

J E A N N E T T E A R M S T R O N G

Influences of Okanagan Oraliture: Sources of Syilx Knowledge

Abstract

The focus of the essay is to draw on a section of my dissertation, "Constructing Indigeneity: Syilx Okanagan Oraliture and tmix^wcentrism", to elaborate on the way that captik^w as oraliture works in order to provide context to the way stories are Syilx Okanagan sources of knowledge. The essay expands on the way the captik^w utilizes various literary devices unique to oral story performance. Like any art form 'appreciation' includes not only the performance of the story but also the educated comprehension of the listeners to actively engage with the story and its depths of meaning. Various subjects of story are imparted in captik^w through categorizing them by providing story grammars which indicate that they are clearly informed by and revolve around Syilx ancestral knowledge intended to educate through realization, reflection and recall to retell in order to insure their continued transfer to succeeding generations. The essay expands on the unique oral literary vehicles used to carry meaning and coherence to reveal the layers contained as knowledge in story through examples. Significant terms borrowed from Rubin are used for such devices in common use in captik^w and can best be recognized as 'scripts,' 'associative networks,' 'analog' and 'loci.' The essay expands on the example of post contact influences of the captik^w as a source of Indigenous knowledge in the novel Cogewea by Okanagan writer Mourning Dove, who published a translated English collection of Okanagan stories (1976). The essay concludes with the continued influence captik^w has on me and the Syilx people.

Résumé

Cet article se concentre sur une partie de ma thèse "Constructing Indigeneity: Syilx Okanagan Oraliture and tmix^wcentrism", avec le but d'élaborer sur la manière dont captik^w fonctionne comme littérature orale, ainsi que de fournir le contexte dans lequel les contes de la tradition orale constituent des sources de connaissances pour les Syilx Okanagan. L'article montre comment captik^w utilise des moyens littéraires divers qui sont uniques pour la narration orale de contes. Comme toute autre forme d'art, 'reconnaissance' inclut non seulement la représentation du conte mais aussi la compréhension intellectuelle des auditeurs/auditrices pour aborder activement le conte et la profondeur de sa signification. Les thèmes d'un conte sont véhiculés à travers captik^w en

les catégorisant à l'aide de grammaires de conte divers, très clairement fondées sur et formées par les connaissances ancestrales des Syilx. De cette manière les contes contribuent à l'éducation par la connaissance, par la réflexion et par la mémoire active, assurant ainsi leur transfert continuels aux générations futures. Cet article met en lumière les uniques moyens dont se sert l'expression orale pour transmettre, à travers des exemples, la signification et la cohérence des diverses couches de connaissance contenues dans les contes. Des termes pertinents empruntés à David C. Rubin sont utilisés pour de telles modes d'expression en captikʷɬ et peuvent le mieux être désignés comme 'scripts', 'réseaux associatifs (associative networks)', 'analogue (analog)' et 'lieux (loci)'. En outre, les influences sur captikʷɬ comme source de savoir autochtone après le contact colonial sont expliquées à travers l'exemple du roman Cogewea de l'écrivain Okanagan Mourning Dove qui a publié en 1976 une collection de contes Okanagan traduits en anglais. Cet article conclut sur l'influence continue et actuelle de captikʷɬ sur moi et sur le peuple des Syilx.

Syilx Okanagan oral story, *captikʷɬ* (pronounced chaptteekew) in the *nsyilxcn*¹ language of the Syilx Okanagan, is an essential documentation system by which Indigenous knowledge is maintained and transferred to succeeding generations, as I have outlined in my dissertation "Constructing Indigeneity: Syilx Okanagan Oraliture and *tmixʷcentrism*" (2009). It explained how *captikʷɬ* uses an oral literature method of environmental knowledge transfer, which forms the foundation of a unique form of environmental ethics that I termed '*tmixʷcentrism*'. In order to examine *captikʷɬ*, it was necessary to present the way that the *nsyilxcn* language, as an Indigenous language, replicates distinct and specific knowledge of the Syilx natural world in the way meaning is constructed and how *captikʷɬ* then delivers that knowledge. I presented research that showed that there needed to be a way to 'read' the layers of meanings in *captikʷɬ* in order to access the knowledge allowing analysis regarding the Syilx environmental ethic. As well, I examined obstacles preventing appreciation of the way the stories work to convey meaning through literature as a knowledge documenting system. The main obstacle is a result of the way that *captikʷɬ* works as a 'spoken' literature emanating out of an Indigenous language resident in one geographical location for at least 10,000 years. Another significant obstacle is a result of the way that *captikʷɬ* as a knowledge documenting system relies on a knowledge of *captikʷɬ* literary conventions to penetrate meaning. I preferred to create the term 'oraliture' to refer to *captikʷɬ*, in reference to its oral literary qualities, as being unique and different from written Western literary forms.

