

Chapter II

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Cultural Anthropology in *Medicine River* and

Truth and Bright Water

This chapter proposes to analyze the interdependence of culture and biodiversity, by focusing on the manner in which the process of modernization and assimilation of colonial culture has distanced the indigenous people away from their cultural ethos which has resulted in an unimaginable threat to ecology. Most of Thomas King's works are based on First Nations people. He highlights the culture of First Nations people by explaining their history, culture and traditions in the novel *Medicine River*. Thomas King brings to light the humiliation faced by the First Nations people who were ill-treated by the dominant society which snatched away their lands and forcibly chased them away in the novel *Truth and Bright Water*.

Matsumoto defines culture as, "...the set of attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors shared by a group of people, but different for each individual, communicated from one generation to next" (16). Raymond Williams states, "Culture is the study of relationships between elements in a whole way of life" (63). Raymond Williams emphasizes the word relationship to indicate indigenous knowledge. He hints about indigenous people's interrelationship with the ecological system through which they understand that all living things are equal. Their culture evolved in accordance with the knowledge they gained from their physical environment.

Cultural anthropology inspects human cultures globally by learning both similarities and differences. Cultural anthropology seeks to observe and describe the beliefs, norms

and behaviours of a single group. Cultural anthropology brings to limelight an unknown culture. The best example of one such kind is Nacirema, a culture first illustrated in 1956:

The Nacirema are a North American group living in the territory between the Canadian Cree, the Yaqui and the Tarahumara of Mexico, and the Carib and the Arawak of the Antilles. Little is known of their origin, though traditional states that they came from east. According to Nacirema mythology, their nation was originated by a culture hero, Notgnihsaw, who is otherwise known for two great feats of strength-the throwing of a piece of wampum across the river Pa-To-Mac and the chopping down of the cherry tree in which the Spirit of Truth resided. (Miner 415)

The origin of cultural anthropology began with the writers like Herodotus, Marco Polo and Ibn Khaldun who earned credits for travelling around the world. Their reports about various cultures they came across are still useful for anthropologists. The contribution of the writers of French enlightenment were a remarkable one, among them philosopher Montesquieu was an important writer in the first half of the eighteenth century. His book entitled *The Spirit of Laws* published in 1748, spoke about temperament, appearance and government of many people across the world. He stated that the different climates in which people live had a great impact on cultural differences. In the second half of the nineteenth century, Charles Darwin's concept of human evolution influenced anthropologists and took cultural anthropology to the next level. The most significant founding personalities of cultural anthropology in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were Sir James Frazer and Sir Edward Tylor from England and Lewis Henry Morgan from United States.

The concept of evolution motivated them and they found the model of cultural evolution

which states that all cultures emerge from inferior forms and attain superior forms. This particular concept paved way for naming non-Western peoples as primitive and Euro-American culture as civilization. The colonizers presumed that the primitives should assimilate with the Euro-American civilization and the primitive culture must become extinct.

Franz Boas was the developer of the North American cultural anthropology. He was born in Germany and graduated in Physics and Geography. He researched about Inuit people who had sceptical view towards Western science. Inuit were the indigenous people of Baffin Island. Inuit people also made Boas realise cultures differ from one another. Each culture has different perception towards basic physical elements, like water. Boas also acknowledged the uniqueness and potency of different cultures. Then he brought in the popularly known concept of cultural relativism. According to Boas, no particular culture can be called as superior because each culture has its own value. His perception towards culture was completely contrasting with that of the nineteenth century cultural activists.

On the other side, French anthropologist, Claude Levi-Strauss developed another theoretical perspective called French structuralism. He suggested that understanding a culture is achieved by collecting its myths and folk tales and investigate the hidden themes in them. This concept paved way for symbolic anthropology, the study of culture based on its meaning. Symbolic anthropology was eminent in United States in the second half of the twentieth century.

Marxist theory emerged in the field of anthropology in the 1960s to put forth the significance of humankind to acquire the means of securing the basic needs. This gave rise to a new theoretical school in the United States called cultural materialism. This approach examines culture by highlighting the material aspects of life and how people

manage to form a place to live in the natural environment. Another theoretical position known as interpretive anthropology developed from both symbolic anthropology and French structural anthropology. This ideology states that learning of culture include the understanding people have regarding the basic elements of nature and the symbols and meanings which were formulated by their ancestors.

Culture is the fundamental notion in cultural anthropology. Edward B Tylor, who is a British anthropologist, gave a definition for culture from an anthropological view. “Culture, or civilization ... is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society” (qtd in Kroeber 81). In contemporary cultural anthropology, the definition of culture is not the same. For instance, cultural materialists and interpretive anthropologists say different definition for culture. Cultural materialist, Marvin Harris opines, “A culture is a total socially acquired life-way or life-style of a group of people. It consists of the patterned repetitive ways of thinking, feeling, and acting that are characteristic of the members of a particular society or segment of society” (144). Clifford Geertz states that culture is made up of symbols, interests, state of mind, thoughts and he says that behavior is nowhere connected to culture. A few anthropologists found it difficult to give an accurate definition for culture so they explained the characteristics of culture.

Culture depends on symbols. The whole life of human being right from eating food to greeting people, designing art, performing religious activities are coordinated through symbols. Cultural learning starts right from birth. Most of the learning occurs unconsciously through observation. Then begins the school education where a person learns formally but most cultures are not passed on in the school. Children gain cultural

knowledge through elderly people of each family. Cultures are integrated internally and this gives credit to the principle of holism. Applied anthropologists utilize cultural integration to make positive change. Research shows that establishing new welfare schemes in order to uplift the people belonging to primitive culture without considering the outcome often cause harm for the people of that particular culture. Barbara Miller has given the best example of one such kind.

Western missionaries and colonialists in parts of Southeast Asia banned the practice of head-hunting. This practice was connected to many other aspects of the people's culture, including politics, religion, and psychology. A man's sense of identity depended on the taking of a head. While preventing head-hunting might seem like a good thing, its cessation had disastrous consequences for the cultures in which it was practiced because of its central importance. (Miller 18)

Cultural anthropology clings on to two important acquisitions in analyzing culture. The first one is ethnography which is otherwise called as culture-writing. Ethnography is a comprehensive narration of one culture. This approach gives complete knowledge about the life style and cultural practices of the culture by observing them for a long period. Ethnography is altered through the course of time. During the mid-half of the twentieth century, ethnographers concentrated on writing about exotic culture which was far away from their homes in Europe and North America. These ethnographers set up boundaries and worked within the selected local village. Then they focused on people living there and described about their culture. Later it was developed as multi-sited research where ethnographers conducted research in two or more sites.

The second one is ethnology. Ethnology is nothing but the comparison between more than one cultural construct and is analyzed with the use of ethnographic material. Many topics such as marriage patterns, religious creed and economic practices are compared by ethnographers. Both ethnography and ethnology help each other. Ethnography provides complete understanding of a culture. Ethnology gives comparative understanding of various cultures. A few people have a notion that only their culture is more special and look down at other cultures comparatively. Cultural anthropologists named this as ethnocentrism. Cultural relativism is contradictory to ethnocentrism. Cultural relativism learns each culture by valuing their beliefs. Misinterpretation is possible in cultural relativism as no one can question their practices and beliefs at any extreme situation.

Cultures interact with one another and change through the course of time. The change occurs in many ways such as trade, education, migration and tourism. Globalization is a process of connecting with people worldwide through exchanging of goods and information. Globalization is the driving force for contemporary cultural change. This change paved way for multiculturalism.

Canada is the first country to accept multiculturalism as its official policy. Canadian culture cannot be explained by a single celebratory moment because it has array of historical events by which each culture has equally contributed to make the Canadian culture an amalgamated mosaic. The term multiculturalism is referred to Canada because of the centuries of immigration. Canada allowed migrants to enter the country for settlement. It is important to know the history in order to understand multiculturalism. The history of Canada reveals the combination of diverse and complex historical forces and circumstances ranging from migration, colonial ambition, political ploy, economic pillage and linguistic threat.

