about three thousand members of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe and other tribal nations and supporters during a protest held outside of the White House. Saying "the pipeline threatens the environment and water resources and exploits Native Americans," he asked President Obama to take action and conduct a full environmental and cultural impact analysis of the project, which he believed would kill the pipeline (Gaudiano, 2016). Calling the proposed pipeline route "the ripest case of environmental racism I have seen in a long time," in October, 2016, the Reverend Jesse Jackson announced support for the movement saying, "The tribes of this country have sacrificed a lot so this great country could be built. With promises broken, land stolen and sacred lands desecrated, the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe is standing up for their right to clean water. They have lost land for settlers to farm, more land for gold in the Black Hills, and then again even more land for the dam that was built for hydropower. When will the taking stop?" (Live, 2016).

In between these events, Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, a United Nations expert on the rights of indigenous peoples, admonished the U.S., saying, "The tribe was denied access to information and excluded from consultations at the planning stage of the project, and environmental assessments failed to disclose the presence and proximity of the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation." She also responded to the rights of pipeline protesters, saying, "The U.S. authorities should fully protect and facilitate the right to freedom of peaceful assembly of indigenous peoples, which plays a key role in empowering their ability to claim other rights" (UN News Centre, 2016).

In November 2016, President Obama announced that his administration was monitoring the situation, and that he had been in contact with the Army Corps to examine the possibility of rerouting the pipeline to avoid lands that Native Americans hold sacred (Hersher, 2016). And, at the beginning of December 2016, President Obama ordered the discontinuation of the Pipeline construction forcing the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to look for alternative routes (DemocracyNow.org, 2016).

As I am writing the essay, I feel that the future of the Standing Rock reservation is still fluid and uncertain, as the President Donald Trump, with a simple stroke of his pen, has reversed President Obama's decision allowing the pipeline project to be resurrected (Baker & Davenport, 2017). Of course the tribe is reacting and exploring all legal avenues possible to fight back on President Trump's decision. Very likely it will be a long struggle, which may be symptomatic of the development of highly problematic relationships between the Federal government and Native Tribes and entities.

Traumatic and Healing Aspects of Standing Rock

The following powerful testimony reported by a participant to the insurgency, gives an accurate and contextual account of the events affecting the Standing Rock reservation. "The U.S. government is wiping out our most important cultural and spiritual areas. And as it erases our footprint from the world, it erases us as a people. These sites (reflecting to the sacred sites threatened by the pipeline project) must be protected, or our world will end, it is that simple. Our

young people have a right to know who they are. They have a right to language, to culture, to tradition. The way they learn these things is through connection to our lands and our history. If we allow an oil company to dig through and destroy our histories, our ancestors, our hearts and souls as a people, is that not genocide? (McKibben, 2016). These words are an accurate description of the losses which have contributed to Native Historical Trauma, which will be later examined.

As already stated, although the Standing Rock Insurgency is the largest Native American gathering in more than a century, it has been largely ignored by the mainstream American media. This a very troublesome omission by the major networks for specific reasons: the gathering contributes to the debate about energy policies, to the movement against police brutality, to a better understanding of the history of Native American sovereignty and the psychological and physical damage of Historical losses, defined as historical trauma. By minimizing and ignoring the gathering, the psychological aspects of Historical Trauma stemming from narratives viewing Native Americans as "vanishing Americans" and mere tragic victims of oppression with no real voice, agency, or presence, have been set in motion again. While, on the contrary, the insurgency is a shining example of resistance, protest, and activism in which Native Communities have responded to, and often changed, the historical dynamics leading to psychological trauma.

In the following section I will cite examples of how capable Native communities are and have been putting forward effective political and strategic efforts that result in both political victories and contribute to their sense of self-empowerment.

Examples of Native American Ecological Resistance

As already implied and stated, mainstream sources in reporting events regarding Native history, usually emphasize the helplessness and hopelessness of Native populations. This view, propounded by some well-meaning individuals, activists, historians, etc. does not take into account that Native communities have consistently fought the injustice of Federal government policy makers, who historically have been trying to exploit their lands. Therefore, I would like to reexamine a few historical events, basing my narrative on views more consistent with reported Native American perspectives.

Negative episodes like the defeat and surrender by Geronimo and Chief Joseph, the horrors of the Wounded Knee massacre, to mention two among the most cited, are very much part of our collective views of Native history. But what is overlooked is that quite few negative events in Native history have a silver lining. And by reading history accurately, almost every action by the Federal and State governments interfering with Natives' control and preservation of their own identity, culture, and livelihood, has been followed by strong opposition and reactions by the Native people.

 For example, the tragedy known as the Trail of Tears, which consisted in the forced removal of huge numbers of Native Americans to reservations located west of the Mississippi river during the first decades of the 19th century is well documented in history books (Cherokee Nation

Cultural Resource Center, n.d.). On the other hand, the Cherokee Memorials, following this tragic event which constitute a vital and well-articulated legal response to the removal of the Cherokee people during the Trail of Tears, is almost ignored. And while the Memorials did not succeed in halting the removal, they represent a vigorous example of protest and activism (Teach US History, n.d.).

Also, it is worthwhile to mention another pivotal example of successful resistance. I am referring to the Mashpee Revolt of 1833–1834, when The Cape Cod Massachusetts fought back the illegal white intrusions and settlements on their land. The tribe drafted a formal resolution of protest that gained momentum and yielded a successful outcome for the tribe, and securing the state's recognition of its right to self-governance within a new "Indian District of Mashpee" (Mass Moments, n.d.). Another example is the political commitment by Ponca chief Standing Bear and other members of the Nebraska tribe, who engaged in a long political tour advocating for tribal rights which culminated in an amazing legal victory in 1879's *Standing Bear v. Crook*, a case in which for the first time the notion of Native American personhood was established under the law.

During the court proceedings Judge Dundy clearly stated the most natural and reasonable way to define "person," is simply to consult a dictionary. "Webster describes a person as 'a living soul; a self-conscious being; a moral agent; especially a living human being; a man, woman or child; an individual of the human race.'' This, he said, "is comprehensive enough, it would seem, to include even an Indian" (Starita, 2009). Paiute chief and author Sarah Winnemucca's resistance to her tribe's removal through a combination of legal petitions, written activism, and land occupation is another Native success story of resistance, helping Paiutes to keep their Oregon homelands (Railton, 2016a).

Returning to current events, as eloquently stated by a Native American involved in the Standing Rock Insurgency" We have seen a collective and organized community insurgency unfolding in Standing Rock. It's quite possible that the Dakota Access Pipeline will be built nonetheless. History tells us with certainty that more violence and discrimination will be directed at Natives fighting for environmental justice. We cannot and must not extend and supplement the oppressions by repeating our history of minimizing and ignoring Native American protest and activism. And if focusing our collective attention on Standing Rock helps us likewise remember those longstanding legacies of resistance, all the better" (Railton, 2016b).

Following this argument, the fight to halt the Dakota Access Pipeline is about reviving a way of life for Indigenous people. Therefore, the Standing Rock insurgency is the attempt not only to stop another ecological disaster, but to revive the sense of land, traditions, and culture, which, as stated several times in the article, is also pivotal for maintaining and growing the social fabric of Native cultures and to actively fight the sense of helplessness which comes with the passive intergenerational accumulation of historical traumatic memories.

The Role of Ecological Activism in Overcoming Historical Trauma

The ecological movement around the world, although inclusive of multiple views and ideologies, has consistently emphasized the concept of a solid interconnectedness among the different living beings and elements of our planet (Cho, 2009). Although accused by some of "new age environmentalism" because of the rather simplistic and mystical approach to nature evoked by the concept, in reality the claim to the interconnectedness is based on real scientific considerations on how the ecosystem works, regenerates, and thrives, as can be deduced from genetic analysis which shows that living organisms share a multitude of similar genes.