Here I will elaborate on the way that *captikʷɬ* as oraliture works in order to contextualize its influence on Syilx Okanagan sources of knowledge. I will expand on the way the *captikʷɬ* utilizes various literary devices unique to oral story performance. In that way, I will explore the relation between Indigenous knowledges contained in

1 The *nsyilxcn* language by convention does not use capital letters.

captikʷ and Western discourses. I have found David C. Rubin's *Memory in Oral Traditions and the Cognitive Psychology of Epic, Ballads and Counting Rhymes* (1995) to be useful in my research. Rubin's view, that meanings of words and larger units in an oral tradition cannot be understood solely in terms of the text in which they appear but in terms of the entire tradition to which that text belongs, is true of *captikʷ* (1-64). I rely, therefore, on the more defined terms he uses within the field of cognitive psychology to describe the devices significant to *captikʷ*. Rubin provides terms, which parallel those in *captikʷ*, for structural schema utilized as different mechanisms to shape meaning in oral transmission and to aid oral memory. As is the case with *captikʷ*, such schema, argues Rubin, occur in common use in the entirety of the literate works of a people (1995, 23-24). Just as in Western literary traditions, which separate such works, for example into prose or poetry, fiction or non-fiction and so on, the entirety of Syilx oraliture occurs within its own conventions, different from written literary conventions in significant ways as a result of oral literary requirements.

The primary role of *captikʷ*, as understood by the Syilx Okanagan, is that it is an enjoyable communal way for those hearing the *captikʷ* to appreciate the art of *storytelling*. Like any art form, 'appreciation' includes not only the performance of the story but also the educated comprehension of the listeners to actively engage with the story and its depths of meaning. Secondly, the various subjects of story imparted in *captikʷ* are clearly informed by and revolve around Syilx ancestral knowledge intended to educate through realization, reflection and recall to retell in order to ensure their continued transfer to succeeding generations.

The general overarching schema of Syilx forms of story is that they can first be categorized into either *smaʔmayʔ*, which are anecdotal folk stories about historical human events, or *captikʷ*, as oraliture which are stories set in the animal world. *captikʷ* can be then somewhat organized into four general categories, although all categories overlap or weave into each other in different ways. As Okanagan language expert Anthony Mattina suggests, *captikʷ* occur through what other scholars identify as a *cycle* or a *complex* of stories in one culture. He further holds that typical of such complexes is that "episodes have neither a fixed order nor specific endings or beginnings" and similarly that a number of well-known *captikʷ* episodes are "cognate with various other Colville Okanagan narratives" (Mattina/DeSautel 2002, 22).

For the examination of oraliture (or *captikʷ*), the identification of general categories was to delineate the different social purposes of knowledge transmission. The way that the different *captikʷ* categories, as oraliture, perform their purpose, provides a foundational approach to their analysis for meaning. The four categories differ less in structure and device than in the intent for the receiver audience to whom knowledge is being transferred. The concept 'story grammar', as outlined by Rubin, suggests that there are forms of organization in oral traditions, including thematic organization, that operate to classify the story within the tradition through

its serial process (1995, 29-31). In this way, I theorize a story grammar for *captik*^{wɔ} as an analysis method to identify a larger overarching framework by which different story categories exist in the way different social strata are targeted. Each general category organizes story into those which offer social codes of conduct for a) the individual; b) family interaction; c) community relationships and; d) human interaction with the environment. This is one way *captik*^{wɔ} works in order to educate, rationalize and institutionalize the logic of the required ethics in human interactions. The societal ethics shaped through the four categories of *captik*^{wɔ} weave together to form a larger template of the wisdom for a society-wide appropriate ethic related to their inter-relationship with nature. A brief synopsis of the four general categorizations of *captik*^{wɔ} intent is provided here:

- Sacred text *captik*^{wɔ} – those in which correct ceremonial and ritual conventions are encoded. They are always serious in tone for select audience listeners and usually kept esoteric to Syilx knowledge keepers.
- World-before-humans *captik*^{wɔ} – those in which codes of conduct are connected to human ethics related to nature. They are lofty or serious in tone in which the story revolves around a philosophical dilemma or question which must be resolved.
- People-were-living *captik*^{wɔ} and people-were-traveling *captik*^{wɔ} – those which impart and encode social and community standards of conduct in the home, village or out on the land. They commonly make use of irony, suspense, pathos and other conflict enhancing devices.
- Coyote-traveling *captik*^{wɔ} – those which encode individual morals and behaviours in which Coyote encounters and eliminates people-eating-monsters to ready the world for the humans. They are much longer, intricate stories, requiring rich detailed embellishments and dramatic devices more suited to entertainment. Melodrama, humor, reversals and informality of subject are characteristic. They are most widely studied as trickster tales.

As a general rule, both world-before-humans *captik*^{wɔ} and sacred text *captik*^{wɔ} are selected to align with listening audiences on more formal political and ceremonial occasions. People-were-living *captik*^{wɔ} and people-were-traveling *captik*^{wɔ} and sometimes coyote-traveling *captik*^{wɔ} are generally selected for listening audiences to align with the local area on informal community social occasions. Family-centered occasions, either out on the land or in the home, are more open to selections of people-were-traveling *captik*^{wɔ} and coyote-traveling *captik*^{wɔ} (Armstrong 2009, 114-125).

A deep influence on Syilx society of the knowledge through *captik*^{wɔ} is that they constitute a continuous feedback loop, in maintaining within a lived context knowledge for the essential ethics in Syilx society. *captik*^{wɔ} are continuously accessible to all, without censor, from an early age on into all levels of maturity, allowing

their meaning to deepen and evolve with the experience of each individual. *captik^{wɨ}* become omnipresent in a way that permeates the social psyche and provides a lifeway to be lived in the present. The continued social telling of *captik^{wɨ}* ensures each succeeding generation has access to the knowledge of the social codes for conduct and therefore acquires the values consistent with the Syilx land ethic. The Syilx construct of nature's wisdom transmitted through story provides references which can be interpreted into relations within community and family circles. *captik^{wɨ}* are delivered by people who are relatives or community members gifted with storyteller memory, and are thus imbued with an affection and respect for the characters linked to the tellers. The *captik^{wɨ}* stories are part of our communities, part of our families and permeate the everyday world as an ever-present lens through which all interactions can be seen. In that way, it is the intimacy and the psychology of knowing who is telling the story that acts as intermediary between the teller and the learner and provides a critical component of how the story is received; they are critical in the development of ethics and values in each new generation that the stories are told. Moreover, the tellers are spiritual interfaces between humans and nature's beings, in that their stories carry the spark to illuminate the vast knowledge of nature held within our communities and families as a part of the place they have occupied for many thousands of years. In that way, the *captik^{wɨ}* speak a meta-language continuously casting our interactions in the light of being part of a cohesive whole with each other as humans, as well as humans within that larger lifeworld of living nature. The *captik^{wɨ}* continuously embed the ethic that it is nature which accords us our physical lives and therefore is essential as the foundation of knowledge of how we are to conduct ourselves in relation to each other.

The *captik^{wɨ}* are structured for 'telling' in that the structure and the devices are germane to live performed story. Much like epic poetry, the listener must be able to sustain coherence through the variety of layered meanings contained in the story. *captik^{wɨ}* employ structural devices unique to oral story performance, to assist the storyline and develop a rich layering of imagery and description that conveys meaning with the least amount of explication. This provides a memory track for the teller and the listener. In addition to the story's surface plot, clarity and coherence is provided for the listener through the story's ability to relate aspects taken directly from nature to the story in order to impart and encode the intended knowledge.

All interactions of nature's beings are common knowledge to the Syilx and are familiar and specific to the ecology of the Syilx land. They can be relied on to provide a ready template from which to draw the necessary story meaning. The typical interplay between the different species in nature are encountered by all Syilx people, even in the contemporary world, and serve as stable referents by which to convey meaning when cast as parallels to human interactions. Different types of interaction assist to develop tensions, provide sub-text and to help deliver models of archetypal characterization and metaphor. As literary tools they become elegant vehicles to carry meaning and coherence and at the same time to reveal the layers

contained as knowledge in story. Such devices, borrowed from Rubin, in common use in *captik*^{wf} can best be recognized as “scripts,” “associative networks,” “analog” and “loci” (Rubin 1995, 23-24).