The initial migrants who settled in Canada were the First Nations Indians who inhabited the country during ice age. Centuries later, the first Europeans from France came to Canada and inhabited St. Lawrence River banks and its tributaries. Then the British, the Scots and the Irish made their settlements. All the early migrants contributed to Canadian economy through agriculture, railways, mining and lumber industry. Their contribution to the Canadian society was fundamental yet cultural and racial anxiety came into existence. People belonging to indigenous cultures were afraid of assimilation and acculturation into the dominant western culture. The fear of unemployment and domination of language caused anxiety among Native people as the immigrants population increased. “Many Canadians revel in a national self-image as a mosaic – each ethnic group maintaining its distinctive character while still being essential to the whole. The image has some validity, but it seriously underplays pressures towards cultural conformity, especially at the regional level” (Morrison 13). These anxieties paved way for anti-immigrant sentiment. In addition to that a massive immigration took place during World War I and the country faced great economic crisis so the government revised the Immigration Act. With respect to this act, immigrants were segregated into groups like British, American or Northwest Europeans.

Soon after Second World War, Canadian government began assimilation practice. This was done purposely to pressurize native people to give up their traditional culture and assimilate with the dominant western culture. This resulted in the opening of Indian Residential School System and the children were forced to go to schools. Church as well as media contributed a lot to the development of assimilation practice. Meanwhile, Canadian economy insisted upon recruitment of more people from other countries as a part of economic

expansion. This diluted the immigration act and paved way to end racism and discrimination prevalent especially against the native people. Later Canadian government abandoned assimilation policy and adopted multiculturalism. Meanwhile Canadian literature exposed the practical difficulties of maintaining multiculturalism as national policy. Will Kymlicka, Professor of Queen's University, argued that even though multicultural policies are hard to execute and uphold, they are essential to continue for a well-functioning democracy.

English Canadian fiction started to contribute towards creation of Canadian national identity in the second half of the twentieth century. 1920s and 1930s witnessed remarkable growth in fiction as the novelists showed their concern about the specific environment called prairie. As George Woodcock said, "...it is the prairie novelists who are giving form to the great symbols that express the relationship between man and the Canadian land" (85). The prairie novelists write about the colonial past especially about the western plains. "The prairie west as developed by Upper Canada suffered the disadvantages of being a colony of a colony" (Morton 231). A few notable prairie writers are Maria Ostenso, Robert J. Stead and Frederick Philip Grove. Grove's novels exhibit about European naturalism. At the same time he depicted how prairie framers were afraid of losing their lands. He also illustrated the transition from agrarian economy to industrial economy that took place in Canada. Thomas King's novels are set in the Canadian prairies. Thomas King begins the novel with the description of the prairies of the reserve, Medicine River. The novel *Medicine River* starts with the vivid description of the natural scenery of his native reserve.

Medicine River sat on the broad back of the prairies. It was an unpretentious community of buildings banked low against the weather that slid off the

eastern face of Rockies. Summer was hot in Medicine River and filled with grasshoppers and mosquitoes. Winter was cold and long. Autumn was the best season. It wasn't good, just better than the other three. Then there was the wind. I generally tried to keep my mouth shut about the wind in Medicine River. (King, "Medicine" 1)

Through the description of seasons, the author tries to highlight the relationship between nature and the indigenous people. The Native Americans had understood that land is the basis for sustenance of all life. Their beliefs are deeply rooted to their culture. They consider mother earth as creator and they respect earth and the other living beings equally. They believe that elders keep their culture alive and they pass on the wealth of cultural knowledge from one generation to the other. The Native people revered nature.

Will, the protagonist of the novel *Medicine River* replicates Thomas King. Thomas King belongs to the Cherokee tribe and Will also represent the same tribe. According to government law, a woman and her children lose their rights of being Native when that woman marries a White man. Thomas King faced the same situation personally and so does the protagonist of the novel. This situation makes Will feel lonely while compared to the life in the reserve where people have close-knit bonding with each other. When Will, his mother and brother vacate the house to go live near the reserve, he thinks that they are going to the reserve but Maxwell's reply makes him frustrated.

You guys have to live in town cause you're not Indian any more.

"Sure we are", I said. "Same as you".

"Your mother married a white".

"our father's dead".

“Doesn’t matter”.

I could feel my face get hot. “We can go to the reserve whenever we want.

We can get in a car and go right out to Standoff.”

“Sure”, said Maxwell. “You can do that. But you can’t stay.

It’s the law”. (King, “Medicine” 9)

Thomas King urges the need of cultural identity in the novel *Medicine River*. Will starts to develop hatred towards the reserve after knowing that he has lost the rights of being a native. Later he grows up in Toronto and becomes a photographer. When Will comes to know about his mother’s death, he feels insecure and hesitates to go to the reserve for the funeral. It is Harlen Bigbear, friend of Will, who convinces him to return to the reserve and startup a studio. After the funeral, Harlen hands over a bunch of letters to Will which was treasured by his mother. Will is aware of those letters right from his childhood. Those letters are from his father. Once Will was caught red-handed by his mother while reading them and she had admonished him not to read those letters and had strictly instructed him not to touch those letters. Will develops a vague glimpse about his father through those letters. His father had abandoned them when Will was four years old. Vanished memories of Will’s father keep knocking him down. He has lied to people who had asked about his father in order to escape embarrassment and to hide the fact about his abandonment. As the time passes by, he fantasies about his father’s profession like engineer, photographer, doctor and diplomat. This shows how deeply Will is wounded by his identity crisis.

Sometimes I'd sit in my apartment and try to think up new professions for my father. And then I'd tell myself to quit fooling around. I'd laugh at myself, shake my head in disgust, promise that I'd stop the whole stupid business. What if I got caught? What if someone back home heard about my father being a rich opal miner in Australia? (King, "Medicine" 80)

Will, in order to gain his cultural identity in his native land, he seeks help from Harlen and names his studio traditionally as Medicine River Photography. Anderson clearly points out thus: "Indigenous traditions and values are ultimately intertwined in a cultural epistemology which then creates a central component to Indigenous identity" (28). Harlen is his first customer. He wants a portrait in his dance outfit and asks Will to hang it up in the window so as to attract customers. Harlen helps Will in every possible way. Soon after Will receives his business card, Harlen passes it to whomever he comes across. And these little things have helped Will to earn his living.

Education elevates a person's knowledge as well as status but for indigenous people it is both a boon as well as a bane. The reason is that when the Native people get exposed to the outside world through education, they are caught in between western and native culture. They are drawn towards modernization and slowly detach themselves from the native roots. Will faces the same scenario so he is hesitant to mingle with native people. His interest in urban culture draws Will towards Susan Adamson with whom he had relationship in the past before returning to Medicine River. That relationship does not last long.

In the novel *Medicine River* Harlen happens to be the epitome of compassion. Harlen is a compassionate person who always cares for others and makes sure that everyone remains happy. He attempts to recruit Will as a captain for the local basketball team in

order to make him feel that he is a part of the reserve. Will refuses the offer because he feels that his bond with the community has been uprooted because of his lineage. He does not want to re-enter the community that chased him away. Harley tries to flatter him by saying, “Make a Comeback, Will. Be a star” (King, “Medicine” 14). Eventually he joins Medicine River Friendship Centre Warriors team. From that moment onwards, Will begins to get along with the community. He then realizes his self-identity as a Native Indian and finds a reason to move on in life. He becomes friendly with Native people from whom he gains positivity and improves his basketball skills. They lose three matches consecutively. Then Harlen encourages Will to motivate his team and tells him the fact that the team members respect him and consider him as a brother. “You give the boys confidence, Will. They got respect for you, and we got a good team. We can win the league championship” (King, “Medicine” 23).

