

Storytelling as a Remedial Technique in Boyden's *Through Black Spruce*

Abstract

This thesis research entitled "Storytelling as a Remedial Technique in Joseph Boyden's Through Black Spruce" examines the role and significance of storytelling to visualize the tragic fate of Cree community in Canada. This research aims to dig out the power of storytelling which works as a medicine for the main character Will Bird as well as the whole Cree community of Canada. It shows the importance of narrative techniques and storytelling to heal the difficulties of society and the individuals. In this thesis the concept of narratives and therapy and the theoretical concept regarding the narratives developed by Barbara Herrnstein Smith and Paul Ricouer are applied. Based on the textual analysis of different critics and library based materials, the researcher seeks the role of storytelling as a remedial process. The use of two narratives offer a much wider scope, and just as importantly, a sort of call and response that grows and echoes as the novel progress.

Key words: story, narration, healing, affects, therapy, friendship, self-determination

This research contends that the roles of narrative and storytelling have a significance to efface and remedy of difficulties of the society and the individuals. Basically First Nation peoples in Cree Community faced the difficulties. This research sheds light on how western cultural encroachment upon the native Canadian community destroys the native 'gut' through drugs, language, Missionaries and cultural hegemony among others. Through critical reading and storytelling of two narratives of the major characters Will Bird and Annie Bird, this research aims to dig out the cause which connects characters and finally treat. The theoretical insight about narratives of Barbara Herrnstein Smith and Paul Ricouer's are applied. The finding of the research is the therapeutic effect of narratives which played a crucial role to heal Cree community and especially the main character of the novel Will Bird.

The novel exposes the suffocating condition of the Canadian natives, who are losing their real lifestyle, culture, language, religion and solitude. The Cree inhabitants of the community of Moosonee have gone from living off the land, hunting, trapping, and trading to worrying about booze, drug addiction, and suicides. This is the representative novel of the then Canadian Cree community around Moosonee, where drug culture was swallowing the First Nation people's gut. The collapse of culture and traditional ways of life is often a backdrop to stories by and about First Nations people.

The narrative moves between the experience of Will Bird, legendary Cree bush pilot, who contemplates his life while lying comatose in a northern Ontario hospital bed and his niece Annie Bird, who sits at Will's bedside and tells him the story of her sister Suzanne, which moves between Moosonee, Toronto and New York. Annie is a character who is highly guided by "responsibility" so as to even abort her mission for the sake of her uncle Bird. She takes part in the process of silent storytelling and dedicates herself to the "other". Annie recounts the previous year of her life and her sojourns to Toronto, Montreal and New York City to a comatose Will in an attempt to help to revive him from his coma. In the narrative Will narrates the story about who he is and what he does. He is a famous bush pilot from the town of Moosonee. In the second chapter we realize he is telling this story of his past while in the present he is in a coma. This book revolves around one major event which is that his niece Susan ran off and disappeared with one of the Netmaker boys, Gus. While walking home from his friend Joe's house he is stopped by Marius Netmaker (Gus's brother) and two white guys. On the other hand Annie's story was that she went south in search of her sister Susanna who disappeared with Gus. Gus's father Marius Netmaker is guided by the Western ethical tradition which is ontological, that is self-centered. He enjoys the sufferings of native Cree and blooms his drugs business. Will Bird is

always against this evil which has entered their community. The native themes in these novels include, narrative structure, colonial effect which is effacing native identity, use of Cree language, setting around bush, and the characters distressed to urban. The theme of violence is other running theme which is common theme in Canadian literature as well as native Canadian literature.

Through Black Spruce, a Canadian narrative is set on Moosonee, Ontario and is narrated by Will Bird and his niece Annie Bird with the narration switching between chapters. The protagonists of the novel have the memories of their fearful past and relatives. The two major characters Will Bird and his niece Annie Bird express their detail events that happened in the various geographical locations, i.e., dense spruce forest, highly populated New York and the man less islands. It shifts the perspective between these two narrations. It's told by two different narrators that alternate telling their story each chapter. So the first chapter was narrated by Will and the next by Annie and so on and so forth. Although this study makes significant study of narratives and storytelling to reveal the tragic fate of indigenous people of Canada, it does not focus on overall concept of plot, setting, and character and so on. This research only focuses on the techniques of Narratives and storytelling as well as inescapability and responsibility that lead towards reveal tragic fate but the study of linguistics, mystery, myth, etc. inside the text are outside the scope of this study. Different critics, reviewers and the magazines have commented on the layers of aspects of the issues that *Through Black Spruce* reveals. It is very much significant text for the native Canadians who believe in the tradition of storytelling.

Ron Charles, the reviewer of *The Washington Post* states:

His novel is a striking reflection of Canadian anxieties, particularly the fear of contamination by the United States, that cesspool of murder, narcotics and Oprah that

lurks south of the border. Boyden's previous book was the bestseller "Three Day Road" about a First Nations sniper who fought in a Canadian regiment during World War I, and "Through Black Spruce" picks up two generations later with that soldier's 55-year old grandson, a Cree named Will Bird who lives in Moosonee, Ontario, near James Bay, "on the edge of the world." (2) The anxieties of the Canadian people are shown in the novel. The author, Joseph Boyden, is a Canadian of mixed Native heritage. *Through Black Spruce* establishes Boyden as a writer of startling originality and uncommon power. Related with his previous book about First Nation, in this book also we learn their deepest secrets, heartbreak, intense love, and strong family bonds that become impossible to break.