Scripts include whole sets of social behavior or interactions familiar in the human everyday world. Scripts need no explanation when abstracted into one word or a phrase. A common example of proper social behavior in Syilx Okanagan culture is the expectation to feed guests first, though they be strangers, before visiting with them. The script solicited in the phrase ‘setting food,’ in the language, implies and includes all of the images of the entire sequence of an invitation to a seating order: service of a hot beverage, followed by berries or fruit, a light meat or fish dish, then the offer of a preserved food gift for the guest to take when they leave. All this takes place before conversation – other than polite travel inquiry. Another example of a single word which is common to the Syilx Okanagan is the word ‘digging,’ which in *nsyilxcn* conjures up all the images involved in the traditional practice of a family or other group that has prepared food, tools and travel plans to go out camping on the land for the ritual harvest of a traditional root crop, including the work of cleaning and preparing it for preservation. In that way scripts are a way to impart specific meaning in a minimum of words without long, wordy descriptions, leaving the listeners’ individual imaginations to conjure images and concepts through the lens of their own experiences. In that way *captik*^{wf} scripts impart the sense of a personalized participation and inclusion in the story. Scripts in *captik*^{wf} also rely heavily on common interactions, which would be unquestionably familiar to all Syilx, between nature’s beings, since observance of them is commonplace, creating again the sense of a personalized story landscape. As an example, a story involving the blackbird might simply refer to it and mimic its sounds and movements in order to impart the idea of the blackbird’s actions when harassing the much larger hawk dodging around in mid-air to avoid its assaults, after the hawk has ventured too near its nest. The blackbird’s sounds and movements work to detail the story, and thereby, on another level, to underline that particular kind of human interaction. The sounds, colors, time of year of the storytelling as personal connection to the experience of place brings richness to the imagery being solicited in the mind of the listener to deliver a key point.

Associative networks in *captik*^{wf}, on the other hand, make use of an association within a network of human and nature associations as directive knowledge in the creation of inference. As an example, Raven is a familiar figure in *captik*^{wf}. The use of this character suggests Raven’s association to every other being and thing within the whole system as a characteristic ‘raven-ness.’ Raven is an opportunist in nature, so having a raven interact with other characters in the story both creates an implied association for the listener to the nature of expected interactions, as well as to identify the topic or theme carried by the story. Both encode and impart meaning and depth significant to the story based on the knowledge of what constitutes raven-ness. In that way, all commonplace birds, animals, insects, fish and even plants are

utilized to form associative network knowledge sets in *captik*^{wɔ}, significant to the social codes being imparted. Each animistic story character must then be read within a wider network of associations, both human and nature. Fully penetrating *captik*^{wɔ} requires interpretation by a Syilx person knowledgeable about the type of associations that the animistic characters have within the vast ecological network of the Syilx Okanagan landscape.

The use of an analog assists in creating other layers of meaning to carry encoded and intended information as sub-text. An example can be seen in the use of analog in several stories. In one story Coyote props his eyes open to stay awake to be early to get the best name, while in another he juggles his eyes to impress and spy on others. The eyes, analogous to seeing the truth, are used in those stories to highlight human morals in trying to attain something or triumph through deceitful means. Of course, shortsightedness in those stories leads to failure and a lesson to be learned. The same analog appears in other stories with different animals. In one it is to highlight dangerous naiveté in the face of evil, such as in the episode in the *captik*^{wɔ} of Owl Monster, whose big eyes watch Chipmunk for an opportunity to pounce on her. Owl Monster hides her eyes, when Chipmunk asks her to, all the while peeking through the feathers of the wing covering her piercing eyes as Chipmunk climbs down from the berry-bush. In another, Mole, who is blind in the light of day, never sees how Coyote really is and so believes he is smart and handsome. Such analogs utilizing different objects and body parts are common and occur over many *captik*^{wɔ}.