Thomas King demonstrates how inter-connectedness acts as a web between the individuals and the First Nations community by bringing together Louise Heavy man and Will. Louise Heavyman is a tax accountant. Louise is pregnant and she is not in good terms with the person whose child she is bearing. First Nations community never ostracizes their members irrespective of their situation. Harlen asks Will to take care of Louise as she is helpless. When Will almost decides to accept Louise, he comes to know that she is pregnant. Then again Harlen convinces Will by explaining Louise’s desperate situation. Harlen is such a healer and has a unique quality of being very compassionate. Will states:

Helping was Harlen’s specialty. He was like a spider on a web. Every so often, someone would come along and tear off a piece of the web or poke a hole in it, and Harlen would come scuttling along and throw out filament

after filament until the damage was repaired. Bertha over at the Friendship Centre called it meddling. Harlen would have thought of it as general maintenance. (King, "Medicine" 31)

Will pleads Louise for a date. At first, she thinks that Harlen has sent him, but he makes her realise. "This has nothing to do with Harlen or you being pregnant" (King, "Medicine" 33). Shortly Louise calls out Will for driving her down to the hospital as her labour starts. That is when they realize their intimate understanding in spite of the unusual circumstances of their relationship. He waits in the hospital while Louise goes into labour. Meanwhile Harlen and the basketball team members: Floyd, Elwood and Jack Powless rush there. They are nowhere connected to Louise but still visit her. Through this, Thomas King exhibits the unity of their community. After an hour, Louise delivers a baby girl and the nurse asks Will for a name thinking that Will is Louise's husband. He, in such helpless situation, looks around and reads out the big sign board, South Wing which happens to be the name of the ward. The nurse thinks that the name is traditional Indian name. Later he buys a stuffed penguin for the baby and meets Louise. Will comes to know that she had named the little one as Wilma. She also reveals that her father likes the name South Wing rather than Wilma.

Thomas King strives to throw light on the rich cultural value of the indigenous people who value relationship more than money. "This way of life is much more than living to be *good*, but is a responsible traditional life based on understanding relationships" (Simpson 42). When Will struggled financially, a person called Raymond Little Buffalo renders his helping hand to Will. Ray is one of the members of Native Friendship Centre board. He plans to raise money as the board needs money for their community programs and he proposes a

plan to produce calendar exclusively featuring prominent Indian people of Canada and a few from United States and sell it to companies in Calgary and Edmonton. Will is entrusted with the photography work and he strives hard to showcase his talent. After three months, the calendar comes out well and fortunately the first print counted ten thousand copies; second one is twenty thousand and eventually reached thirty thousand. Ray becomes a great salesman but he fails to pay Will as the bill gets lost. Harlen feels bad and convinces him that Ray would definitely pay the amount. Will avails loan in order to balance the amount he spent for the calendar. People in the community trust each other and so does Harlen trust Ray and he assures Will that he will return the money as soon as he earns. Slowly Will adapts with the people and he meets Ray after a month in a restaurant. Ray is embarrassed and he apologizes, “Sorry to hear you had to take out a loan”, he said. “Harlen and me figure that as soon as the money starts to come in next year, you’ll get paid first with interest. Damn, but I wish I knew what happened to that bill” (King, “Medicine” 87).

First Nations people are inextricably connected to their culture that they always care for their community people. Absence of Harlen for the wedding of Jonnie Prettywoman and Cecil Broadman makes everyone feel strange because no ceremony in their community takes place without Harlen. “Harlen went to everything. He went to all powwows. He went to all the funerals. He went to all the weddings, births, and most of the court cases” (King, “Medicine” 89). After the wedding, the leftover foods are packed and are given to the families who didn’t attend the wedding. Bud Prettywoman, who is the mother of the groom, speaks to Will about each and every person in their community. The value of sharing things is one of the main characteristics of First Nations people. Be it a wedding or funeral, Native people do not miss any occasion in their reserve. One such incident is Granny Pete’s

death. Everybody in the reserve attended her funeral. Earlier she helped their community by keeping other's valuables in her custody when they moved away from the reserve.

“You know, everybody used to leave their stuff at Granny's house, whenever they went somewhere. Should have seen the folks come by when Granny died” (King, “Medicine” 3). This one single act highlights their cultural bond. “Many people in the nation will never know each other, but will have an image of their bond as a group of people” (Anderson 149). In modern life people run after their business and goals that the term community spirit has disappeared.

Thomas King showcases the selfless nature of First Nations people in the novel *Medicine River*. In the modern world people are self-obsessed. Indigenous people not only care for their own reserve but for the whole First Nations people. “Artifacts and history, although important, do not make Indigenous cultures; ideas and actions make Indigenous cultures. Stories, songs, games, and humour all reflect attitudes and behaviours of Indigenous people; it reflects their relationships with other people and outlooks on life” (Keeshig-Tobias 317). They conduct basketball tournament in Salt Lake City every year where all the community people participate. Even Medicine River Friendship Centre basketball team participates but loses every year. They take it sportively and visit all the nearby places. “Harlen had looked at the map in Salt Lake and said we should go through Casper Wyoming on the way home, since we had never seen that part of the country and it wasn't any longer” (King, “Medicine” 104). Then they visit other places and try to help the other team by funding money. “The Little Bighorn is just up the road. And look at this, Will. We're on the Crow Indian reserve. Maybe we should drop in and say hello. Maybe they have a basketball tournament we could donate some money” (King, “Medicine” 110).

Indigenous people's behavior, practices and cultural knowledge eventually connect them to land and the surrounding as their culture is deeply connected with the environment. "Our children must have a strong connection to land in order to be able to maintain the necessary connections with the plant and animal nations and the spirit world to nurture balance" (Simpson 74). Will's mother narrates a lot of anecdotes but never mentions her husband in any of the narration. Will's mother narrates her life in the reserve where people spent most of their time with nature. Every weekend they go to the lake and spend some quality time there. They swim in the lake though the water is freezing.

So Goofy Howard jumps in the lake and goes all the way under, and we don't see him for a couple of minutes, and just when we think he's killed himself, he comes out of the water like he's seen half-dozen grizzlies. And he runs up and down the shore shouting that it's cold and where's the blanket, and then he starts chasing Wilma and me, trying to catch one of us so we can warm him up. (King, "Medicine" 128)

There is a strong connection between nature and their community. They worship mother earth. They are accustomed to the strong weather that it doesn't affect them even if it gets worse. In modern world human beings have distanced themselves from nature. Most of the leisure time is spent with electronic gadgets. Especially children don't play outdoor games. They are addicted to computer games. Social scientists are still learning the effects of video games since 1980s. The games are becoming more realistic that children are exposed to behavioral problems especially in games that involve violence. New research says that playing violent games stimulates hostile urges and makes children aggressive such as fighting with peers. Long term exposure to video games can become worse to

such an extent that they may involve in violent crime or murder. Another best example is Blue Whale game which took away many children's life. Delhi high court ordered all the social media like Facebook, Yahoo and Google to block the links of Blue Whale challenge, a suicidal game that led to the deaths of many children worldwide.

Thomas King portrays elderly people as keepers of cultural values as they protect the value system of the First Nations community.

For indigenous people, authentic elders are living models of transcendence, that is they are the epitome of human experience in an awakened state of mind.... Authentic elders today are not necessarily old. Rather they are individuals who are perceived to have many gifts with which they can perform multiple roles. The leadership hat is one of the many that elders wear. They are also looked at as oral historians, teachers, cultural workers, ecologists, environmentalists and healers. (Cook 192)

Elderly people mend lives of younger generation. One such person is Martha Oldcrow who lives in the reserve. She lives all alone there. She is a doctor and poor people who are sick visit her and she treats them and does not accept money. She not only cures illnesses but also sorts out family issues. "She was known as the "marriage doctor" because that was what she fixed best" (King, "Medicine" 137). Harlen takes Will to Martha to get a present for South Wing's first birthday. Harlen reminds Will about South Wing's birthday thinking that he has forgotten but Will remembers it. Harlen pesters him to buy a present right away but Will says that he has work to finish. On their way, Will guesses where exactly Harlen is taking him. Martha's house is across the river and they reach by swimming. Harlen introduces Will to Martha and requests for an Indian rattle for the little one. Martha

inquiries whether Will is South Wing's father for which Will says that he is just a friend. Martha gives an excellent advice by pinpointing the struggle of being a fatherless child. She even mentions that South Wing's life is similar to Will's life because both of them have no father. She finally gives him the leather rattle which is made of willow and deer hide. She then shakes it and sings a song and teaches him the song. "Anyway, you give this to your daughter. Everything will be fine. You'll see. No cost. Next time you come maybe bring a book or maybe some oranges. Better learn that song" (King, "Medicine" 141). Martha is such a generous lady that she has nothing to look forward to. She treats everyone free of cost and lives the rest of her life working for the benefit of the community people.