Similarly, Boyden's emphasis on the First Nation people is also praised by Morgan O'Neal. Through his eyes, the real causes of suffering of the First Nations people are minutely observed in the novel. He reviews:

As with *Three Day Road*, Boyden is in a good position to address contemporary First Nation issues. . . . The collapse of culture and traditional ways of life is often a backdrop stories by and about First Nations people. The Cree inhabitants of the community of Moosonee have gone from living off the land, hunting, trapping, and trading to worrying about booze, drug addiction, and suicides. (4)

Morgan review suggests that collapse of the culture and traditional way of life through drug and addiction has become the main problem for Native Community. Cree community have the problem of their land to live, they are more or less dominated by westerners and worrying about booze, drug addiction, and suicides. The research for this novel was clearly much different from the research for *Three Day Road*. It was refreshing not to have to pore over historical texts but

rather to look at the contemporary world with as keen an eye with perspective of storytelling.

The novel exposes the unpleasant condition of the Canadian natives, about their real lifestyle, culture, language, religion and solitude. This is the representative novel of the then Canadian Cree community around Moosonee, where drug culture was swallowing the First Nation people's gut. There are unexpected twists and turns gradually that is presented. It's also an important contribution to the native literary voice in this country. Annie always stays by her Uncle's side to show the strong bond between them i.e. the remedy of Will Bird's life. Ray Taras views:

Through Black Spruce is about fire and ice as well as conifers about their regenerative as well as destructive powers. It is about life sustaining beaver and goose, martin and moose-and their animal spirits that command respect and Joseph Boyden has followed up with a meticulously-crafted, suspense-driven story encompassing an extended aboriginal family. (60)

Boyden is creating a new imaginary vision of Canada and its people and that imaginary is inescapably real. This novel is an astonishingly powerful novel of contemporary aboriginal life, full of the dangers and harsh beauty of both forest and city. The exploration of danger and violence and its effect on all of those people isn't just a common Canadian theme but a universal one. Violence is an uncomfortable reality. In this text the writer include far reaching consequences of violence, the awful urban versus pleasant bush, humanistic ethos, identity crisis, journey of solitude etc. He further added, "The novel was awarded the 2008 Scotiabank Giller Prize, one of Canada's top literary awards. It puts Joseph Boyden in the company of Giller laureates like Margaret Atwood, RohintonMistry, Alice Munro, Michael Ondaatje, Mordecai Richler, and M. G. Vassanji" (60). By this we know that Taras valorizes the work of Boyden.

The novel's character, Annie Bird plays significant role to show the strong family bond. Annie does not find her sister on her journey but she begins to find herself and her purpose in life. Mark Callanan reviews:

Annie's quest to find her lost sister is a further study in cultural politics, and on the level of the individual, a study of the formation of identity. As Annie finds herself shedding her tomboy past and slipping into her sister's role of "Indian Princess" in New York, her uncle grapples with the Wendigo of memory that threatens to consume him. (8)

This novel focuses on the identity and the cultural formation. We also find the major characters of this novel are highly ethical and their acts are intended towards responsibility to others. Annie's work is definitely a great work for others in her community and especially her action is great for her sister and uncle. In this sense, this research is definitely a great work in the field of storytelling which is one of the important parts of native Canadian tradition. It aims storytelling as a technique to reveal the tragic fate of Cree community in Canada.

This research contends that the use of silent storytelling technique has played a crucial role to heal the life of Will Bird as well as the whole Cree community and continues to grow. Native stories also have the power to educate and heal the heart, mind, body and spirit. Will Bird's medically failed condition get recovered through story telling. Indigenous community is struggling for its sovereignty and self-determination. In the novel storytelling is presented as the means by which the Cree community heals and is healed. The word of Will's niece, sister, friends, relatives and others bring him back to the consciousness. From a scientific perspective he had almost no hope for recovery but through the storytelling process he healed his problems and gets recovered. From the publication to the present many researchers reached its various

aspects but the present study deals with the issue of storytelling as the remedial process as well as therapy.

Having dealt with the theories of narratives and storytelling that inform the framework of my research, I have applied the related part to the methodology. The keywords through which I have engaged with this research are; story, narration, healing, affect, therapy, friendship, self-determination etc. Storytelling is the art of conveying events in words, images, and sounds. It is the social and cultural activity of sharing stories of past. Every culture has its own stories or narratives that are valuable form of human expression. Because story is essential to so many art forms, however, the word storytelling is often used in many ways. It sometimes works as the therapeutic role to revive from the critical situation. It is a meeting of minds where visions, values, feelings and memories are passed on in words by oral or written.