This way of thinking has been integral part of Native American views about nature, stemming from their accumulated knowledge and wisdom developed from incessant observation about natural phenomena. In fact, most of the traditional American Indian cultures, have as common denominator this sense of interconnectedness. It is the centerpiece of their beliefs, ceremonies and spiritual practices which promote a sense of unity and reunification between living beings and the environment as a way of sustaining and healing the individual and its community. Also, the importance of this knowledge has been embraced by current ecological research and planning (Berkes, Colding, & Folke, 2000).

This Native scientific knowledge is blended with a deep spiritual context that adds values to it. For example, the respectful rituals regarding hunting is a testimony of how the spiritual aspects blend with the science of responsible utilization of resources. The killing of animals is viewed in the context of a balanced interaction between man and nature, which avoids as much as possible exploitations of nature and lands (Krech, 1999). These views constitute the context for the ritual of spiritual purification before and after a hunting session in Native cultures. Although, Native Americans are not immune from episodes of abuse of the environment, these are rare cases, and deviate from a consolidated norm of respectful approach towards nature. It needs to be stressed that Natives' sense of balance with nature is essentially based on their consistent caring about future generations. It is about keeping and passing down a balanced ecosystem to future generations (Hultkrantz, 1966).

Consequently, hunting represents an act of reciprocal giving between the animal, willing to sacrifice his life to the sustenance of mankind, and man providing a balanced, protected environment for the animal to grow in (Martinelli, 2012). However, it is worthwhile to stress that the Native natural beliefs based on an animistic concept where every single particle of nature has a spiritual aspect, are substantially different from similar concepts towards nature found in the Western world, where the essence of spirituality is to be found in the dyad: God – Humankind. And, although this may sound an oversimplification, the fact in itself that the world was seen by the dominant culture as divested of a spiritual meaning, may have contributed to its exploitation. Although examples of spiritual beliefs akin to Native Americans' views have been expressed in the Western world, they are still contaminated by their "man-centric" postures, which represent man as the arbiter of the ecosystem. As summarized by Pastor Scott Bullerwell, during an interview: 'While we respect Native spirituality, and the rights of folks to practice within their culture, it would be inappropriate to confuse it with Christianity, because there's little affinity between Native spirituality and Christianity" (CBC News, 2014). What I said, even

without looking back at salient aspects of the relationship between Native and Western cultures, can explain some of the dynamics which have set in motion the saga of Standing Rock.

I am arguing that the historically forced severing of the relationship between Native people and their lands, which happened progressively throughout history, is one important aspect of the genesis of Historical Trauma. And therefore, in this ecological context, the standing Rock Insurgency is a positive response to Historical Trauma because it brings together Native communities in asserting and celebrating the values of self-empowerment, relationship with the environment, community, and traditions. The exposure to these traditional beliefs, creates the right psychological frame for regaining a sense of control over individual's and communities' present and future realities, spearheading and reinforcing a sense of renaissance among the various Indigenous people in North America and around the world.

Although Historical Trauma is a frequently used term, there is confusion about its significance. Therefore, I will try to give a clear review of the concept, including its difference with posttraumatic stress disorder. Although many scholars and clinicians would argue that a definitive conceptualization and definition of Historical Trauma has to be reached yet after years of debates and studies on the subject, the majority of Native American scholars describe Historical Trauma, essentially, as the psychological, physical, social and cultural aftermath of the processes of colonialism and post colonialism endured by Indigenous people (Wesley-Esquimaux & Smolewski, 2004, p. 3). But more on the subject will be presented in the following sections.

Historical Losses as the Basis to Understand Historical Trauma

As already implied and stated, the dominant European cultures have engaged for centuries in actions and policies geared towards the systematic destruction of the Native American people. Native Americans have been subjected to traumas resulting in specific historical losses. These losses include loss of people, loss of land, and loss of family and culture (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998; Garrett & Pichette, 2000). As consequence, the population of Native Americans in North America decreased by 95% from the time Columbus came to America in 1492 and the establishment of the United States in1776 (Plous, 2002). This decline can be explained by three main factors: the intentional killing of Native Americans, the exposure of Native Americans to European diseases and the implementation of colonial and postcolonial policies (Trusty, Looby, & Sandhu, 2002).

A huge number of Native Americans died because of infectious diseases (i.e., smallpox, diphtheria, measles, and cholera" that Europeans imported to North America) (Trusty et al., 2002). It has been documented that the Native American people were purposely subjected to these diseases. In 1763, for instance, Lord Jeffrey Amherst ordered his subordinates to introduce smallpox to the Native American people through blankets offered to them (Plous, 2002).

This loss of population further impacted the Native American community due to the lack of public acknowledgment of these deaths by the dominant culture. Moreover, the dominant culture

suppressed coping tools for managing losses, which contributed to the chronicity and intergenerational aspects of their traumatic experiences (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998; Sotero, 2006). For example, in 1883 federal law prohibited Native Americans from practicing traditional ceremonies (Brave Heart, Chase, Elkins, & Altschul, 2011). It is not well known that this law remained in effect until 1978, when the American Indian Religious Freedom Act was enacted. Moreover, an accurate reading of history, shows that the taking of Native American lands was a priority for the United States government during the 19th century (Duran, 2006; Sue & Sue, 2012). In 1830, President Andrew Jackson approved the Indian Removal Act, which forced the relocation of as many as 100,000 Native Americans (Plous, 2002).

By 1876, the U.S. government had gained possession of Native American territories which led Native Americans to live either on reservations or to move to urban areas (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998; Trusty et al., 2002). Of course the process of relocation contributed to a substantial decline in socioeconomic status as Native American men were not able to provide for their families, and the families became dependent on goods provided by the U.S. government (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998). These relocations were nefarious as they resulted in the death of thousands of Native Americans and the disruption of families.

As well documented, the US government historically tried to impose its policies on Native populations and lands (Garrett & Pichette, 2000). The goal was to promote their full assimilation into the dominant Euro-American culture. With a historical decision in 1871 the U.S. congress declared Native Americans wards of the U.S. government, giving the green light to the process of "civilization" of Native Americans, with the goal of shaping them according to the values and beliefs of the White culture (Trusty et al., 2002).

Boarding schools took Native American children from their families and communities without allowing any contact with their Native American between them for years (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998; Garrett & Pichette, 2000). The boarding school system tried to transform the Native children into white children by changing their appearance, and forbidding them to use their Native languages and practicing the traditional rituals they had been raised with. (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998; Garrett & Pichette, 2000). Also, quite few of them were physically and sexually abused and later developed psychological issues characterized by depression and substance abuse (Garrett & Pichette, 2000), but probably more correctly defined as trauma related. Such circumstances led many Native Americans to recoil from traditional ways and religious practices, which contributed to a loss of ethnic identity (Garrett & Pichette, 2000). The ongoing process of removal of children from their families has been a ruinous traumatic event for Native Americans as it contributed to the disruption and destruction of the families and Native American communities and has caused many of the past and current psychological problems for not a small number of Native Americans (Duran & Duran, 1995).

As I summarize the pivotal events and dynamics that have characterized Native American history, the similarities with the Standing Rock saga are striking. Again, it involves violating and desecrating the land and the culture, therefore, perpetuating the psychological distress from Historical Trauma. Unfortunately, the current mainstream psychiatric and psychological views on Historical Trauma are still very skeptical about the validity and reliability of the concept.

(Kirmayer, Gone, & Moses, 2014). This theme will be addressed over the course of my narrative on the subject in the following section which will focus specifically on the notion of Historical Trauma.

