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Robertson, David. A. (2020) Black Water. Family, Legacy, and Blood Memory. Toronto: HarperCollins Publishers Ltd.

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Residential schools caused many Indigenous families to be ripped apart, languages to be lost, and changed how many Indigenous people view themselves. In David Robertson's memoir book "Black Water," we learn how intergenerational trauma has affected his family and how their family was able to heal. There were many themes within the book, including the subtitle: *family, legacy, and blood memory.* However, this review will focus on education, language, and stereotypes. Davidson shared many memories of himself growing up that could not have been easy to write, including the shame of denying that he was Indigenous. He showcased many examples of how colonization and residential schools have demonized Indigenous peoples. Through the book, we also see hope, love, and that some ancestry will not be taken away because of blood memory.

Education and the importance of it was stressed throughout the book, starting with mentioning how important education was to Robertson's Nana (Sarah Robertson):

> Above all else, Nana wanted her children and grandchildren to get educated. She understood the necessity of education and the difficulties of being First Nations in the new world they faced. To the Olson girls, my cousins, she once said, "It's really nice that you want to learn about your Indian side, but don't let it get in the way of your education" (p. 73).

This quote showcases not only how Nana felt about Western education but also displays some

colonization residue from her education and treatment at a residential school. However, Robertson did bring up a good point when he said her desire for education could have been her trying to see the good in a bad thing that happened to her (p. 74). It could have been her way of making peace with what happened to her and the start of intergenerational healing.

Indigenous knowledge and education were also a focal point of the book. Robertson mentioned several times how important it was to him and his healing to learn Indigenous knowledge and stories from his dad. He also highlighted the importance of Indigenous Peoples having local control of the education of Indigenous children, “That building self-image and confidence in young people involved presenting their culture in a positive way, not as something that needed to be eliminated or didn’t hold intrinsic value. That doing so would improve motivation, learning, and self-worth” (p. 161). Robertson mentions that residential schools built mistrust within Indigenous people when it comes to Western education and that “Fear and mistrust of schools can be undone only by involving parents in their children’s learning experience, to build trust and, in doing so, improve success and educational attainment” (p. 162). Indigenous knowledge and education are a way of legacy as well. Robertson often wrote of the importance of verbal storytelling as a way of passing down knowledge. At the end of the book, Robertson paints a beautiful picture of his father’s history and writes, “The stories I've learned, that Dad has told me, are stories I can tell my kids. They are stories my kids will tell their kids one day” (p. 261).

Robertson continually talks about language throughout the book, its importance, and what the loss of it means. Residential schools tried to take language away from Indigenous people and succeeded for generations. Robertson brings up the importance of this when he says, “Language

loss has been, arguably, the most profound impact of any system established to educate Indigenous children. To use a simple equation: language = culture" (p. 105). Residential schools succeeded with Robertson's family, as is evidenced in his lack of knowledge that he was Indigenous for the better part of his formative years. The biggest regret in Don Robertson's life was not teaching his children how to speak their language (p. 146). Robertson follows this by saying, "I regret it as well, especially in moments like this. Not only because I feel left out, although that's part of it, but because after all the work I've done to establish a firm sense of who I am, of my Indigeneity, it feels like there's a piece missing" (p. 146). However, we see healing in this family when Robertson's daughter, Lauren, is taught Cree by Don Robertson (p. 245). Robertson mentions the first time Lauren asks to be taught Cree, and he writes, "I understand intergenerational healing" (p.245). By Lauren learning their language, their family is continuing to heal their intergenerational trauma, and that is beautiful.

Stereotypes and their significance are mentioned many times in the book. Robertson connects the stereotypes about Indigenous Peoples to the way he was treated growing up and to how Indigenous Peoples are still treated today. In the book, Robertson wrote:

> If we present ourselves as one thing- say, an Indigenous minister- it can perpetuate stereotypes. Dad was interested in people connecting as human beings, not as an Indian and a white person. […] This didn't make him not an Indigenous person, but it may have introduced townspeople to a different idea of what an Indigenous person was (p. 150).

The last sentence is insightful and thought-provoking. Had Don Robertson introduced himself as a Cree minister, could he have changed the town's perception of Indigenous People? Growing up, a person could tell that Robertson believed the stereotypes he heard when he wrote, "I had no

desire to be Indigenous because everything I learned about Indigenous People during my formative years was negative" (p. 12). Imagine a child growing up and feeling ashamed of who he was because of what he heard people say. Our society still does this, and it is essential that Robertson talks about it. Hopefully, what he wrote will change people's negative perspectives.

Countless Indigenous people who went to residential schools and lost much of their culture say that when they went home from school, they did not feel like they belonged in their community anymore. Still, they also felt like they belonged outside of settler society. Robertson touched on this when he wrote:

> I find my way to the church by following the roadside like any other band member walking to or from the mall. It makes me feel even more like I belong here […]. The roads wind around the community, and I have to pay attention or I'll turn the wrong direction and head away from the water rather than towards it. I've done that in the car, despite the many times I've been here. This makes me feel less like I belong (p. 95).

Making this connection is important because not many people realize how displaced many residential school survivors and people who grew up without their culture feel.

The intended audience for "Black Water" is anyone wanting to learn more about colonization, residential schools, intergenerational trauma, the harms of stereotypes, Indigenous knowledge, family dynamics, and the disenfranchisement of Indigenous Peoples. Some academic disciplines that may learn from this book are social work, sociology, Indigenous studies, anthropology, psychology, and history.

One thing that was inconsistent within the book was when Robertson said, "When I'm having an anxiety attack, you'll never know that I feel wretched in body and mind. I've learned to

hide it, put on a front, ignore it as best I can" (p. 24). Hiding his anxiety attacks is reminiscent of Robertson also hiding that he is Indigenous throughout his younger years. It could be argued that the reason Robertson has anxiety is because of the treatment he received from other children when he was growing up and not knowing who he was. However, this still questions how far along he is in his healing journey if he still needs to hide things about himself. Another limitation of the book was that it could have some bias or inaccurate information because it was written from Robertson's perspective. He brings this up in the book, "Because I'm continually learning, things I've said in the past have sometimes turned out to be wrong" (p. 177). However, this book was beautifully written and quite insightful. I recommend it to anyone wanting to learn more about intergenerational trauma, Indigenous knowledge, family dynamics, and Indigeneity.