Since the onset of the Literary Era approximately three thousand years ago, storytelling in the west was taken only in lower position but now it is escaping that position, as it is becoming ever clearer that story and storytelling are central to human life. During the Literary Era, relating a series of events has in Western culture not generally been thought of as storytelling, but rather as, telling what happened, giving information (that may or may not be accurate), or just talking. Now only when the presentation or content has been especially unrealistic, cute or exotic people recognized narratives as stories. Storytelling has also come from within academia, which now definitely acknowledges that narrative texts must be viewed in the context of their presentations, and views the social event of the performance itself as a text. The power of storytelling and storytelling itself remain secrets, grasped only by the initiated. Storytelling is something that comes directly out of, and is made up of, the storyteller's self.

In narrative theory, two major levels or dimensions are identified. Firstly, narrative

theory consist of the basic events or actions which circumstances in which they are performed in chronological order, in which they are supposed to have happened, to be called the story or narrative. Secondly, those events or actions used for telling to the readers are called narration. Here the concerns is to the both technique identifies by Boyden. By presenting the story about Native Canadians he used this narrative technique. Thus, the telling of the story, the narrative technique like 'point of view' also helps to identify the meaning and interpret as Peter Barry argues, "how we see in what we see" (61). This kind of 'howness' of the text might have been developed from the time of oral storytelling. Though, not in written form of narrative fiction, certain discipline of telling the story supported by some flexible rules and regulations must have been developed since the time of oral fiction. The discussion of narrative technique like point of view theory has got its written form from the time of Greek civilization.

An American literary critic and theorist Barbara Herrnstein Smith talks about storytelling.

In her views:

In seeking to identify the functions of storytelling for the individual narrator or his community, recognition of the variety of possible narrative transactions and the range of interests that they may thereby serve should encourage us to acknowledge and explore the multiplicity of functions that may be performed by narratives generally and by any narrative in particular. (235)

In these lines she shows that storytelling has multiple purpose of human being. By this, she hints that it gives entertainment, education and helps to empowering individuals and community as well. There is not any single fundamental purpose or psychological effect of narratives rather it has its multiplicity. The narrative also helps to reveal the past painful experience of the person who is in coma. The reader's ability to construct a summary of the story from a text does not

according to Smith demonstrate an essential narrative component within the text. Rather it shows a readerly competence which will defer from reader to reader and culture to culture.

Narratives are sequentially organized signs that may be oral or written. It has multiple versions which are also hinted by Paul Ricoeur. He argues, "Narratives are made of sequentially organized verbal and or other type of signs (visual, musical, kinesthetic) that depicts a temporal transition from one state of affairs to another" (96). Narratives are not only in the verbal signs but also in visual, musical or kinesthetic form which also helps to transform from one mental state to another to remedy the sufferings. These are equally helpful to recover.

According to the Russian philosopher and literary critic Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin storytelling is the matter of social exchange. In his own words, "storytelling activities are widely viewed as essentially anchored within a broader dynamics of social exchange" (83). In his book the *Dialogic Imagination* he takes storytelling process as strengthen of the broader dynamics of social exchange. He hints that through the storytelling process the man shares his experiences which are sometimes personal or communal. These shared experiences also helps person to recover from destructive past.

Story telling helps the person to get recover from the critical shortage of time. Storytelling is the most powerful way to activate the brains which helps to relate the past experiences to the present condition. Storytelling process also links with mental activities and it activates human mind. When people became mentally active then only they eliminate negative aspect of past experience and hope for better future life.

This thesis is the study of the Canadian writer's novel from the perspective of storytelling as a remedial technique. This novel is part of a trilogy relating the story of a Cree family living in Northern Ontario near the James Bay area. They share a number of thematic stories as well as

structural elements. It focuses the major character Will and also the representative of the Cree community. This novel portrays a dispossessed and colonized Cree community in crisis. In each narrative conversation, one of the narrators is unconscious. At the end of each novel, the two narrative aspects merge to give way to an ending full of hope and the promise of communal healing and rejuvenation. Here storytelling became the tool for imposing them. Important as fighting cognitive imperialism and the denial of the autonomy of the Cree community are to the struggle for communal survival in Boyden's novels. We cannot have a comprehensive understanding of that struggle without considering the crucial relationship between storytelling and healing.

Will's niece Annie Bird has returned from her own perilous journey to sit beside his bed. She narrates about her journey to her uncle and Will recounts the events of the previous year which led to him being in coma. The novel is simply the story of the Will. Each and every story and the characters are in one or other way related to the story of Will. There is suffering, pain, loss of the Cree community. The critic Eric Miller, in his "Storytelling Workshop: Notes" argues, "Vladimir Propp's theory (1928) states that a story is composed of three stages; Peaceful home, Break-up of the home often seemingly caused by a villain figure and finally Member of the broken home tracks down the villain, defeats him/her, re-establishes the home" (4). Miller points out the importance stages of story composed by Propp. Here Boyden's novel is also manages the stages following by Propp. There is peaceful society and family first, Suzanne is disappeared with Gus, Will is being attacked by Marius. Finally Will defeats Marius, Annie back with Suzanne and Will is recovered. The very beginning of the novel Will narrates the experience about bush pilot that is in the normal situation. He narrates to his niece, "You know I was a bush pilot. The best. But the best have to crash. And I've crashed a plane, me. Three times.