Definition and Meaning of Historical Trauma

The concept of Historical Trauma has developed as a natural consequence of tragic historical events affecting the psyche of Indigenous Peoples, and as a reaction to the narrow definition of trauma, as expressed through the clinical entity of PTSD (Posttraumatic Stress Disorder) (Maviglia, 2002). PTSD is a psychiatric entity which manifests with clinical symptoms following a circumscribed traumatic experience. These symptoms can be grouped in two main categories: the "intrusive" and the "numbing" manifestations of trauma. The "intrusive" category includes: hyperactivity, explosiveness, nightmares related to the traumatic event, and flashbacks. In the "numbing" realm we find: social isolation, inability to explore pleasure or satisfaction, and avoidance of obligations. These two, summarily described, convey a mechanical-biological picture of trauma, evoking alternating phases of biological and neuronal hyperactivity (intrusion) and hypoactivity (numbing) (Maviglia, 2002).

However, experiences from the Holocaust, dictatorial regimes, episodes of ethnic cleansing, political persecution, etc., show that the consequences of trauma could be and often are, transferred from one generation to the next. The clinical manifestations are analogous but not the same as those witnessed in PTSD but extended in an intergenerational fashion, definable therefore as Intergenerational Trauma (Berger, 1988). Although this entity definitely broadens the scope of the traumatic experience, it does not encompass an analysis of the historical context in which trauma originates and therefore is not sufficient to fully explain the psychic damage deriving from the colonial and postcolonial experience in Indigenous populations (Duran & Duran, 1995).

Sotero (2006) provided a conceptual framework of Historical Trauma including three main stages, which is consistent with the narrative provided by this author in the following pages and therefore constitute an additional testimony to the validation of its concept. The first entails the perpetrating by the dominant culture of mass traumas on the Native population, resulting in cultural devastation. The second occurs when the Native populations exposed to the repetitive episodes of trauma show traumatic symptoms. In the final stage the initial responses to trauma are passed on to successive generations. The losses suffered by Native populations (i.e., land, family and culture) have resulted for a rather large number of Native individuals and communities in psychological symptoms which are still present today (Whitbeck, Adams, Hoyt, & Chen, 2004). One of the most salient aspects of Historical Trauma is, therefore, its transmission to subsequent generations probably through biological, psychological, environmental, and social means, resulting in a cross-generational emotional distress (Sotero, 2006).

To add a contextual view, we could say that the emotional issues present in Native American populations can be viewed as the result of "a legacy of chronic trauma and unresolved grief

across generations" perpetrated on them by the European and North American cultures (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998). In this vein we can say that the significant body of research on the cross-generational transmission of trauma regarding Holocaust victims and their descendants (Doucet & Rovers, 2010; Yehuda, Schmeidler, Wainberg, Binder-Brynes, & Duvdevani, 1998) constitutes a solid scientific basis for the understanding of the dynamics of historical psychological wounds across generations. Although the concept of Historical Trauma has been viewed as clinically applicable in clinical practice (Braveheart et al., 2011), there is still reluctance to accept it as a valid psychological entity (Evans-Campbell, 2008; Gone, 2009), even though those who are expressing their criticism seem to forget that there are questions about the validity of most psychiatric disorders (Scull, 2015).

It is true that the connection of causality between past atrocities suffered by the Native American people and current psychological problems identified under the rubric of Historical Trauma in Native American communities is not straightforward from a statistical point of view. However, the body of quantitative and qualitative research by Indigenous scholars on this subject has also been neglected and discounted by mainstream academia for reasons which go beyond science and have a lot to do with bias, power, ownership of knowledge, and ideological orientation (Maviglia, 2002). In my opinion the mainstream academic reaction to Historical Trauma is an appendix of colonial and the post-colonial dynamics, which have contributed to the trauma in the first place and continue to promote the reenacting of similar dynamics and symptoms of trauma.

Issues Regarding the Concept of Historical Trauma

The preamble on the salient aspects of historical losses is necessary for an insightful approach to the subject of Historical Trauma. The understanding of Historical Trauma presupposes the evaluation of the experience of the meaning of psychological "fragmentation" in the context of the colonial and postcolonial historical frame. As already stated, a correct insight into Historical Trauma should include an adequate understanding of governmental Indigenous policies as subtler and insidious causes of trauma. The psychosocial consequences stemming from the colonial and postcolonial dynamics can be expected as just partially fitting into a psychiatric nosology, but they essentially have an existential meaning and context, not easily amenable to an official psychiatric classification.

In one of my articles on Historical Trauma, I formulated its concept in a schematic way, as follows (Maviglia, 2002): (1) A historical existential dimension, whose most salient characteristic is a sense of "not belonging", estrangement from the relationship with an Indigenous cycle of life, definable in traditional sociological terms as Anomie; and (2) Another part, closely related to the PTSD nomenclature, occurring from more discrete traumatic situations, enacted in the background of specifically deleterious historical processes. Indeed, it is worthwhile to observe that much of the circumscribed traumatic events in Native country develop in a scenario of poverty, unemployment, and social injustice: They could be viewed as an appendix of historically traumatic events.

The existential-historical-emotional manifestations could not have the clearly defined boundaries of a clinical syndrome like PTSD because the "existential" is essentially personal, subjective, social, and political. The pathology, however, is no less real or painful: If anything, its manifestations raise the subject of the inadequacy of Western methodological screening and testing procedures of phenomena not happening within the realm of the dominant society. From the literature available, and the direct feedback of Native American scholars and professionals, the existential-historical aspects of historical trauma could be summarized as follows:

1. Communal feelings of disruption of the family and societal network,
2. Development of an existential form of depression, based on a sense of communal disruption and anomie,
3. Ambivalence and anxiety about feeling part of the historical ancestral pain, and the tempting option to adopt the easily accessible Western attitudes, values, and sociocultural models,
4. Development of chronic existential grief, nested in the dominant context of denial and silence. This angst is typically manifested through the complete rubric of destructive and self-annihilating behaviors (including some pattern of drinking and substance abuse),
5. The daily re-experience of colonial aspects of trauma stemming from stereotyping, and racism, which are the base for the above described emotional states, and
6. Lack of resolution of the existential dimension triggering an individual, intergenerational, and communal extension of the existential pain.

Culturally Appropriate Approaches are Needed

From what has been stated, it would appear evident that decontextualized modalities focusing on circumscribed biological and psychotherapeutic attempts are bound to yield marginal results, if any. Also, there is a realistic need to have a clear conceptualization of Historical Trauma and in finding strategies to overcome skepticism about the validity of its concept. Several Native American scholars, such as Spero M. Manson, Bonnie Duran, Eduardo Duran, and Maria Yellow Horse Braveheart, to name but a few, have responded to these shortcomings by voicing the importance of cultural appropriateness in the treatment of Indigenous health care problems (Brave Heart, 1999; Duran, Duran, & Brave Heart, 1998; Manson, 1995; Manson, 1996; Manson, Shore, & Bloom, 1985). Their views, echoed in a previous U.S. Surgeon General Report (U.S. DHHS, 2001), constitute a pressing testimony to the importance of developing appropriate approaches for psychiatric disorders affecting Native populations, including trauma. It needs to be emphasized that there is a unanimous agreement among Native researchers that the core of Native American mental health issues can only be understood through an understanding of historical traumatic events (Brave Heart, 1999; Duran et al., 1998; Manson, 1995).