"Indigenous traditions and values are tied to land and this is another aspect of Indigenous identity" (Alfred 597). "The land strengthens our relationship to our extended families and deepens our spiritual understanding of life and our place in it" (Simpson 130). Thomas King portrays First Nations people's environmental connection through one of his characters Joe who is Harlen's brother. Joe reminds Harlen about their childhood and their association with the river. Their favourite leisure activity was to climb trestle bridge and dive into the river. "The water was only about twenty feet below us, and I figured it was better to jump from where I was than to slip on one of those planks near the top. So I jumped. Christ, that water felt like concrete. I must have gone all the way to the bottom, because I was spitting water when I finally came up for air" (King, "Medicine" 153). Native people play in the river and enjoy each season in their reserve. Nature, according to them is another companion and it plays an important role in their life.

Barbara D. Miller opines, "Cultural anthropologists study play and leisure within their cultural context as a part of social system... Many leisure activities combine pleasure

and pain. Serious injuries can result from mountain climbing, horseback riding or playing touch football in the backyard” (325). Thomas King brings in trestle bridge climbing in the novel to show that even leisure activity is connected with nature. Joe calls Harlen to climb the trestle bridge and they plan to leave Will behind as climbing needs practice and strength. Will is tempted by their enthusiasm and decides to join them. The bridge is hundred feet high and Joe heads down the slope and leads them. It is a long walk and Joe sprints in the front by singing his favourite song. Harlen tries to keep pace with Joe but Will is twenty feet behind. They ask him to stay back and take a short nap but Will says he is brisk enough to climb. Joe kicks up the dust as he walks and it appears like a cloud. The grasshoppers and dragonflies add extra interest to the day. Joe jumps off the giant concrete abutment like a monkey and reaches the first steel beam and Harlen too manages to keep up the pace. They are fit enough to climb and it seems like a piece of cake walk for them because they have been doing it since childhood. Things are difficult for Will because he is brought up in town and he struggles to climb the bridge. “You guys are crazy”, I shouted, but I kept moving along the girder” (King, “Medicine” 158). Indigenous people grow up along with nature. So they are stronger and have immune power to withstand the severity of the weather. Researches prove that modern life style paves way for the low immune system especially the present generation kids remarkably have low immune power and are prone to many diseases.

Indigenous rituals have deep connection with the physical environment and underlying belief that each and every life is interconnected. Barbara D. Miller defines Cultural anthropology as: “Cultural anthropology is the study of contemporary people and their cultures. The term *culture* refers to people’s learned and shared behaviours and

beliefs” (7). Thomas King in the novel *Medicine River* projects ritual practice called Sun Dance through the character Lionel to explain the ancient cultural practice of Native American community. Lionel is the most respected elder who belonged to the Horn Society. Will has heard stories about him stating that he was a great athlete in the past. He even has scars proving that he had participated in Sun Dances. The Sun Dance is a ritual practiced by a few tribal people of United States of America and Canada. It is more or less a community gathering where prayers take place for healing. Native American people believe that the earth will lose its power gained from universe if the sun dance is not performed. Then during the nineteenth century, the sun dance was banned as personal sacrifice is a part of the ceremony. Though this bothered the settlers who thought that practice was gruesome, their real motive was to pull them towards western culture by forbidding them to participate in their ceremony. Indigenous people are disturbed as they are restricted from participating in their cultural practice.

In the novel *Medicine River*, Thomas King highlights the oral tradition which serves as the reliable source of First Nations people’s culture and history. Indigenous people create their individuality by practicing customs from a cultural epistemological structure, and this can be seen through their narration of stories. “Traditions and language are the methods of transferring an Indigenous cultural epistemology between generations” (Battiste 254). Story telling is a part of their culture. In the novel *Medicine River*, Lionel is an expert in telling stories. Once Will pays visit to Lionel’s house to give his pictures that he had clicked while Lionel visited his studio. Lionel entertained Will by telling stories. Womack says, “Storytelling – written or oral – helps foster the collective identity of a people, no matter where they are situated” (15). The stories narrated by Lionel are

mostly about old man and old woman, some about Coyote and Raven. He also tells an incident about Will's father who once made a prank by hiding Will inside the cloth basket and convinced his mother that he had put his son into the washing machine along with the clothes by mistake. This makes Will happy that his parents had good times despite their estrangement. Everybody stood up and clapped after Lionel finishes his story. They appreciate his stories as if they hear it for the first time. They never get sick of his stories. They have respect for him as he is the elderly person in the reserve. Especially small children are taught to respect elders. "Just stood there and clapped. Like they never heard that story before" (King, "Medicine" 175).

Harlen gives Will a good idea to develop his business. He asks him to run photography special by clicking free family photos so that he can get to know many customers. "Something like that will bring in a lot of people from the reserve. Family is an important thing" (King, "Medicine" 202). Thomas King gives a hint to the readers through the word family. Family is everything to indigenous people. Togetherness is all they know. "Some themes in foundations of resistance are: strong families, grounded community, a spiritual connection to land, use of Indigenous language and storytelling, as well as spirituality" (Alfred, "Indigenous" 608). Will learns the advantages of having strong family ties from Joyce Blue Horn's family. Will gets a call from Joyce Blue Horn asking for a family photo. When Will tells this to Harlen he bursts into laughter and lists out the number of members in Joyce Blue Horn's family which astonishes Will. At the same time Will did not believe. "Harlen liked to exaggerate. I knew that. And there was no way I could get fifty people in the studio for a photograph, so I guess I didn't really think that fifty people would show up" (King, "Medicine" 205). On Saturday, Will clears the room by moving everything out of the studio in order to

make space for the large family. Harlen stops by the studio early to check on Joyce's family. Louise and South Wing arrive there to watch the photo shoot. Eventually the family arrives at eleven. Elvis, Joyce's husband comes behind with a large carton box filled with lunch. One by one the members of the family enter the studio and by noon the number reaches thirty-eight excluding Harlen, Louise and South Wing. As people come by, Harlen introduces them to Will. It is hard to keep track of people but Will attempts to remember some of them. This helps Will to know the importance of maintain good rapport with the family members.

Well, I did make an attempt at remembering some of the names. And I tried to keep count. By twelve thirty, there were in the vicinity of fifty-four people-adults and kids-in my studio. The kids were everywhere, in the bathroom, in the studio itself, in the kitchen. The adults stood around in groups, talking. Someone had opened the cardboard box, and Joyce Blue Horn was passing around sandwiches and potato chips. (King, "Medicine" 207)

Louise comes up with an idea of taking everyone down to the river and click picture. This news spreads like a forest fire and before Will thinks about it, everybody agrees to it. Eventually the photoshoot turns into a picnic. They plan to pick up Bertha, Big John and Eddie from the Friendship Centre. By the time they bounce their way down the dirty road to Horsehead Coulee, the family members change the place into a picnic spot. The river is calm and green. After a while, Harlen starts his routine job of being a mediator. He takes Will to the elderly people and introduces him. Lionel is happy seeing everyone at one place. Then he introduces Will to an old woman who is Floyd's grandmother. She asks him to get a sandwich and he takes a sandwich which is very soft and a root beer to

Floyd's granny. Later Lionel tells Will that granny likes him as Will reminds her of his son. Lionel uses this opportunity and makes Will understand the importance of family. Lionel also asks Will to consider marrying Louise and to adopt South Wing as his daughter. "'Fathers are important too,'" said Lionel, and he put his hands in his pockets and gestured with his chin towards Louise and South Wing" (King, "Medicine" 211).