I need to explain this all to you. I was a young man when I crashed the first time. The world was wide open. I was scared of nothing” (1). It shows that at the beginning Will is happy with his job and relatives. He discusses the first time he crashed the plane. As long as he has his friends, his family, and his rye whisky, life is good for him in Moosonee.

When Marius Netmaker, a local drug runner, suspects Will of being an informant for the police, he taunts Will with a series of increasingly violent episodes that culminate in a fateful confrontation. Will narrates the relations and events of his past life that sometimes makes him painful and traumatic. His friend Marius Netmaker is a violent character. Marius is an awful man he is responsible for drug trafficking and is involved with bad people. Marius is guided by the Western ethical tradition which is ontological, that is self-centered. He enjoys the sufferings of native Cree and blooms his drugs business. The starting of the novel reveals the story about the traumatic feelings of Will as he says, “I don’t know how long I lay there. Something, someone maybe, told me that I eventually had to surface if I was going to live, and believe it or not, it was a tough decision to make. For me, my life’s been hard, and sometimes I’m so tired out from losing the things I love that it feels easier to just give up and slip away” (18). This is the memory of Will which is full of fear. Marius is a Native American who loves to drink wine. Suzanne has gone missing in Toronto with Gus, Marius brother so Marius is angry; he and two other men brutally beat Will and say, “I can kill you anytime I want. And I will, one day soon” (18). This portrays the anger of Marius who is guided by western tradition.

There is a problem about a biker gang who is threatening and harassing and Will Bird is the one who shows determination and shows that he will risk anything as long as he protects his family even though he has already lost so much in his life. From the dangerous bush country of Upper Canada to the drug-fueled glamour of the Manhattan club scene, Joseph Boyden tracks his

characters with a keen eye for the telling detail and a rare empathy for the empty places concealed within the heart. Will Bird thinks that drug culture is more dangerous than snitching their own culture. He narrates his past. The events of the story always take place within the past of the narrative voice. Paul Ricoeur adds “The narrator may move forward or backward, considering the present from the point of view of the anticipation of a remembered past or as the past memory of an anticipated future” (100). French philosopher Paul Ricoeur developed an account of narrative and narrative identity that has been highly influential. Narrative means more than simply a story. It refers to the way that humans experience time, in terms of the way we understand our future potentialities, as well as the way we mentally organize our sense of the past. On the same way the novels characters move forward and backward by the narration of the story that really helps the individual and the whole to recover the problems.

Annie takes part in the process of storytelling to take her uncle into right condition. Annie herself compelled to tell stories to her uncle; she develops her skills as a storyteller. Her apprenticeship as a storyteller strengthens her indigenous identity given the importance of storytelling as a means of communal survival. Will, who is more of a versed story-teller than Annie, starts his story fluidly and smoothly. His niece, who is obviously less familiar with the indigenous practice of storytelling, however, finds it difficult to start the storytelling process. She starts haltingly and needs to “learn to talk” before she can tell her stories as smoothly as her uncle does. A whole chapter is devoted to her apprenticeship and is significantly entitled “Learning to Talk” (18). Annie’s initial inability to tell stories may be due to her young age (when compared to Will), but it is also due to the impact of, what Battiste calls, “cognitive imperialism” (210). Cognitive imperialism refers to the cognitive structures through which the colonization of the minds of indigenous peoples was carried out in Canada. Annie’s inability to

tell stories at the beginning can be seen as a symptom of the increasing distance separating a large number of indigenous youths from their cultures. Her apprenticeship as a storyteller is a way of countering cognitive imperialism. The storytelling performed by, on the one hand, Annie and Will, and Boyden, on the other hand, reminds us of one fundamental task of native artists to help their people heal.

This research foregrounds the importance of the relationship between healing and storytelling as a mechanism of community building. Storytelling is something that comes directly out of, and is made up of, the storyteller's self. The narrative conversation between the elder and his niece, in Boyden's novel, also facilitates the healing of the Cree community not by spelling out a solution, but by diagnosing the ills plaguing their community and the colonial structures (external and internal) responsible for the misery of the Cree community. The diagnosis of the colonial structures responsible for the dependence (intellectual and otherwise) of the community is carried out in a way that is reminiscent of a story told by Chickasaw-American scholar and educator Eber Hampton. In his "Redefinition of Indian Education," he tells about a situation similar to the one framing the narrative conversation of uncle and niece in Boyden's story. One day, Hampton crossed an elder at a convenience store. The elder asked him if he had some time to spare. He thought the elder wanted help with carrying a box, but he just asked him (talking about the box) "how many sides do you see?" (Hampton 42). Hampton replied "one" (42). "He pulled the box towards his chest and turned it so one corner faced me. 'Now how many do you see?' 'Now I see three sides.' He stepped back and extended the box, one corner towards him and one towards me. 'You and I together can see six sides of this box,' he told me" (42). Likewise, the narrative perspectives of Will and Annie yield a comprehensive assessment of the crisis afflicting the Cree community.