However, as instinctively and rationally valid these views may appear, substantial criticism has routinely been expressed, mainly by professional and scholars representing the Western psychiatric ideology. Their views about historical trauma, mostly expressed in informal settings in order to avoid political clashes, can be summed in one basic statement: The concept of

historical trauma doesn't have demonstrated validity. Although this criticism could be superficially viewed as correct, it dismisses the fact that the construct is evolving, and it has a huge resonance with Native People. It also ignores that the PTSD entity is in itself questionable from this viewpoint. Moreover, the possibility of cultural and ideological bias, the lack of historical perspective, and the presence of political and financial interests need to be taken into account in the analysis. It would, therefore, be worthwhile to spend some time in clarifying the ideological and political process through which Western scientific knowledge is constructed, and how it relates to the establishment of the diagnostic category of PTSD (Maviglia, 2002).

The establishment of scientific entities can be summarily conceptualized as including 3 major steps (Berger & Luckmann, 1966): Externalization, Objectification, and Reification. The phase of Externalization is focused on the verbalizing and voicing of the newly developed concept. It is a tentative step, initiated by the promoting party, with the intent of capturing the receptivity, mostly of the scientific establishment, to the new idea. The process of Objectification consists in the translation of the new idea into viable, acceptable, "scientific" frame. This process, in reality is just as much political as it is about science; it often includes a very intense networking with targeted scientific entities to gain their active support. The third, the stage of Internalization, can be viewed as the final step with the goal of integrating the reified knowledge into the daily social vocabulary. This is probably, the most political and propagandistic stage; it heavily capitalizes on the financial and social resources available; the richer, the better. The establishment of the PTSD entity went through similar steps, with a fundamental difference: the victims themselves, (mainly Vietnam Era Veterans), were the proponents of it. This scenario does not happen too often in medicine and, especially few decades ago, represented a revolutionary change: The shifting of the axis of production of medical and scientific knowledge from the establishment to the consumers. Besides that, the validation of this entity followed, more or less, the described stages.

At the end of the Vietnam conflict, a substantial group of veterans were left on their own to deal with the psychological, social, and financial scars derived from their involvement in the conflict. However, the attempts at communicating their psychological discomfort seemed to fall, repeatedly, on deaf ears. Positive outcomes were reached by the adoption of a strategy based on the following points (Kutchins & Stuart, 1997):

1. Networking with sympathetic "insiders" and professionals receptive to their plight.

2. Establishment of ideological support from groups knowledgeable about the Jewish Holocaust.

3. Gaining validation from survivors of industrial natural catastrophes.

These strategies were proved essential for the inclusion of the entity into the DSM. It is worthwhile to stress that when the diagnosis was finally accepted, the doubts about its validity were still being raised and voiced, proving that the process was not just about science.

The most valuable lesson from this segment of our psychiatric chronicle is, in my view, the possibility of being emulated and transferred to a strategy of divulgation and acceptance of Historical Trauma. Fanon, one of the most emblematic figures in the conceptualization of

psychological problems stemming from colonialism, eloquently advocates for strategies leading to a reframing knowledge from the perspective of the oppressed. He perceptively understood that the disastrous social and psychological situation of the so called third world would not improve until it continued to be defined according to the standards of the European thinking (IndianCountryMediaNetwork.com, 2016). Duran and Duran (1995) cleverly reframed Fanon's views of the consequences of the colonial process as "acute or chronic reaction to colonialism", setting the base for reframing of the Indigenous experience with trauma.

Psychodynamics and Treatment Issues

Unfortunately, Native concepts of illness are often ignored. Although it is virtually impossible to engage in a satisfactory review of even the most fundamental concepts of Indigenous healing, it is imperative to state that there are some peculiar, specific ways in which traditional Native Americans tend to define illness and the phenomenology of trauma. Allowing for expectable differences from one community to another, we can find general themes in the conceptualization of psychobiological indigenous pathology. They could be summed up as stemming from two main mechanisms (Duran & Duran, 1995):

1. Eradication of the quintessential "vital lymph", by transcendental, negative, and abducting forces.
2. Insidious and erosive spreading of a corruptive, destructive force in the body and souls.

This double mythological paradigm of extirpation and invasion is pivotal to the understanding of internalized oppression. This phenomenon, in fact, could be defined as the "colonization" of the mind as it is based on the embedding of the values of the colonizer into the psyche of the Indigenous mind, and manifesting in the emotional and cognitive states of Historical Trauma. This process assumes a very subtle and insidious course, as the traumatized and oppressed individual may actually rely on his Indigenous cultural paradigms to explain colonially induced pathological behavior, their, there by triggering a self-blaming reaction.

An example would be the extremely self-derogatory position of a Native individual who, with their drinking, has caused disruption to family, and, as a consequence, been shunned by the community as an iconoclast. Not discontinuing individual responsibility, this not unusual occurrence totally overlooks the presence and the effect of contextual issues in the genesis of aberrant behaviors. Undeniably, the development of a psychodynamic formulation and therapeutic approach should not be isolated from an understanding of the historical phases through which Native cultures have interacted and clashed with the Western European civilization. There is indeed agreement that the overall schema of this process can generate a reasonably accurate understanding of current psychological problems. The process can be summed up in four major periods (Kawamoto, 2001):

1. The Colonizing Period, characterized by the establishment of definite policies leading to the appropriation of Native American lands and resources.

2. The Relocation Period represented by the forceful relocation of Indigenous people in often unfamiliar territories.
3. The Boarding School Period, finalized to the annihilation of the cultural characteristics of the Native population by enrolling Native youth into Boarding Schools, under the pretenses of fostering the development of competent and integrated American citizens.
4. The last step, Termination Period, consistent in the additional and substantial removal of families from Reservation land into urban area, with the unrealized promise of a better life.

Although these phases present overlapping aspects, they reflect two distinct and concrete themes: one characterized by the dispossession of the land base, during the initial colonial phase; and another typified by the subtler policy-making period, focusing on the extirpation of cultural roots, destruction of the language, customs.

These two motifs are basic for the understanding of the development of the Indigenous sense of identity. It is reasonable to speculate that the colonized individual stalled in the passive position of total acceptance of dominant values will develop an unhealthy sense of self. This is mainly due to the stunting of the critical capacity to appreciate and analyze one's roots and culture in the context of the Western European paradigms.

Another deleterious aspect is represented by the impact that the historical vicissitudes have had on the traditional role of women. The Native American sensitivity has traditionally viewed the feminine soul as synonym of the earth and the source of life. One of her most noble functions has been to act as a comforting entity to the male soul. Although more than one allegoric image could be found to describe her task, the traditional Native Ceremony of the Sun Dance can be viewed as emblematic (Duran & Duran, 1995). During the dance, the female stands beside the male to support him in the synchronic and cathartic movement towards a personal and communal renovation. However, this nurturing role, symbolized by the symbiotic dancing steps, has changed through the ages by the consequences of trauma on the male psychology. The woman is forced in the position of assisting a male dancing out of step, showing a disconnection with the traditional community and at times engaging in negative and destructive behavior: the steps originally leading to the rebirth, now lead to Thanatos. In summary, the matriarchal-matrilineal tradition and wisdom are translated into dysfunctional-masochistic support, so distant from the original archetypal function.

This picture obviously implies the presence of children and adolescents whose possibilities for identification with their own roots and culture are highly disrupted. The example is intended to convey the point that therapeutic approaches should be informed by the general themes found in the mythological and cultural beliefs.

It should also be pointed out that the concept of Native therapy is centered on the authoritative figure of the Healer and, therefore, the focus on "client centered approaches", tested on Indigenous patients, may not be appropriate. Additionally, there are no Western based interventions proved to be effective with Native People; this lack of efficacy is shown by the high dropout rate from therapy (Barrett, Chua, Crits-Christoph, Gibbons, & Thompson, 2008;

Kawamoto, 2001). It would also be reasonable to view the empirically tested approaches as an extension of the dominant thinking and therefore representing an extension of the traumatic experience. Duran and Duran (1995) aware of these dynamics, capture as the distinctive objective of therapy for Native populations the exorcizing of the "Western Aggressor" from the individual and the communal psyche (Duran & Duran, 1995). They propound the view that the aberrations of the Indigenous soul are characterized by the breakdown in the connections within the harmony of the traditional cycle of life and not by the linear cause-effect relationship between the pathogen and the host as viewed by Western medical science. It follows that the reductive medical model is not sufficient in the appraisal of another problem affecting a percentage of Native Americans-dysfunctional drinking. Only a historical- contextual approach to this problem would shed some light on drinking-related problems in Indian communities.