Thomas King illustrates that culture of First Nations gives importance to kinship to ensure the continuity of their relationship with one another. Barbara D. Miller says, "Many cultures emphasize kinship ties based on acts of sharing and support. These relationships may be either informal or ritually formalized" (188). Will experiences kinship when the whole family of Joyce wants him in the picture. Will gathers all the family members of Joyce for the photo shoot by the river. He puts elders in the front and makes them sit on the chairs. Then the little ones sit on the sand and bigger kids are made to stand next to the grandparents. Then, adults stand at the back. At last when he sets the frame, Joyce wants Will also to be in the picture. Then Harlen remembers the delay button in the camera and asks him to do so. "The first shots were easy. I set the timer, ran across the sand and sat down next to Floyd's granny. But with a large group like that, you can't take chances. Someone might close their eyes just as the picture was taken" (King, "Medicine" 214). He takes twenty-four pictures. Each time he sets the camera in delay button and rushes to the group. At one point he decides to stay behind the camera so as to make sure everyone is looking at the camera but they want him in the picture. His face becomes reddish towards the end. Finally, the pictures turn out well.

"The land teaches how to live one's life and how to be a good person in one's homeland" (Battiste 254). Likewise, characters in the novel *Medicine River* lead a nature

oriented life. Harlen buys a canoe in a big estate sale at Ninth Avenue. Harlen is excited to show the canoe to Will. Initially, Will hesitates to buy it but Harlen has already casted his eyes on that canoe. “Sure. Hey, I’ve been wanting to go canoeing. It would be fun. You know, you and me out on the river. Just like our grandparents used to do” (King, “Medicine” 241). There are many things put out for sale such as furniture, appliances and antique home decors but they buy a canoe for fifty dollars in order to lead a life like their forefathers and also to be one with nature. Canoe was the first means of travel found by First Nations people in Canada.

Anderson states, “The land inevitably influences families first and radiates outward to communities and nations. A renewed relationship and spiritual tie with the land is a strong factor in the formation of a healthy identity” (601). Thomas King exhibits First Nations identity by making the characters merge with the environment. Harlen, Will and Louie begin their adventure in their new canoe after painting it with dark green colour and fixing minor repair. Harlen picks a place for canoeing.

The place was the upper part of the Medicine River where it cut through a long winding sandstone canyon. ““The first four miles””, Harlen read aloud, ““are relatively easy with gentle and easily negotiated rapids. After you pass a farmhouse on the right, the river picks up speed and two- to three-foot standing waves are formed near the cliff face on the right....’ This sounds great, doesn’t it?” (King, “Medicine” 243-244)

They plan to drive down to Springvale Bridge then put the canoe in the river and go off downstream. From that point, they decide to exclude Louise and South Wing from their adventure as it is an experiment and they don’t want to risk Louise and the little one’s

life. Their first experiment doesn't go as they planned. They get lost amongst the roads and wander there for a long time. Eventually they stumble on the bridge at three o'clock and it takes another half an hour to get the canoe to the river. Louise and South Wing wave their hands as the canoe passes by the white water. Harlen is bubbling with eagerness. The canoe sails forward and suddenly the waves increase and hit the bow. The second wave hits even harder and the canoe rolls and turns upside down throwing them into the river. They are pulled away by the flow of the current. "I was driven onto a rock, trapped there for a moment by the force of the water, and then snatched away again. Harlen was in the swifter current. As he shot by me, I could see his eyes staring through the spray, his mouth open" (King, "Medicine" 246).

Will flounders into the calm water as he sets his feet at the bottom of the river. Louise waves at Will and tries to say something but will is not able to hear it. The waves push Harlen ashore and he looks like a mixture of yellow and orange garbage bag. Harlen completely enjoys the adventure forgetting all the risks. The first thing that comes to Harlen's mind is the canoe. Will and Harlen go in search of the canoe and they find it farther downstream. The nose of the canoe is buried into the sand and the rest is floating on the water. Gunwales are cracked and the canvas is torn. They pull the canoe out and try to bring it to the riverbank. They make fun of each other while dragging it. They find it difficult to pull the canoe but they make sure that they take it with them. "The river swirled around us, sucking at our feet, flashing at our legs as we went. Harlen began singing a forty-niner, beating out the rhythm on the gunwales. And we brought the canoe back through the dark water and into the light" (King, "Medicine" 248). Despite difficulties, they love to have such adventures very often. This shows that indigenous people have a

deep association with the natural environment they live in. Though they exploit nature for their livelihood, they make sure that the natural resources are not affected negatively.

Thomas King not only highlights the values of the indigenous culture but also expresses their struggle for survival towards the end of the novel *Medicine River*. David Plume visits Will's studio one morning. Will has not met him before but he identifies him by the red jacket he always wears. It is a normal club jacket and across the jacket the word AIM is printed. The word AIM stands for American Indian Movement. A few indigenous people protest against government for seizing their lands and David Plume is one among them. He asks Will to enlarge one of his group photos which is very old. David Plume warns him to be careful with the photo as it was taken at Wounded Knee. ““This is a famous picture”, said David. “The FBI or the RCMP would love to get their hands on it”” (King, “Medicine” 192). The Wounded Knee incident took place on 27th February 1973. Around two hundred followers of AIM seized Wounded Knee, a town of South Dakota. They controlled that place for seventy-one days but later the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) took over that area. The activists selected the place deliberately to symbolize the incident, Wounded Knee Massacre that occurred in 1890. U.S. soldiers killed nearly three hundred Native Americans who fought for their lands.

After a week Will meets David Plume in front of his studio. David Plume is inside the van with his friends. He informs him that they are going to protest again. ““We’re on our way to Ottawa”, David told me. “Government wants to cut the money for Indian education”” (King, “Medicine” 199). Thomas King, through the character David Plume, gives a glimpse of how indigenous people are fighting for their rights and how their leeway is slowly taken back by the government.

Indigenous people are known for their distinct culture which involves people and environment. Their livelihood depends on their land and its natural resources. Approximately eleven percent of the forest is guarded by indigenous people. Indigenous people can nurture their territory on their own without others help. Interference of non-native people leave them shattered. As Champagne says, “The land is considered a gift; it should not be owned, and must be cared for with a clear understanding of a sacred purpose” (7). Thomas King, in his novel *Medicine River*, make the readers comprehend the culture and lifestyle of First Nations people and brings out the fact that First Nations people are stewards of nature.

Thomas King’s *Truth & Bright Water* highlights the ill-effects of cross cultural encounter. “Culture is stable, yet is also dynamic, and manifests continuous and constant change” (Herskovits 306). Cultural anthropology studies the differences and resemblances across cultures and analyses cultural transformation with relation to time. Cultural anthropology can be further divided into two; they are invention and diffusion. Invention is finding something new and diffusion is spreading culture through various contacts. Most of the inventions occur through experiments but a few happens suddenly. For instance, many technological inventions such as printing press and polio vaccine have created cultural transformation. Most of the inventions bring positive change to the society but not all, there are negative changes too. Diffusion is sensibly connected to invention as new findings spread in no time. There are many ways in which diffusion occur. Two powerful societies exchange characteristics of their culture among one another. Second one happens through transferring from dominant culture to subservient culture.

During the first half of the twentieth century, American Indians were colonized by Europeans and the most traumatic experience was the spread of epidemics which uprooted ninety percent of the native tribes and made it much easier for European Empire to colonize.

Native people almost lost their culture and their right over the land. Their life style was replaced by Catholicism. Schiffer states “The colonization of North America attempted to assimilate Aboriginal peoples into the settlers’ European ways of living. Settler policies and attitudes meant that Aboriginal peoples were cut off from their traditional culture, languages, spirituality, economies, systems of governance and other important parts of their identity” (10).