The narrative technique of an author in any novel is crucial to the readers understanding of the narrative. The way in which the novel is written influence the way in which the reader interprets the events which occur through the novel and allows the author to convey the feeling of time, place and people in the society. Barbara Herrnstein Smith argues:

For any narrative, the conditions would consist of such circumstantial variables as the particular context and material setting (cultural and social, as well as strictly "physical") in which the tale is told, the particular listeners or readers addressed, and the nature of the narrator's relationship to them, and such psychological variables as the narrator's motives for telling the tale and all the particular interests, desires, expectations, memories, knowledge, and prior experiences (including his knowledge of various events, of course, but also of other narratives and of various conventions and traditions of storytelling) that elicited his telling it on that occasion, to that audience, and that shaped the particular way he told it. (226)

Narrative should have the particular context and material setting. The narrator and the listener also have the particular relationship to them. Boyden calls Native culture as the first pillar of Canadian culture. His concept of four pillars exists in his country's foundation: the English, the French, the Contemporary Immigrant, and the First Nation. Each plays a vital role in supporting and explaining about Canadians. Boyden presents the significant setting and the context in this novel. Setting plays a major role in the story because it acts as an anchor for Annie as she journeys down south and a place to avoid for Will. The two main characters have completely opposite view on Moosonee. Annie and Will tell stories each other. By that Boydens serves us the story. Will lives a couple miles away from the town out in the bush. There was other people view as dangerous Will views as safe. He thinks that the real danger lurks in the city. In a way he

is right the city is corrupt with drugs and he is afraid of Marius. Annie however constantly thinks back to her town when she is in New York, Toronto and Montreal. The town of Moosonee is not as bad as the towns she visited and therefore she has a different view of it. She associates the town with all the good, such as her family, friends, the beauty of the land and good things it provides. Will only see it for the bad and believes that the bush will provide everything for him. The particular memories and experience are sharing by each other.

There are two narrations that we also called 'dual narrative'. The first one is the story by Will and second is the story by Annie. In Boyden's novel there has to be a clear reason for a dual narrative that is organic to the story, or else it will feel false. The decision to once again use this structure wasn't even all that conscious. Apparently, the Bird Clan needs one another to talk to when it feels as if the rest of the world is against them. Ultimately, the use of two perspectives offers a much wider scope, and grows the novel. These stories help to remedy the difficulties of the communal society of Canada. Both Will and Annie have similar pictures of struggle, domination, misery, loss and dishonesty and cope with them is differently. Dual narratives of uncle Bird and niece Annie go to their past and explains in a detail way.

Will Bird, as a bush pilot faced many accidents and now his comatose stage is because of his long run riot with local drug dealer Marius. Marius is connected to the underworld biker gangs who are destroying native youths. The drugs come from the west that means America to pollute whole Cree community. Bird finds that the drug is larger destroyer of their community than Missionaries. He dreams of freedom of children who are captivated by those missionaries:

I had recurring dreams of going back to it, climbing up the side like Ahepik, our own Cree Spider-Man, and rescuing the children from their beds, the dreams so full of anxiety all and even terror as if the building was on fire. I'd go back into that building over and over

until the children had been freed, lined up safely on the bank of the river in the tall grass where they couldn't be seen. (90)

The story of Will soothing himself while he memorized his own past. He dreams about the children who are in difficult situation. He rescues them by using his own effort. He is ethical and honest person. He finds this act of saving is so urgent as if the residential school 'was on fire'. He metaphorically dreams the 'river' and 'tall grass' to show his strong affection towards his own way of life. He wants to hide them from the sight of Western missionaries for the goodness of his culture, language and of whole peaceful Cree community. In Boyden's early book *Three Day Road* there is also the character like Will who dreams the same like him. This dream helps him to relief from his poor condition.

Will explains about the first day his mother died and he and his father buried her in the cemetery rather than cremate her. He narrates:

I got my wings the day my mother died. I asked my father if we could cremate her and take her up in a plane and sprinkle her ashes across the tundra and the bay, watch her body float like snowflakes onto the ground below. My father wanted to wrap her tight in blankets and place her in a tree. The Ojibwe blood in him wanted it, I guess. But when we ran into obstacles with the town about doing that, we buried her in the cemetery by the healing lodge with the rest of the *Anishnabe*, making sure her feet pointed east, to the rising sun, and her head pointed west to where it set. (56)

This narrative presents the culture and tradition that is different from the American Indian people than Native American. Though he wants to burn his mother's corpse, he buried because of the endurance of western culture. He wants to cremate her and take up in a plane and sprinkle her ashes across the bay. Not only Will's family faced that type of problem but the whole

community faced it. They are forced to follow rules and regulations of western tradition. He further adds, "When I die, nieces, I want to be cremated, my ashes taken up in a bush plane and sprinkled onto the people in town below. Let them think my body is snowflakes, sticking in their hair and on their shoulders like dandruff" (56). His desire does very much sadden to Annie because she is inside of his bed that is at the last stage of death. This story narrates by Will somehow cure and recovered.