Alcohol was introduced in Indigenous America during the early phases of colonization, within a context of economic and financial exploitation, responsible for its unhealthy use (Unruh, 1996). Indeed, hard liquor was used as a tool for bartering with the Natives who were therefore faced with the hard task of managing the proper use of a substance totally unfamiliar to them. A "mature" use of alcohol would have required the time for its gradual assimilation in the cultural and social fabric. Moreover, the heavy and dysfunctional use of alcohol not uncommonly observed in the white culture functioned as a modeling effect (Unruh, 1996).

Enlightened Native American leaders, fully conscious of the colonial implications of heavy drinking, took steps to offset the problem. The most charismatic leader of this "awareness movement" was the Seneca prophet, Handsome Lake. He viewed abstinence as the tool for political, cultural, societal survival and renewal; and, in the cultural revival he identified the spring for a renewed interest in the conservation of the land, the necessary source of life. He is said to have received his insights from visions and dreams, from the "world of spirits". It is indeed through his understanding of alcohol as a "controlling-colonizing" spirit that he reached his stance against this substance (Duran & Duran, 1995). In his mystical language, "booze" speaks the political idiom of the colonizer in a fluid form, as if each drop is representing another malignant clause to the long list of the deceiving laws, policies, and dispositions already tragically experienced.

As part of the therapeutic issues, it is also important to mention the concept of "cultural historical transference", defined as the reaction of the Indigenous patient to the cultural and historical values represented by the mental health professional. This entity, usually ignored in the practice of psychotherapy, or mistaken for psychoanalytic transference, usually manifest as rage, paranoia, reluctance to "open up" and is often wrongly judged as a sign of a personality disturbance. In order to avoid this pitfall, the therapeutic relationship needs to follow two essential paths: one vertical, facing history; the other, horizontal, relating to the current cultural, social and psychological manifestation of the Ancestral Pain, or trauma.

Moreover, the theory of Historical Trauma, as it relates to the development of substance abuse issues finds a clear and logical support in the theory of dislocation as a promoting factor in human psychological distress. In the following section I will review this theory, which contextualizes substance abuse problems within a frame that fits with the concept of the

Historical Trauma dynamics. The major contributor of this theory Dr. Bruce K. Alexander, a Canadian psychologist, who in his insightful work "The Globalization of Addiction "has contextualized in a masterful way the problem of substance abuse, which too often is reduced to a mere biological paradigm.

Contextualizing Addiction Problems

Addiction is usually described as a chronic brain disease with a strong genetic basis. This view which has been called the "Official View of Addiction" originated in the 19th century, was expanded by the medical establishment in the late 20th century, and continues to be validated by mainstream medicine in the 21st century (Alexander, 2010a). Although ignored and suppressed by official scientific sources, criticism of the biological view of addiction is quite substantial as shown in the specialized literature (Alexander, 2010a; Polanyi, 1944). Without a doubt, the official view does not encompass historical and social issues that regard addiction as a manifestation of an environmental crisis and decaying of communities in a societal context and, currently, in a globalized economy. A view of addiction including a historical and social context agrees with the theory of Historical Trauma as it identifies the distal causes of addiction in the breakdown of the social network, which is pivotal, as stated to the development of psychological distress stemming from Historical Trauma. In this vein, addiction and potentially addictive substances become a strong "colonizing force" as implicit in the wisdom of the Seneca prophet Handsome Lake's words and vision (Wallace & Steen, 1972).

Fragmentation of Societies as Part of Historical Trauma

A huge part of the process of colonization is the fragmentation of the colonized society. By that I mean a breakdown with the continuity of the individual life with traditions, social institutions, domestic economy, etc. The concept of fragmentation is in perfect agreement with what has been said about Historical Trauma, thus far. Psychologist Dr. Bruce K. Alexander, states that societies and communities around the globe have become progressively highly fragmented during the course of history (Alexander, 2010b). In line with the views on Historical Trauma he emphasizes that, since the time of Columbus, colonization by western powers has annihilated entire cultures by conquest, exploitation, and devastation of local ecosystems. He also emphasizes that the forces of colonization displayed the same exploitative processes within their own countries. In fact, the agricultural and industrial revolutions contributed to the dissolution of peasant communities and is an example of the capitalistic exploitation, responsible for the deep ubiquitous societal fragmentation (Alexander, 2010b).

This process, with brief periods of attenuation, has assumed a more incisive and destructive force during the last decades of the 20th century and the first part of the 21st century. We see in current neo-liberal government policies which are invading and fragmenting local urban and rural societies, social "safety nets", universities, etc. (Alexander, 2010b). And of course, it has continued to the fragmentation deeply embedded in the Historical Trauma process in Native

communities. Dr. Alexander states, by quoting different sources, that a great deal of the fragmentation of communities will be produced by oil and gas pipelines, fracking, hard-rock mining, overfishing, real estate bubbles, uncontrolled banks and financial markets, pollution of the fresh water supply, privatization of our excellent medical and educational systems, and the massive invasion of technology in our private life. He concludes that, in such a context, the ultimate fragmentation will be caused by catastrophic global climate change, as consequence of these practices (Alexander, 2010b).

In this regard, one change deserving mention is the massive and swift introduction of legalized gambling in Native tribes. This topic is the subject of intense debate within Native communities, because of the potential and radical societal and cultural changes that have already caused and could cause. We can argue that these changes could be responsible for an exacerbation of the traumatic themes already present in the collective psyche of Native tribes. However, there have been some objective financial gains for tribes, which have aided cultural and health programs.

There are tribes that "have used revenue that their gaming operations have generated to support scholarships; construct health clinics, day-care centers, and teenage runaway and halfway houses; build new schools and hospitals; open hotels, restaurants, gas stations and flower shops; fund retirement programs; and invest in hydroelectric plants (Kaelber, 2001)". Therefore, it is not an easy and straightforward subject to face for Native Americans and tribal communities. Without discounting other voices, my impression in reviewing the literature on the subject is that, in the past, a number of traditional Native Americans from different tribes were critical about the introduction of gaming into tribal economies and lives.

For example, among the clan mothers and other traditional leaders of the Haudenosaunee in Western New York, and among Oglala Sioux elders in the Black Hills of South Dakota, casinos are feared as a threat to the communal way of life they have struggled to preserve (Judson, 1994).

Going back to the theory of fragmentation, Dr. Alexander states that large segments of the world population are experiencing a feeling of psychological and social dislocation, which include the absence of enduring and sustaining connections between individuals and their families and/or local societies, nations, occupations, traditions, and physical environments. In existential terms it is the absence of feelings of belonging, identity, or purpose. In spiritual terms he defines it as "homelessness of the soul". This deep sense of dislocation eventually undermines the normal and usual feeling of belonging, identity, meaning, and purpose, leaving an unbearably empty and powerless experience of the world. Durkheim, Polanyi, Chandler, Lalonde, Sokol attribute this sense of dislocation to the increasing rates of suicide, depression, and domestic violence around the world.

Alexander is very clear about making a strong point about the meaning of dislocation. It is not just a geographic displacement of individuals and or entire populations; it is the experience of the absence of belonging, identity, meaning, and purpose. And, in this context, addiction, as we often have seen in Native individuals, becomes a dysfunctional coping mechanism for dealing with a sense of dislocation (Alexander, 2010b). In fact, addiction can provide dislocated people

with some much needed relief and compensation for their desolate existence, at least for the short term. That is why it is so common in a fragmented global society (Alexander, 2010b).

