

Indian Horse by Richard Wagamese

Summary:

Saul Indian Horse, ex-hockey star, reluctantly entered treatment for alcoholism, after a binge that nearly killed him. In *Indian Horse*, a novel by Richard Wagamese, Saul tells the story of his life while hoping to heal and reclaim it. The story is told in first person through Saul's eyes, and through his vision, the reader confronts the racism and abuse that follow Saul once he is forcibly removed from his family.

As a member of a First Nation, Saul experiences first-hand the shame of the Indian residential schools, which took native children away from their families and culture to live in isolated boarding schools far from home. Cut off from their families, language, and culture, Saul and the other children endure terrible pain and suffering, including physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, near starvation, and daily insults to their culture and heritage, along with forced English language lessons.

The novel begins with an Ojibwe man struggling with alcoholism who finds himself at a treatment facility called the New Dawn Centre after his latest binge. He identifies himself as Saul Indian Horse, a descendant of the Fish Clan of the Northern Ojibwe, or Anishinabeg. He is advised to share his story in order to find peace, but he is unable to share openly with others. Instead, he is given permission to write his story down, so that he can "get on with life."

Saul begins with the story of his grandfather Shabogeesick and how he earned the name Indian Horse. He then recounts his childhood, beginning with the stark statement: "All that I knew of Indian died in the winter of 1961, when I was eight years old." That was the year Saul was taken to the St. Jerome's Indian Residential School.