Cox and Theilgaard observe in their book *Mutative Metaphors in Psychotherapy: The Aeolian Mode* that "Psychotherapy is concerned with a story which is so disturbing that, however painful the telling may be, it must be attempted" (233). Likewise the observation of those critics Will tells his story silently in painful situation. He says:

Quiet laughter and whispers travelling like smoke into my home. I was still up and not able to sleep. I slipped to the kitchen, looked out the window, and saw the dark outline of a big new truck. Marius's truck. I watched two men climb out, one of them the hulking form of Marius, a bottle clutched in his hand. His friend flicked a lighter, and I watched the flame touch the tip of the rag. They weren't about to do what it looked like, were they? There are laws against this. They couldn't. (110)

The past experience of Will through silent storytelling is also the painful to tell her niece. But in the psychotherapy, a person needs to tell it to recover the pain and suffering. Though it is painful, disturbing there is a compulsion to tell story to get remedy. Will describes about bad activities of Marius. Likewise, in the story Marius takes Bird as the spy of local police and attacks him time and again. Boyden also portrays the story of painful past of Will to get relief to the Native Canadians. A person who shares his/her painful experience to other he/she more or less gets relief.

Ricoeur argues, "narration can be identified as a "tale of time," or better yet, as a "tale about time" (104). Generally stories are narrated on certain time and context. The native Canadian stories also have certain time and context. Will narrates his own story that happened an actual time. A person who is really suffering time and again he/she has compulsion to make a new action. He plans to kill Marius. In this context Will states:

I'd drunk a mickey of rye to steady my nerves. I'd killed dozens of moose in my life, dozens upon dozens of beaver, fox, marten. I never thought I would kill a man. But Marius was no longer a man. Maybe he never was. He was missing something that the rest of us have. He is what the old ones would call *windigo*. Marius, he needed killing. (186)

Will is worried about Marius behavior. Marius always disturbs him and his family. Though, Will is not that type of person who get involve in violence and destruction, he compelled to do and plans to attack Marius. His expression shows that he is afraid to kill him at first. He narrates:

Control. Breathe. In, out, in, half out. Like my father taught me. Blank mind. Focus on the kill. Hands steadier, I followed the movement of his truck with my rifle, like sighting in on a goose coming in for a landing. The crosshairs were on Marius's face now. Ugly face. He was laughing to himself, no longer focused on what was in his hands. Sunlight reflecting off his window. Almost. Almost. (188)

The past experience of the Will is so traumatic. He faced many problems and finally he wants to kill Marius who is very violent for him and his family. Will remembers his father who taught him to play gun. His father also gives him a gun. He pointed through truck that is driving by Marius but he is almost shooting him.

In Will's words "I 'had killed a man" (226) is the event after attacking Marius. Will

shoots him finally but he is afraid even with the cars and trees crossing his truck on the road. He encounters many cars and bushes passed him but he only thinks about the incident he did with Marius. We can say that in Propps language the real hero defeats the villain. He further narrates:

As summer died, I came to understand that the revenge I'd sought didn't stem from my beating, from the killing of my sow, even from what Marius did to me and would have done to my family, but from what Marius was doing to damage the children. I convinced myself of it. I killed him to save the children. The big white building that I thought was finally gone came back into my nightmares again when I began to contemplate the Netmaker clan. What Marius and his friends brought into our community was more destructive than what the *wemestikushu* brought with their nuns and priests. (267)

Will Bird always want to get rid of these people and culture. Marius and his son are guided by the western culture. This shows that the collapse of culture and traditional ways of life is often a backdrop to stories by and about First Nations people. The community of Moosonee has gone from living off land, hunting, trapping, drug addiction and suicide. Will clearly say that he killed Marius to save the children and to recover the community from the very destruction.

The memory of destruction haunts badly to Will. Will, who is one of the main victims in this novel, has many stories. Once Will says, "More than three months that I'd left Moosonee. Three months since I'd killed Marius. I spoke the words. *I murdered Marius. I have killed a man.* Why did the memory of that decide to haunt me now?" (304) Will is haunted by the memories of his fearful past. He is haunted physical as well as psychological. He narrates his memory with his niece. The past of Will in a manner that enables survival or a reengagement in life. Time and again he recalls the memory what his fathers did:

My father had killed many men. I watched him kill a goose one time. Many times I watched him kill. Geese, moose, a polar bear. Fox. Marten. But this particular goose.

My dad cried. He cried! A simple goose. I think he never got over the guilt or the shell shock of killing so many. Who knew it can last decades? I hadn't even begun coming to terms with what I had done. (304)

Will tells his father's incidents about his immoral activities. By doing that his father becomes guilt more. This happens on last decades. He also doesn't forget that he kills Marius and remembers again and again through narration.

Barbara Herrnstein Smith focuses on the plot and the structures of the stories. She presents stories should give the specific idea and purpose of storytelling. In her own words:

The basic stories or deep-plot structures of narratives are often not abstract, disembodied, or subsumed entities but quite manifest, material, and particular retellings--and thus versions--of those narratives, constructed, as all versions are, by someone in particular, on some occasion, for some purpose, and in accord with some relevant set of principles. (218)

The story of Will and Annie are not a simple and general ideas or qualities about the place, person and culture, it is recognizable, shows clear picture of the Cree community. The story has purpose to remedy the individuals as well as the whole community.