Unfortunately, as for Historical Trauma, this view is not shared by mainstream science. For example, The U.S. National Institute of Drug Abuse and other governmental and professional agencies proclaim addiction a chronic disease caused by drug use -- rather than an attempt to adapt to challenging circumstances (Alexander, 2014). Alexander highlights that the way to heal the sense of psychological dislocation is essentially to reduce the fragmentation of societies, communities and cultures and to invest in aspects like spiritual traditions and a restructuring the global economy by getting away from neoliberal policies and basing the future of our societies on a more balanced and sustainable model of economic and social development (Alexander, 2014).

The role of the Western trained behavioral health expert, in this context, will entail a thoughtful attempt to understand the history and the societal structure of the Native community to which the individual in distress belongs. Alexander views are therefore in line with the guiding principle in the article which proposes that non-culturally specific interventions are not only ineffective, but also potentially instrumental to the perpetuating and reenacting of the experience of the trauma, by taking the focus away from historical issues, which are intimately inherent to the psychology of Native individuals and communities, and focusing on decontextualized psychological and biological approaches. As expectable, denial or neglect of certain pivotal historical issues creates the basis for re-traumatization. In the same vein, the therapeutic approach should be a tool for empowerment, conceptualized as the development of a self-guided indigenous process for the reconstitution of individual identity and fragmented or lost cultural and societal networks.

Consequences of Historical Trauma

There are 566 federally recognized tribes located in the U.S.; therefore, a considerable level of diversity is expectable. In addition, approximately 60% of Native Americans reside in urban areas (IHS, 2013a), creating an even greater challenge to making an overall generalization about Native Americans, including issues concerning historical losses and Historical Trauma. However, as we avoid blanket statements, we cannot ignore the existence of consistent psychological and physical distress in Native communities.

As previously stated, the effects of these psychological dynamics and, probably more correctly, existential angst have been usually decontextualized by main stream scientists studying behavioral health problems in Native American populations. The philosophical orientation of this essay is to look at major social problems experienced in Native communities as part of the context of Historical Trauma. And, although it could be objected that there is not a clear linear relationship between the historical losses and the psychological, physical and social problems still plaguing Native communities, a thoughtful interpretation of the possible consequences of Historical Trauma should lead to the reasonable view that the link makes sense.

Episodes of domestic violence and physical and sexual assault which are extremely higher than the national average in Native American communities (Sue & Sue, 2012). Also, compared with all other racial groups, Native American adults are at greater risk of experiencing feelings of psychological distress and more likely to have poorer overall physical and mental health and unmet medical and psychological needs (Barnes, Adams, & Powell-Griner, 2010). For example, the life expectancy at birth for the Native American population is 2.4 years less than that of all U.S. populations combined (CDC, 2010). Additionally, Native Americans have much higher rates of heart disease, tuberculosis, and physical traumas. In particular diabetes represents a substantial threat and is also more prevalent than in any other racial or ethnic group in the United States (Barnes et al., 2010). Preliminary, but still unpublished findings from a study in which I served as co-investigator, show that Historical Trauma has a linear relationship with diabetes, among other physical and psychological impairments. And although Obamacare, which as I am writing this essay is threatened by repeal, represents a huge step forward in coverage for millions of Americans, it is still unclear how much it has improved the quality of health care for Natives Americans (Leonard, 2015).

One long-term troublesome aspect of Native American psychological health is related to suicide rates, which, for both adults and youth, are higher than the national average. Suicide is listed as the second leading cause of death for Native Americans from 10–34 years of age (CDC, 2007). Additionally, Native Americans have the highest weekly alcohol consumption of any ethnic group with noticeable exceptions and variance at individual and tribal level (Chartier & Caetano, 2010). In particular, many Native American adolescents struggle with substance abuse and mental health disorders (Abbott, 2007). Insightful theorists are clear in recognizing that substance abuse in Native individuals may be related to low self-esteem, loss of cultural identity, lack of positive role models, history of abuse and neglect, self-medication due to feelings of hopelessness, and loss of family and tribal connections (Sue & Sue, 2012). These are signs of psychological distress that can be considered as part of Historical Trauma. Native Americans have the lowest income and education, and highest poverty level of any group—minority or majority—in the United States (Denny, Holtzman, Goins, & Croft, 2005) and the lowest life expectancy of any other population in the United States (CDC, 2010).

Current Standard of Care for Native Americans.

The behavioral and physical problems briefly described are not consistently treated in the current medical system available to Native Americans, even with the improvements generated by Obamacare. A large portion of Native Americans receive behavioral and medical health services from Indian Health Service (IHS, 2013b), which was established and funded by the U.S. government in 1955 to provide healthcare services to members of federally recognized Native American tribes (Jones, 2006).

According to the IHS (2013a), the Native American people "have long experienced lower health status when compared with other Americans." This is substantiated by the IHS (2013b) report, which that shows that $2,741 is spent per IHS recipient in comparison to $7,239 for the general

population; and a minimal portion of these funds is utilized for mental health and substance abuse treatment in 2010, even though the rates of mental health and substance abuse issues are very high, as stated. The reasons for these disparities are multiple but continue to stem from colonial and post-colonial dynamics like inadequate education, disproportionate poverty, discrimination in the delivery of health services, and cultural differences (IHS, 2013b).

Healing Historical Trauma by Promoting Traditional Culture in Mainstream Medicine

As already stated and implied throughout this essay, medicine is not merely science, but also political ideology, usually reflecting the beliefs of the dominant powers. As indicated in several essays, articles and books of authoritative scholars, the field of psychiatry, which can essentially be defined as an appendage of the dominant culture, has seen a proliferation of diagnostic categories in the last thirty years. Therefore, it must be taken into account that psychiatric diagnoses are very often the fruit of this ideological frame that also generates treatments in line with dominant views, most usually based on biological theories and models, the ideologies exclude the presence of a contextual reality contributing to the manifestation and course of emotional distress (Kutchins & Stuart, 1997).

The model in vogue in American psychiatry cannot meet the needs of the psychological suffering of Native Americans, which, as already mentioned, includes the acknowledgment of a bond with nature, the community, the context of life. In the classic work, *The Rockefeller Medicine Men, Medicine and Capitalism in America* (Brown, 1981), the author describes how American medicine looked in the early decades of the 20th century when it fell under the financial and ideological control of the big magnates (Rockefeller, Carnegie, etc.). The result was the implementation of a biological model mirroring the contemporary emphasis on technocracy.

The proponents of this new medicine "showed off" the biological aspects, putting aside the social, cultural, and spiritual aspects that had been part of the complex medical landscape in the United States up to that moment. The new medicine was to be "scientific", meaning it had to be based only on biological foundations. Although there were variations on this theme, American medicine, including psychiatry, with few exceptions, continued to develop according to this model which nowadays is the dominant one. But for many cultures around the world not following the predominant medical paradigm, including Indigenous cultures, illness essentially results from "being out of balance" with nature and one's community. This condition, in turn, creates a severance among the emotional, spiritual, and physical aspects of our being (Korn, 2013).

Native scholars and healers provide numerous testimonies about the need for Native American communities to reestablish the sense of continuity with their cultural heritage to heal the psychological damages caused by historical losses (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998; Duran & Duran, 1995; Trusty et al., 2002; Wesley-Esquimaux & Smolewski, 2004, p. 3). Their approach to Historical Trauma is to address healing in a dimension involving the working through process of historical memories for the whole community. This is a clear departure from dealing with trauma in a mere clinical way by focusing on symptoms and prescribing a course of psychological and/or medical therapy, with the goal of reducing the psychological distress.