As a part of colonization, Indian residential school system was introduced. It was one of the colonizers strategies to remove indigenous children from their close-knit culture and incorporate them into their dominant Canadian culture. The Canadian government ordered the Department of Indian Affairs to fund money for the school which were administered by Christian churches. Milloy aptly says, “The schools were designed primarily to ‘re-educate’ Aboriginal children to conform to the colonizer’s world. Children were taken from their families and forced to live in unfamiliar, hostile environments, where beatings and other forms of ill treatment were the norm” (67). The indigenous children who completed school education lost their sense of belongingness and they became strangers in their own land. Eventually they failed to gain knowledge about their own culture such as surviving in the harsh climate, their ritual practice and their attitude towards nature. “It is difficult to argue that a group faces oppression if you no longer believe the group exists because you have deconstructed its identity to death” (Womack 205).

The novel *Truth & Bright Water* is set up with the preface that specifies the background, the physical landforms around the two towns, Truth and Bright Water. Truth lies on the American side and Bright Water, a reserve, lies on the Canadian side. Thomas King reveals that First Nations people go to the extreme level of misusing their authenticity

of old tradition to lure the tourists who come for Indian Days festival just to get rid of their poverty. The author clarifies the manner in which colonial structures like Churches, boarding schools, museums and international borders affect the lives of indigenous people.

Many people who are born in Bright Water move to the border town, Truth. Tecumseh is the narrator of this novel and his parents also move to the town despite the fact that his grandmother and the family of his cousin Lum remain in Bright Water. Lum's father and Tecumseh's father are brothers but are different by character. Lum's father is quite abusive that most of the time Lum becomes the scapegoat and gets beaten up. Whereas Tecumseh's father is affectionate even though he has misunderstanding with Tecumseh's mother. Lum's only goal is to win the Indian Days long-distance champion title for which he strives hard.

The modern lifestyle adopted by mankind is sabotaging the existence of many lives. Glen A. Love in "Revaluing Nature: Towards an Ecological Criticism" suitably quotes Arnold Toynbee thus:

... mankind now has the power to make the biosphere uninhabitable, and that it will, in fact, produce this suicidal result within a foreseeable period of time if the human population of the globe does not now take prompt and vigorous concerted action to check the pollution and the spoliation that are being inflicted upon the biosphere by short-sighted human greed. (Love 205)

Thomas King shows the extent of pollution in the reserve by non native people through his characters. One night during Lum's practice, they witness a car which gears up across the prairies. Then they see a woman getting out of the pickup. Soon their curiosity reaches its peak and they rush to the spot. As they near the spot, the woman reaches to the

side of the truck and takes a box. The next moment the mysterious woman throws something into the river. Through this incident it is evident that indiscreet manner of polluting river endangers the ecosystem. Lum gets irritated by her action because they witness such kind of activities often. Countless people bring their trashes and dispose it into the river.

A lot of junk winds up in the river this way. Some of it gets washed out of the Bright Water landfill and some of it gets blown off the prairies by the wind. But most of the garbage- car tires, glass bottles, oil drums, shopping carts- comes from people who figure that rolling an old washing machine down the side of a coulee or tossing plastic bags and roofing materials off the bank isn't going to hurt anything. (King, "Truth" 8)

Lum and Tecumseh decide to advice the lady not to throw trashes into the river but soon after throwing the box, she jumps into the river and waves washes her over the edge of the cliff. They sprint down to rescue her but no traces are left behind. Then they walk along the riverbank all the way to the flat below the Horns and very often they look back for the footprints but their efforts go vain. Eventually they find Soldier, Tecumseh's pet dog toying with something and to their surprise it is a skull. Tecumseh becomes inquisitive to know about the skull and the woman. They suspect the woman was the one who threw the skull into the river. There starts the mystery which continues till the end.

Thomas King explains that the ideology of the modernized culture changes the lives of the indigenous people at varying points in the novel *Truth & Bright Water*. Patrick Macklem argues, "Cultural pluralism that enables the individual to have multiple alliances as opposed to one. The overlapping quality of cultures allows these multiple attachments"

(53). The indigenous people try to imitate Americans in order to earn money as well as respect in the society. The most prominent example in the novel is Lucy Rabbit who strongly believes that Marilyn Monroe is a native Indian who was adopted by an American family when she was a child. She carries a picture of Marilyn Monroe in her purse. She is the obvious example of a person suffering from identity crisis with regard to her cultural heritage. She assumes herself to be Marilyn Monroe. She is too much driven by modernization that she wants to imitate the white people. So, she convinces herself by clinging on to the belief that Marilyn Monroe is a Native American. She tries to redeem her people by hoping that even native people can become famous and modern like Americans. She wants to become like Marilyn Monroe by attempting to color her hair blonde. Tecumseh finds it funny that Lucy tries to change her identity by colouring her hair. “Lucy has been coming to my mother for several years trying to get her hair to turn blonde, but the closest my mother has been able to get to the kind of baby-soft yellow-white dandelion hair that Marilyn has is flaming orange” (King, “Truth” 19). Lucy Rabbit tries to erase all the traces of being Indian in order to become modern. She is not in the state to accept the reality. She even colours Marilyn’s hair black in one of her pictures to persuade Tecumseh and his mother to make them believe that Marilyn is an Indian. At one point of time she accepts that she is ashamed of being Indian. ““Marilyn was ashamed of being Indian”, she said. “That’s why she bleached her hair”. “A lot of people were ashamed of being Indian in those days”, said my mother. “But they didn’t all bleach their hair”. “And that’s why I want to bleach my hair”, said Lucy” (King, “Truth” 101).

Thomas King reveals that life in the reserve is unwelcoming after colonization. Job opportunities are almost non-existent as their lands are snatched away by Europeans.

Before colonization, Native people relied on farming, fishing and gathering food. They produced variety of crops like corn and beans. Soon after colonization, indigenous people faced many issues such as unemployment, cultural change and environmental ruin. Their inability of connecting themselves with the natural environment forced them to rely on western culture. “This view of change and adaptation arguably deters Indigenous people from adopting certain practices, materials, and ideas which may be threatening to the moral strength of the culture; this adaptation has cultural boundaries and limits” (Alfred, “Indigenous” 598).

In the novel *Truth & Bright Water*, almost all the characters face the same problem. Most of the characters want to leave their native land as there is no opportunity in the reserve. Tecumseh’s mother, Helen is one such character in the novel who is longing to live in the town. She runs a beauty shop and her dream is to become an actress. She devotes most of her time weaving quilt as an effort to escape the frustration that exists in her life. Twice or thrice a week before opening the shop, she visits Santucci’s grocery and collects Mrs. Santucci’s leftover flowers from the previous day sale. Almost all the flowers would be in a bad condition but Tecumseh’s mother removes the damaged petals and trims the stem and arranges in the vase. Then she plays the phonograph that her husband had left with them. After setting everything, she waits for the customer. She repetitively plans for a vacation but never succeeds to get away from the town. Her inability of leading a grand life makes her feel jealous of her sister Cassie, a globetrotter who does not have any limitations in life.

Cassie is free-spirited woman who always travels and has adventures beyond the imagination of the indigenous people who think that they are stuck in Truth. She keeps on making friends from all countries as easy-going as herself. Though she travels globally,

she ends up returning to Truth and Bright Water as if something is continuously pulling her back to her native place.

Though Helen is very much influenced by the western culture, she still has the bond with the environment. “Indigenous people can use their specific cultures to help continuously form their identities with a historic national narrative of how their group used to do things; but culture can also provide a center which people currently draw from to make decisions today and pass down new knowledge in the future” (Battiste 56). Whenever Helen wants a break from her routine life, she prefers a lake rather than going to a mall, but her son Tecumseh is bored seeing sceneries. He says, “I voted for the West Edmonton Mall. I had seen brochures of the place, and Lucy Rabbit had even been there and said it was neat. But my mother wanted to go camping, to get into nature and see stuff like animals and scenery. I told her we saw that all the time, but she said the mountains were different” (King, “Truth” 75). The next generation kids in the reserve are completely influenced by the western culture that they are waiting for an opportunity to go away from the reserve. The only employment opportunity that most of the people in the reserve get is in the railroads. Most of the work is labour-intensive that it tires the workers a lot yet they are paid less. These force the community to exploit nature by building resorts called Happy Trails with the intention that tourists who come for Indian Days festival would love to camp on the Native reserve.