Indigenous storywork is a rare and truly innovative work that illuminates new practices and context for the ethical use of Indigenous oral history and tradition as an educational tool. Joann Archibald *Indigenous Storywork* demonstrates how stories have the power to educate and heal the heart, mind, body, and spirit. It builds on the seven principles of respect, responsibility, reciprocity, reverence, holism, interrelatedness, and synergy that form a framework for

understanding the characteristics of stories, appreciating the process of storytelling, establishing a receptive learning context, and engaging in holistic meaning-making. In her own words:

The Elders taught me about seven principles related to using First Nations stories and storytelling for educational purposes, what I term storywork: respect, responsibility, reciprocity, reverence, holism, interrelatedness, and synergy. Experiential stories reinforce the need for storywork principles in order for one to use First Nations stories effectively. These seven principles form a Stó:lo and Coast Salish theoretical framework for making meaning from stories and for using them in educational contexts. I learned that stories can “take on their own life” and “become the teacher” if these principles are used. (9)

Similarly, Boyden presents the role of storytelling for the purpose of educational context. The story of Annie, his sister and other relatives have the power to educate and relief the heart, mind and physical body of Will and the whole community. The respect and the responsibility of Will and his niece towards others also form a framework for understanding the story and the process of storytelling. Will says, “Bush life is simple. Repetitive. My father knew that only three necessities exist in the bush. Fire, shelter, and food. You dedicate your every waking moment either to the actual pursuit or to the thought of these three things” (249). Through these lines Will Bird feels the sense of responsibility to her niece. He suggests her for three things; Fire, shelter and food that exist in the bush life. She needs to concentrate for these three things.

Boyden portrays the story about Annie in very remarkable way. Her story is the therapy to her uncle who suffers in comatose stage at hospital bed. She has a story to tell, of her harrowing search to find her missing sister in the big city, and how she found a protector in the most unexpected place. One the one hand the brutality of the western tradition guided man

Marius and other Netmakers suffer Will a lots, on the other hand he is he is suffering by missing his second niece Suzanne. Annie also has the story about love relationship, drug consumption and sibling. Annie always takes risk for other's survival. The responsibility toward other is clearly reflects in this novel. Her story is a therapy for her uncle and also the whole community.

While Suzanne left her family Annie memorized Suzanne's past to her uncle and says:

Suzanne left mother and me on Christmas morning two years ago and climbed on the back of Gus's ski-doo. I remember a light snow fell that must have tickled her face. She and Gus, they drove across the frozen river, through the black spruce and into the wilderness. They were heading south with the plan of selling the ski-doo once they reached the little town that has a Greyhound station. They planned on taking that bus all the way to Toronto. But almost two hundred miles of frozen bush separated Moosonee from the town with the bus station. And don't forget. I knew Gus's ski-doo all too well. I was the one who used to ride on the back of it with him. It was a piece of shit. (27)

It shows the behavior of Suzanne which her sister knows already. While Suzanne is disappear with Gus Annie guesses the place where they have gone. The braveness of Annie and her strong attitude shows hope to find Suzanne. That hopes (story) play the vital role to Will to get recovery because he wants Suzanne back and hope to see a beautiful family again. Not only by the attack of Marius Will is being in coma but he has also the tension of his own niece Suzanne who is being disappeared with Gus. Annie narrates the story while she leaves her hometown to search for her sister Suzanne. She brings the hope to her uncle and say, "And so this is the way my world once went, Uncle, me always ready to pack up and head into the bush, trying to leave this place that is home, trying to make my way up or down the river, in whichever direction seemed

the best one to take me. This was my life” (44). This clearly shows the responsibility to her family and brings the positive effect to her family. She is ready to search her missing sister and travel many places.

While Annie story revolves around the searching of her sister there are many problems she faced. To find her lost sister, Annie goes to Montreal and later to New York. She couldn't find her but writes a letter being Suzanne to her mother. Further into the city she finds life harder and more mechanical. Suzanne had established herself as a successful model earlier in New York but now she is out of reach. Annie starts to do the job as an “Indian Princess” to search the sister. But she doesn't like the task and makes a friendship with “mute” Indian Gordon. He helps her in many ways. Her friend Gordon is the protector and Gordon saves her in many places. While Gregor attacks, Gordon saves her and she angrily says, “Gordon killed that fucker. He killed him. Not something I should be talking about out loud, I figured” (122). Gordon faced difficulties in Toronto and he killed Gregor. She further says, “He is my protector now” (123). She knows that Gus has been killed by biker gangs and Suzanne is also in danger. She further finds that this life in city is not for her. She says natives are best in the bush. She returned her homeland. She sits next to her uncle and takes part in the process of storytelling which she hopes will have healing effect.