This view deconstructs the Western- based concept of illness founded on the biological model and discrete medical diagnostic categories. Also, it reformulates the emotional distress in traditional Indigenous people by departing from the Western dichotomy of mind and body and the neglect of contextual factors, including traditions and spirituality. In the process, this view contributes to the undoing of the demonization of Native religions and spiritual practices that were outlawed during the colonial assimilation process and, therefore, to the undoing of traumatic- induced helplessness.

The identification of major psychological problems in Indigenous communities during a healing process should be based on the understanding of the connections among history, society, culture, and those psychological factors identified in the specific community. The goal of this therapeutic effort would be the creation of   a "synthesis" of all these factors leading to the resolution of the internalized sense of oppression by reformulating one's contemporary social and cultural identity in line with traditional Native values. Unfortunately, in the unraveling of the traumatic events, Native people did not have the opportunity to develop effective strategies to undo the psychological damage. Such a process, as expectable, requires the presence of a viable cultural, social and political network among Native communities, which for the most part was compromised and or destroyed for an extended period of time, before the more recent renaissance in Native communities (Braveheart & DeBruyn, 1998; Braveheart et al., 2011; Duran & Duran, 1995; Sotero, 2006; Wesley-Esquimaux & Smolewski, 2004, p. 3)

The traumatic intergenerational process that followed caused the numbing of sensory perception, a sense of isolation, and a discounting of their feelings, hopes, and needs, as part of the trauma experience. The psychodynamics of trauma replaced the traditional sense of wellbeing causing serious emotional discomfort. The acting out of a substantial part of Native Americans is a response to this mental, cognitive and psychological overload and can be viewed as a dysfunctional attempt to dispel the confusion, the sense of psychological dislocation. It continues to manifest with substantial rates of substance abuse and addiction violence towards self and others.

These conflicting dynamics are well described in the book "Trauma and Recovery". In one of the passages   Herman, describes the psychological dynamics of trauma by stating: "The ordinary response to atrocities is to banish them from consciousness. Certain violations of the social compact are too terrible to utter aloud: this is the meaning of the word unspeakable. Atrocities, however, refuse to be buried. Equally as powerful as the desire to deny atrocities is the conviction that denial does not work" (Herman, 1992). Therefore, the goal of any psychological healing process is a recovery of awareness, a reawakening to the senses, a re-owning of one's life experience elaborated and metabolized to produce new paradigms that substitute the comfort of tradition to chaos, and helps with the recovery and reintegration of the past into the present.

Also, there are views which align the process of historical trauma with the concept of epigenetics, a scientific discipline exploring links between contextual and social factors including poverty, malnutrition, and physical and psychological problems. According to the latest theories on Historical Trauma the losses and the prolonged history of deprivations experienced by Native communities may interfere with gene expression and contribute to

physical and psychological pathologies (Francis, 2009; Maviglia, 2016). Although debatable, the epigenetic view constitutes an additional tassel to the causes and analysis of Historical Trauma and to the refinement of its theory.

To be effective with Native American clients, professional counselors need to understand that Historical Trauma permeates all domains of existence e.g., personal identity, interpersonal relationships, collective memory, cultural and spiritual worldviews (Weisband, 2009). Clinicians need to have knowledge that historical losses impact all facets of a patient's life. These considerations should help professionals trying to assist Native Americans in reframing historical losses symptoms in terms of collective responses that are employed to assist clients in alleviating symptoms (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998). Therefore, the therapist should acquire a new view consistent with the notion that the psychological, social, and environmental issues that many Native people continue to face are manifestations of a complex reaction to colonialism, intergenerational persecution, discrimination, and oppression.

In this vein, clinicians need to validate the existence of both the initial historical losses and the continued discrimination and oppression that has impacted the Native American people (Brave Heart et al., 2011). Therapeutic change may be difficult for Native American patients without validation of both the past atrocities to which they were subjected, and the acknowledgment of the current discriminatory environment that many Native people still endure. Also, since the dominant white culture has been responsible for many of the historical losses, this validation is pivotal especially when the clinician is a member of the white dominant culture. Native individuals should be assisted in making a connection between the historical losses and their emotional distress as an additional therapeutic path enhancing their insight about how the events of the past may impact them today (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998). And although the role of clinicians in the office in dealing with the psychological aspects of historical trauma is not to be discounted, probably the best approaches have been executed at the community level. I will provide two examples of these projects as they represent the quintessence of communal effort to overcome traumatic issues.

Historical Trauma Project in Portland, Oregon

Portland has the ninth largest Native American population in the United States representing 380 tribes. These share with other Native populations a very high poverty level. They live in neighborhoods with high crime rates and they do not have the skills, and training to be competitive in the current economy. A research project focusing on the social distress of this population identified the presence of historical trauma, high levels of substance abuse (alcoholism), mental health (depression), and Type 2 diabetes (Tann, Yabiku, Okamoto, & Yanow, 2007), which may be considered in part as consequences of Historical Trauma. A premise of the study is that the psychological makeup of a substantial portion of Native Americans in this community is characterized by a significant emotional barrier in making meaningful connections with others. The study explains these difficulties as a consequence of the Indian children's experience in the boarding schools that severed their links with their Native traditions. The resulting psychological fragmentation is manifested through psychological and social numbness, impaired sociability, loss of self-esteem and depression.

According to the writings of Native scholar and clinicians, as I continue to emphasize in the course of the narrative, the best way to promote healing of Aboriginal people is to encourage and support a process of reworking and reframing of the existing traumatic memories to develop a new historical framework that will contextualize the cultural and societal losses in a new vision based on tribal collective strength. In other words, re-telling the story of Indigenous historic trauma with the intent to deconstruct the negative views of historical events gives the opportunity to analyze and reframe history to learn lessons and promote positive changes. In fact, anecdotal experiences and research show that losses can be instrumental in promoting positive changes, and growth, which at times   may only be attainable because of personal and historical losses (Baltes, Lindenberger, & Staudinger, 1998).This work implies that the past is going to be deconstructed and freed from the colonizers' ideological shackles and therefore requires that the correct information about history is spread through Native communities to replace the mainstream interpretation that is still influenced by the theory of 'manifest destiny", which constituted the ideological basis for the attitude prevalent during the 19th century that the United States was destined to expand from coast to coast (Miller, 2006). As expectable, it gave impetus to Western settlement and to the removal and relocations of Native Americans and the expropriation of huge portions of their territories. Basically, an ideological blessing to theft.

The hope is that a properly de-colonized account of the Aboriginal people's suffering will replace untrue accounts and images regarding Native American experience and history. A properly deconstructed narrative of Aboriginal people's lives must accompany any social or political action directed at helping those who have been dispossessed. In recent decades, the North American Indigenous communities have been engaged in a process of revival which restores traditional languages, beliefs, values, and encourages a renewal of identity in the context of an Indigenous prospective. However, this process of restoration and renewal is not easy to grasp for the majority of the white U.S. population since they are not usually familiar with the consequences of the process of colonization and post colonization on Native Americans, and often discount it by remarks such as "it is in the past" and that the "Indians should get over it". Native communities have been involved forever in the struggle to overcome the ravages of Historical Trauma.