Leopold warns, “Ecology knows of no destiny relationship that holds for indefinitely wide limits. All gains from destiny are subject to a law of diminishing returns” (165). In the novel *Truth & Bright Water*, the community builds RV Park hoping that they can mint money but by the time RV Park is built, septic tank gets clogged. The

mushy stuff which is supposed to make its way down takes another route and bubbles up in the washrooms and showers. A soft mustard-coloured slick overflows around the parking pad and a foul smell spreads around the prairies. The band comes up with countless ideas to fix the problem but nothing works. The saddest part is that the people who are in charge of RV Park justify their actions by blaming their own tradition.

Marvin Simon, who had taken a couple of Native culture courses at the University of Lethbridge, stood up in council and reminded everyone that, in the past, Indians were known to dump their refuse in holes in the ground, and that putting shit into the earth was more or less traditional. Carleton Coombs agreed with Marvin, but pointed out that there was a difference between shit and sewage. (King, "Truth" 100)

Cheryll Glotfelty admits that environmental ruins are mainly executed by human beings. She says:

We have reached the age of environmental limits, a time when the consequences of human actions are damaging the planet's basic life support systems. We are there. Either we change our ways or we face global catastrophe, destroying much beauty and exterminating countless fellow species in our heading race to apocalypse. (xxi)

Likewise Thomas King portrays the impact of cultural change and the manner in which it affects the environment. People have the utmost bearing on the environment in the ways that they manoeuvre the natural resources and dispose waste. Elvin, father of Tecumseh helps corporate people by disposing bio-hazardous waste from the hospital. He is not ashamed of doing such menial job as the pay is higher than any other work in the reserve.

Corporate people use indigenous people's poverty as a tool to execute their plan. Capitalists make use of their submissiveness and misuse their land. One day Tecumseh goes with his father to help him. He is both surprised and shocked to look at the barrels which are oily slick with bad odour. The waste leaves a strong stain on Tecumseh's hand which makes him feel disgusting. He says "I use the soap with the pieces of pumice in it, and I scrub my hands and arms all the ways to the elbows until they hurt, but the smell doesn't go away and my hands still feels sticky" (King, "Truth" 83). Then Elvin vents out his anger towards corporate people when he dumps the bio hazardous waste near the prairie. He angrily shouts, "They don't mind making the mess, but they don't want the job of cleaning it up" (King, "Truth" 141). Then finally he takes the waste to his own reserve just to earn more money. Towards the end he is chased by the police for dumping wastes illegally.

Indigenous people while acquainting cultural change and while adapting to contemporary culture, they tend to modify their native culture according to their convenience. The adaptation of cultural change can create additional capability for the term culture. "Culture then is the collective agreement of the members of the society about what is accepted, valued, and sanctioned – both positively and negatively – and about what will be the society's protocol and beliefs" (Battiste 56). In the novel *Truth & Bright Water*, Elvin not only ruins environment but also misuses the authentication of their tradition by making fake products and selling it by the name of tradition. He makes tiny wood carved coyotes and to make it appear authentic, he signs at the bottom of the coyote. He says, "Everybody's going crazy over traditional Indian stuff. I figure I can sell these for fifty bugs as fast as I can make them" (King, "Truth" 32). He gets this idea by looking at an advertisement in which a person sells card which has a turtle printed on it. The card explains about the turtle and what it symbolizes. Their Indian name is used for authentication. "The guy with the turtles

signs everything with his Indian name. clever, huh?" (King, "Truth" 32). From the tourists perspective, anything becomes traditional when the prize is high.

Cultural change sometimes helps other people learn one particular culture and experience it. Indian Days Festival is one of the examples of cultural change. It is a festival held at Banff, a town in Canada where the tourists are allowed to experience the life style of First Nations people. Many tourists come from various part of the world to attend the festival. The tourists dress up like Indians and imitate them. The only benefit that First Nations tribe get from this festival is that they get rid of their poverty by selling their products. Not only Elvin but almost everyone in the reserve try to make money from the tourists. Tourists who turn up for Indian Days get anything they want.

Beaded belt buckles, acrylic paintings of the mountains, drawings of old-time Indians on horseback, deer-horn knives, bone chokers, T -shirts that say things like "Indian and proud", and Indian Affairs Are the Best." And all of it, according to the signs that everyone puts up, is "authentic" and "traditional." Fenton Bull Runner and his wife Maureen make dream catchers out of willow shoots and fishing line. Edna Baton runs a frybread stand. Lucille Rain and her sister Teresa do bead work. Jimmy Hunt and his family sell cassettes of old-time powwow songs. (King, "Truth" 209)

Franklin exploits land as well as animals to the extreme level in order to satisfy the tourists and to gain profit. Anything that exceeds its limit loses its value. Franklin's greed makes him lose the essence of being a Native. James rightly says, "It must be stressed that cultural loss is not interchangeable with cultural change. Change is inevitable and the agency of Indigenous people may help in adapting new practices to continue and endure

as a people. Cultural loss implies having no agency while the imposition of new ethics and values destroys the very essence of a people” (317). Franklin is in charge for maintaining RV Park which is built to accommodate tourists. As the days pass by, the buildings are extended and the pollution is doubled. Franklin does not stop with that. He further takes entertainment to another level by disturbing buffalos. Lesley Thomas reminds people to, “Treat animals (and elders) with respect; remember that all things are connected; be patient, know that all things are visible and we can’t understand everything” (4). Franklin plans an event where many buffalos are forced to run from the cliff and are chased by many people and simultaneously the buffalos are shot by paint pellets with different colours. Just because the tourists love it, they startle the poor creatures. By looking at the scene, Tecumseh is reminded of their ancient lifestyle.

The crowd at the buffalo run has started to thin out. I can’t see anything that looks like an ancient, but I hear several of the cows bellowing, and I wonder if they can remember the good old days when they had the place to themselves, before they had to worry about Indians running them off cliffs or Europeans shooting at them from the comfort of railroad cars or bloodthirsty tourists in tan walking shorts and expensive sandals chasing them across the prairies on motorcycles. (King, “Truth” 235)

Thomas King’s longing for restoring their culture and landscape prior to colonialism is seen in a few of his characters like Rebecca, Lum and Monroe Swimmer. Rebecca is a Cherokee girl who comes along with the group of trailers to Happy trails campground in Bright Water. Most of her time is spent searching for her missing ducks. Her dress is quite old fashioned. The author wants to emphasize the tragic event called Trail of Tears through the

character Rebecca. Rebecca and her family travel from Georgia to Oklahoma. Similarly, the same journey was made by the Cherokee Nation during Indian Removal Act of 1830. They were forcibly removed from their land. It is now remembered as Trail of Tears. Approximately four thousand Cherokees died during the journey. In the novel *Truth & Bright Water*, Rebecca shows desire to go back to her native land and restore their culture.

Lum wants to get out of Bright Water because he wants to escape his bad memories. His mother's death affects him extremely that he becomes mentally unstable at times and imagines that his mother is alive. But he cares for his community and the environmental ruins done for the sake of tourists. "I am not opposed to mankind but only to man-centredness, anthropocentricity, the opinion that the world exists solely for the sake of man, not to science, which means simply knowledge, but to science misapplied... not to civilization but to culture" (Abbey, "Dessert" 306). Lum sometimes pours out his emotions to Tecumseh about the altered landscape. He speaks about their ancestor's lifestyle. "'No tourists'", says Lum. "'No railroads. No fences'" (King, "Truth" 152). Though he is helpless about the landfills and pollution, he wants to restore his land and culture. However, his unstable mind drives him to commit suicide.