The language of westerners also impacts the native Canadians. Annie meets a woman at New York City while searching her sister. She makes a conversation with this woman. Annie says her name in her own language. She says, “*Annie Peneshishtishinihkason. Winipekohkntocin*” (267) but the woman did not catch her name and by squealing and stamping her feet she says, “What did you say?” and Annie replied, “My name is Annie Bird, and I come from James Bay in the Arctic Lowlands of Ontario” (267). But the woman didn't give respect to

her name and say, “Girlfriend! That is such a crazy fucking language” (268). That is the way westerners communicate with the native Canadians. Covering emotional story theme such as anger, anxiety, fear, shame, guilt, separation and bereavement, Boyden present many fascinating stories which he has found to be particularly beneficial in the therapeutic context. He shows story therapy can be employed practically in different setting. For example; within education, or as part of family therapy and with different age groups. Annie has hoped to relief her uncle. She narrates:

When I’m alone with Uncle, I look at his face, actually reach my hand out and touch it. He’s still warm. He’s still alive. “I bet if you had your say, you’d want to stay here in Moose Factory,” I tell him, “not be sent to some strange hospital down south.” I won’t let it happen. I know what he wants as surely as if he’s spoken the words. “I’ll fight to keep you here with us.” (174)

Annie really loves her uncle. When Dr. Lam and her family force to take him to the south for treatment Annie doesn’t accept their way. She wants the words that is spoken by his uncle and not be ready to send him another strange hospital down south. She wants to treat him in Moose Factory by words and her past and ready to fight to keep him in Moose Factory. She believes that one day he will get up.

Boyden more or less presents Annie as a therapist for her uncle Will Bird. The words Annie narrates, “Uncle, you knew how to drink. And I notice you have an aversion to your washing machine. All of your sheets, your clothes, your towels, they’re washed and neatly folded. They’re waiting for you when you wake up and you’re ready to go home” (222). It means that Boyden adds the tiny family matters in the story of the major character Annie. Though the words and the languages are simple, it reliefs more or less to her uncle. In this regard Jeremy

Holmes in his book *Between Art and Science* points the importance of a life story for the patient in quest of his identity as an essential requisite for psychotherapy. He points, “Every psychotherapeutic case-history is, in a sense, a “fiction” – a story wrought collaboratively by patient and therapist from the raw materials of memory, history, dreams, transference relationship and theoretical perspective. The urge to weave meanings out of experience seems fundamental to human psychology” (127). The story form collaborates from the memory of the Annie to serve Will as well as the story of Will to serve the community. Annie also tries to help her uncle by understanding his present life in terms of his past experiences.

From a scientific perspective, he had almost no hope of recovering but the words and the story of his niece, sister, friends and other relatives bring him back to consciousness. After Will reaches “his hands up in the air,” Will’s friends and relatives came to visit him. Upon hearing about that, Gregor, Will’s friend, realizes the healing power of words. He asks Will’s friends and relatives present in the hospital room to “speak now, people, speak! We are healing him with our words” (361). Words heal because they translate the proximity, care, concern and love of the other. Words also heal because they bridge the expanding gap between generations of native people. We can say that through their narrative conversations, uncle and niece reveal their secrets to each other. They two have different stories switching between the chapters.

Native American storyteller Leslie Marmon Silko's work is a study in cultural mediation and spirit transformation. Her creative vision celebrates the transformative power of story and place, working together for life in a healing way. In her story work, Allan Chavkin writes “...in her novel *Ceremony*, storytelling is a curative art form which can bring about restoration and renewal, as it always has been in Native American oral tradition” (24). She takes storytelling as an act of improvement. Silko honors the power that storytelling carries in these

communities, weaving elements of the traditional Native American art of oral storytelling into a modern narrative story that seeks to educate and instruct readers about ways to heal the world. Though there is silent story on Boyden's novel the power of story brings the new life of the individual and the community.

Stories give one a sense of wholeness that the pieces of one's life fit together and add up to something. It gives meaning to life and expresses values. And telling those stories by a person there is a difference between the listener who survive at present and the past. Will and her niece share the experience to each other. Finally, when Will is recovering from coma he says, "This is where I want to start a new life with you" (401). This line is told by Will to her wife Dorothy. He further adds, "I don't mean live here; I want to live with you on the island" (401). This is the expression of Will after recovered from painful situation at hospital. It clearly shows that by the words and phrases and by the story a person is healed and finally lives as earlier.

To sum up, telling stories is presented as the means by which the native Canadians are healed. This research studies how the affirmation of storytelling contributes to discover the vision that guides the Cree community portrayed in Boyden's novels in its attempt to heal the Cree society. It shows the importance of the relationship between healing and storytelling as a mechanism of community building. The stories, words and phrases of Annie, Will's friends and relatives have played crucial role to heal the traumatic life of Will Bird who is in comatose stage at hospital. Storytelling plays great role to recover the suffocating condition of the Canadian natives, who are losing their real lifestyle, culture, language, religion and solitude. Annie takes part in the process of storytelling to take her uncle into right condition. Her apprenticeship as a storyteller strengthens her indigenous identity given the importance of storytelling as a means of communal survival. It shows the oral tradition of the natives through the technique of

storytelling. Thus, the finding of this research is the applying of storytelling not only to relief the novels characters and Canadian natives but it do exist the globalizing world's community who are struggling for communal survival.

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