The role of the Elders in assisting therapists in helping Native Americans with symptoms of distress related to Historical Trauma is paramount as shown by experience (Ellerby & Ellerby, 1998). The views just expressed are the basis of almost any studies on Historical Trauma and have informed the Portland Wisdom of the Elders, Inc. focusing on History Trauma (WISDOM) Project. To restate the focus of the project in a more concise, concrete and pragmatic way: the collective memories related to the trauma are brought to awareness with traditional ceremonies and teachings and will spearhead a healing process of reformulation of personal and collective history and existence. To help foster this process, Wisdom of the Elders, Inc. (WISDOM) has created a Multimedia project to recover the loss of cultural traditions and family structure across generations, consisting of sharing video-recorded stories of resilient Native Americans (Discovering our Story, n.d.). Sharing stories is a traditional Native practice promoting connection, self-discovery, and learning and healing. In the video recordings tribal elders and storytellers reveal how they experienced being "lost," and they share how they found their way

to eventually return to a meaningful life (Discovering our Story, n.d.). On the project's web page, Native people learn about historical trauma, its effects, and healing practices to overcome it. These teachings help in redefining a sense of identity and in restoring traditional cultural values back into family and community relationships, and provides hope for those affected by Historical Trauma (Discovering our Story, n.d.).

Yakama Rising: Indigenous Cultural Revitalization, Activism, and Healing

Another recent and vivid example of fending off the damages of Historical Trauma and reclaiming a role of protagonist is the work described in the book: Yakama Rising: Indigenous Cultural Revitalization, Activism, and Healing. In this work the author, Michelle M. Jacob, describes the long standing efforts by her tribe, the Yakama Nation (Jacob, 2013) in Washington State, to respond to the challenge generated by Historical Trauma memories and distress, by fostering a grassroots process of cultural revitalization. In this effort, the ongoing cultural resistance is seen as a means of healing wounds of historical losses. The main concept described in the work is that Indigenous communities already have the inner strengths to face the persistent social problems they face. In fact, throughout the book, the author strongly emphasizes that this grassroots cultural activism is, in itself, a powerful decolonizing and healing force. The author identifies three main venues in reclaiming identity and traditions:

1. case studies showing the struggle between reclaiming traditional cultural practices and adapting to change,
2. narratives about the ongoing tribal saga balancing the psychological and physical sequels of the atrocities of colonization and the efforts to sustain the Yakama heritage, and
3. identification of the major domain for cultural revitalization as pivotal for self-determination, healing, and survival.

Validated by clinical experience and reliable sources, many other examples are provided about programs and approaches addressing Historical Trauma and its consequences such as addictions and mental health issues, with traditional healing approaches. All have a common denominator: the rediscovery of the Indian- self thru a reconnection with Native American history, traditions, cultural, and spiritual beliefs (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998).Taking into account what has been said, the narrow biological approaches practiced in Western medicine cannot satisfy the emotional needs of a large part of Native communities and individuals as it is based mainly on an individual sense of wellbeing and health, which is in antithesis with the contextual and intergenerational Native concepts and views about physical and psychological health.

Historical Trauma Research

Those with some knowledge about research work on Native Americans will not be surprised to hear that they are underrepresented in mental health research (Echo-Hawk, 2011). A review of this subject revealed that there is no proven main stream treatment to address the mental health needs of Native American clients (Gone & Alcántara, 2007). However, this viewpoint needs to be carefully analyzed. The authors conducting the review seem to assume that the gold standard for conducting research in Native country coincides with those applied in mainstream research. This may bring to the conclusion that Native Americans could benefit from the implementation of treatment and approaches developed from Western- based research, diagnostic, and treatment modalities, which would most probably be supplemented with some superficial "culturally sensitive" aspects, as already proposed many times over. This hybrid approach, even though sounding reasonable, tends to discount the efficacy of traditional healing practices, and ultimately by imposing Western- based modalities of treatment, could even be the vehicle for episodes of re-traumatization of Native individuals. Indeed, the predominant Western approach is based on ideological and cultural assumptions, which are often erroneously assumed as universal (Lupton, 2012).

The need for a hybrid approach is propounded by mainstream behavioral researchers stating that the majority of published work on Historical Trauma has been theoretical and therefore, more empirical evidence is needed in demonstrating the relationship between historical losses and psychological distress. But they ignore some pivotal research like the one conducted by Whitbeck and colleagues, showing solid scientific data behind the construct of historical losses and Historical Trauma (Whitbeck et al., 2004). Their study stands out as an empirical effort including the development of scales for the measurement of Historical Trauma and measures, e.g., depression, anxiety, and self-efficacy. It is very useful for determining a relationship between emotional distress and the degree of Historical Trauma. Also, the authors suggest that future studies can focus on determining if there is a correlation between neural activity (amygdala and hippocampus) individual signs and symptoms of Historical Trauma (Whitbeck et al., 2004).

Personally, I feel that some caution should be exercised in striving for biological causes, in order to avoid pharmaceutical companies spearheading their typical narrow and lucrative biological interventions by claiming that the basis for Historical Trauma is essentially neurobiological, discounting the socio-historical context, and thereby paving the way for massive re-traumatization. Incorporating indigenous healing methods with mainstream counseling and biological approaches has been proposed as a venue of effective collaborative research (Hartman & Gone, 2012). However, the possibility of such a collaboration is viewed with a high degree of skepticism among Native scholars and clinicians. Their main and valid objection is that Native communities know a lot about healing and that the efficacy of their intervention has been proved by numerous anecdotal reports, which per se constitute evidence. Traditional Native scholars and practitioners refer to this knowledge as Practice Based Evidence, as opposed to Evidence-Based Practices, to underline that long-term history of good outcomes is not inferior to, or may be more

accurate than the customary research practices based on short term clinical trials (Friesen et al., 2012).

Conclusions

 The Standing Rock Insurgency, as I took the freedom to define it, represents the Native opposition to the construction of the pipeline and the defense of the Native lands and sacred territory. In this vein, is both an act of true anticolonial reaction to the powers trying to govern the lives of the Natives on the reservation, and a step toward a rejection of the helplessness and hopelessness engendered by the phenomenon of Historical Trauma. I tried to back up my thesis with concepts identified in legitimate Native American commentaries and narratives, stressing the prominent role of culture and traditions as a main step in overcoming the psychological distress caused by the historical losses to which Natives have been subjected. In this context, I stressed both the neglect and inability of western medicine and behavioral sciences to contribute to the study and management of Historical Trauma. As I stressed, mainstream psychiatry does not acknowledge Historical Trauma as a valid clinical concept yet, and continues to ignore that Indigenous cultures view healing as a communal and contextual process, whereby individual health is deeply affected by the community and vice versa.

My comments on mainstream psychiatry are not an act of disrespect towards the field, but a mere reflection of reality. I did not expand on the reason as to why Western medicine does not put the emphasis on contextual issues (i.e. culture, class, etc.) because the endeavor would have required an additional paper. In reality, much has been written on this subject, but that body of work is often ignored in academia. However, I hope that this article will be the springboard for the reader to address this subject more in depth. As I stated, from the beginning, the main reason for writing this essay is to diffuse thoughts generated by Native American scholars, clinicians and leaders on the effect of historical losses in Native communities and individuals, and not to formulate theories on the subject on their behalf, since they do not need my help. Most importantly, in the article, I intended to contribute to the rejection of the myth that Native cultures are disappearing and that they are living in a state of desperation. I hope I succeeded in providing convincing evidence that the opposite is true.

As shown during the Standing Rock saga, Native Americans are active in maintaining and rebuilding their traditional networks and communities and in addressing and facing the psychological challenges stemming from historical losses. Also, by providing the example of the Italian American community of Roseto, whose experience shows the beneficial health effects stemming from community cohesion, and briefly citing the multiple episodes of earthquake in Abruzzo, whose occurrence and consequences stem from an injudicious model of economic development, I meant to convey a larger context and meaning to the Standing Rock Insurgency, something that would resonate with most of us. I found it in an ancient Native American quote: "Treat the earth well: it was not given to you by your parents, it was loaned to you by your children. We do not inherit the Earth from our Ancestors, we borrow it from our Children".

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