To take one metaphor, culture can be thought of as light: it is comprised of dual qualities, particle and wave. Cultures are fluid (wave-like) and malleable and so change through time and flow into other cultures. Yet they also have solid (particle-like) attributes, which allow them to bump up against, resist, or contrast themselves to other cultures. (Warry 100)

Indigenous people who have settled in cities return to their native land irrespective of their education or their social status. Monroe Swimmer is one such character who returns

to his native land to restore the landscape. While both Rebecca and Lum express their desire to restore their culture, Monroe Swimmer is the one who does it by making the church disappear. The church is built on the prairies of Truth. It is built by the Europeans which marks the start of colonialism. The church appears to be out of place. “Instead of being long and sharp with a hard pitch like the steeple on the big Presbyterian church in prairie View, this steeple is squat and flat with a set and angle that make it look as if a thick spike has been driven through the church itself and hammered into the prairies” (King, “Truth” 1). The church in charges kept changing, later no group volunteered to take responsibility until it was abandoned.

Monroe Swimmer, a famous Indian artist buys the church as soon as he returns to Truth. He employs Tecumseh for his restoration work. He spends most of his time to paint the church so that the walls match the prairies. The painted walls make the church blend well with the landscape and looks as if there is no church. Thus they restore landscape to its past, that is, prior to colonialism. He does so in order to hide the signs of colonialism. He feels proud of himself when he talks about restoration. ““Nineteenth century landscape was my speciality”” (King, “Truth” 129). He describes the landscape to Tecumseh. ““They all look alike. Craggy mountains, foreboding trees, sublime valleys with wild rivers running through them”” (King, “Truth” 129). He was a professional painter specialised in restoring worn out paintings. He blurts out, “I went around the world fixing paintings. They said my brushes were magic” (King, “Truth” 129).

Interestingly enough, he brings buffalos made of iron from Toronto. When Tecumseh asks about the buffalos he says ““I am going to save the world”” (King, “Truth” 131). They take those buffalos to the prairies and dump them into the ground and hammer

them. Tecumseh is surprised in the beginning and finds it hard to fix it. “It’s a little tricky hitting the spike with the hammer and missing the buffalo and Monroe’s hand, but by the third buffalo, I get the hang of it. After we nail the fourth buffalo into the prairies, Monroe walks up a small rise and looks at the grouping” (King, “Truth” 132). Monroe strongly believes that by hammering the iron buffalos into the land, the real buffalos would return. ““Each day the herd will grow larger and larger””. Monroe pushes off the truck and walks up the hill. ““Before we’re done, the buffalo will return”” (King, “Truth” 135). He tries every means to restore the lost landscape and culture despite knowing the truth that his efforts will go vain. He finishes his work on the day of Indian Days festival and he meets Tecumseh saying that he finished painting the church. Then Tecumseh looks around but could not locate the church. “I know where the church used to be across the river and on the bluff above Truth. But even from the distance, I can see that it isn’t there anymore. No roof, no steeple, no door. No church” (King, “Truth” 217). After painting it, Monroe himself is not able to locate the church so he asks Tecumseh to bring Soldier the next day to help him find the church. He then quickly says, “I should have left the door alone until it was all finished” (King, “Truth” 218).

Next day Tecumseh and Soldier go to locate the church. Soldier jumps and dives into the grass and keeps barking as he goes. There is grass everywhere and the landscape appears to be similar in all directions. It looks as if the church had never existed. “The prairies can fool you. They look flat, when in fact they really roll along like an ocean. One moment you’re on top of a wave and the next you’re at the bottom” (King, “Truth” 237). According to Monroe, the dead should be given some respect and they should rest in peace. The dead should not be objectified and kept in museum. Monroe is disturbed after

seeing the Indian's skulls which are exhibited in the museums, so he steals all of them and brings them to their native land. When Lum asks him the reason for stealing the bones from the museum, Monroe explains him that those bones belong to Indian children. He says, "Anthropologists and archaeologists dig the kids up, clean them off, and stick them in drawers. Every ten years or so, some bright graduate student opens the drawer, takes a look, writes a paper, and shuts the drawer. So I rescued them" (King, "Truth" 253). His reply makes Lum understand that the lady who threw a box into the river earlier was none other than Monroe.

Thomas King ends the novel with the giveaway ceremony. It is a practice of First Nations people in which properties or gifts are ceremonially distributed. As Eagleton asserts; "Culture also depends on shared speech, beliefs, traditions, values, and a sense of identity" (37). Monroe plans for a giveaway ceremony after locating the church. By the time Tecumseh and his pet dog, Soldier reach the place which is near the church, a large circle of grass is cleared and piled up with firewood. Then they meet Monroe who is busily shifting logs from the truck. After shifting logs Monroe locates the church with Soldier's help and opens the door of the church. The moment Monroe enters the Church he makes Tecumseh shift all the things from church and arranges it around the circle of firewood. Tecumseh does not know the reason behind this. Soon after arranging everything outside, Monroe cracks the flares and wedges all together under the logs till it is glowing red lights. He also puts a CD into a portable stereo and after sometime, people come one by one by noticing the bonfire. "More cars and truck arrive, sliding out of fog like ghosts" (King, "Truth" 242). Monroe executes his giveaway plan soon by taking things out and shouting out loud as if there is an auction. "Who wants the Japanese armour" (King, "Truth" 243). In no time,

people from Truth and Bright Water are standing around the fire. It seems more like a family get-together where everyone is talking and having fun. Monroe makes sure that nobody leaves empty handed.

Skee gets a really nice painting of a woman on a beach for his café. Lucy gets a poster of Marilyn Mondroe, and Lucille and Teresa get one of the big rugs. Monroe gives my grandmother a Navajo rug, and he lets Sherman Wilfred and Eddie pick out turquoise and silver rings from a carved wooden box. Wally gets one of the two suits of Japanese armour, and Gabriel Tucker gets the other. (King, "Truth" 244)

Ever since the Europeans arrived, First Nations people started losing their culture due to the imposition of their dominant culture. Thomas King has created characters in such a way that a few strive to restore their culture and rest of them are neither bothered nor cared. Characters like Lum, Rebecca and Monroe try to revive their culture but none of them succeeds in the process of restoration. Whereas the other characters like Elvin and Franklin want to lead a wealthy life with materialistic comforts. They are not bothered whether their culture survives or not. Though they retreat the issue of their broken culture, they hardly earn for their livelihood. The problem affects them severely especially when it comes to employment. In the process of overcoming their poverty, they get corrupted. Encroachment of lands was the first thing that Europeans did as soon as they arrived and it is still continued by the capitalist who build industries, resorts and dam on indigenou land. These activities affect First Nations people in many ways.

Language and land are most often identified as the pillars of contemporary Native identity. Crucially, neither can be maintained by an individual in

isolation. Maintenance and revitalization of language and culture inevitably depend upon family, community, and, for many, the reserve as home place, regardless of present residence. (Darnell 175)

Despite the fact that First Nations people strive to restore their culture, they fail miserably. It is known that Canada is a multicultural country where the citizens have rights to practice their own culture but circumstances make First Nations people assimilate with the western culture. The helpless victims witness the environmental devastation done by capitalists. Indigenous people adapt the western culture to get rid of their unemployment, poverty and social exclusion.

Thomas King pours out his concern for First Nations people by bringing out their struggle to maintain their culture in the novel *Truth and Bright Water*. Miller rightly says “Many cultural anthropologists are critical of Westernization and modernization because their research shows how modernization often brings environmental ruin, increases social inequality, destroys indigenous cultures and reduces global culture and biological diversity” (363). Likewise, Thomas King makes it evident that cultural change eventually brings social inequality and destroys nature as well as indigenous culture through his characters. Thomas King shows that First Nations identity comes from their close knit community who care for one another and the entire environment they live in. Though First Nations are stewards of nature, dominant society and capitalists stop them from being nature oriented by continuously relocating them from one place to another. All these things force Native people to adapt western civilization for their livelihood.