The use of loci, or mind mapping in story, allows the teller a memory path from one point to another. Loci in *captik*^{wɔ} utilize direct reference to places in a story which are distinct and well-known within the Okanagan landscape. As unique landforms loci provide an easy story path to direct, follow, locate and identify the significant meanings layered within a storyline, and assist the memory progression of both the teller and the audience. Loci within story also provide useful geographical mapping of significant parts of the territory as well as bring the landscape alive with the presence of the *captik*^{wɔ} characters and their ethics. In that way the land itself becomes infused with teaching and deep meaning and becomes spiritually precious. As an example in the story of Coyote bringing salmon to the people, the story loci is a real path, which defines and connects the territory through its river systems leading from village to village. Each village, complete with special geographical landforms, is referenced within the story as part of Coyote's magic, to both impart intended situations in the story in relation to the laws of kinship systems and salmon governance protocols, and at the same time to provide a clear mind map to be accessed by travelers.

captik^{wɔ} as story is also made more complex by nature knowledge in another way through the use of a device that I term the 'animafication' of humans, through the creation of characters to display observable and familiar characteristics lifted directly from the Syilx knowledge of the natural world. Animal behavior is stable and

dependable for all to use as ready reference to codify aspects of human behaviors. 'Animafication' is a necessary device to avoid confusion of theme and topic and provides immediate imagery for the recognition of behaviors by which to dramatize human capacity, creativity and potential. As well it is necessary to point out negative latent tendencies which individuals in society are capable of and will encounter that are a detriment to society. The world-before-humans *captik^{wf}* are characterized by featuring specifically selected *tmix^w* as people. *tmix^w* is the general *nsyilxcn* word used to refer to all lifeforms of animal, bird, plant, fish, insect or reptile. In the *captik^{wf}*, *tmix^w* are never actual animals, but animanized people. At the same time they are not humans, but are humanized in a world peopled only by *tmix^w*. In the preface to *Tales of the Okanagan*, Mourning Dove, who grew up immersed in *captik^{wf}*, described *captik^{wf}* as stories from the animal world that were a part of education where story characters are "somewhat in the form of humans who could transform into animal form at will" (Mourning Dove 1976, 13). It is characteristic for storytellers to acknowledge that they are *captik^{wf} tmix^w* and not the individual specific animal, bird, fish or insects we see out on the land, as there are no portrayals of actual birds, animals, fish or insects, since *captik^{wf}* are understood to be set in the time of *captik^{wf} tmix^w*.

Deconstructing the *nsyilxcn* terminology used to describe the time the stories refer to is extremely critical to developing a *captik^{wf}* theoretical framework for contextualizing the story world. Examinations of the stories prefaced by the category designating them as world-before-humans *captik^{wf}* reveal that these *tmix^w* are not magical or mystical deities, but are constructed in human thought to humanize the knowledge of the non-human lifeworld. Rather than the familiar personification of animals, that is, giving an animal a human persona for the purpose of story, humans are instead endowed with animal personas. Some of the most important and familiar personas encountered are: Coyote, Porcupine, Bear, Raven, Meadowlark, Magpie, Chickadee, Eagle, Salmon, Frog, Turtle, Tamarack Tree, Saskatoon Berry, Camus Root, Fly, Maggot and Cricket.

Characters are selected from nature, not for what they look like but for what they do in nature, which can be transposed unto human interactions. Their actions are magnified and exaggerated to illuminate what is possible in human interaction, both good and bad. Several of the key personas could be described as being archetypical in their significant and unchanging roles throughout all *captik^{wf}*. As a result, animal interactions impart two layers of knowledge. One layer is that nature itself is mirrored in story to be contextualized as humanized interactions, which allows ecological knowledge to be available and familiar within and part of the human social consciousness domain. Nature knowledge becomes internal to us as a part of our living experience and is perceived in human interactions. Another layer is the use of what I term 'ecomimicry' as an essential component in embedding the characteristics of nature as an older and wiser order and intelligence continuously informing us, teaching and guiding us in the way a natural system's parts interact as a

template for human values and ethics. The result is abstract knowledge based on the *tmix^w* interactions, which have verifiable outcomes and so impart systems-based principles and concepts in human behavior and conduct while at the same time delivering the knowledge of nature's dynamics in the real and physical ecology surrounding us. For example many stories contain interactions between characters in very specific times of the year in specific habitats, providing clear ecological information for human harvesting protocols for conserving and respecting vulnerabilities. In some stories, the relationship between two characters provides knowledge about symbiotic or ecological niche co-inhabitants that require special considerations in order to preserve the whole.

In that way, *captik^w* characters permeate the Syilx consciousness as metaphysical animanized voices who speak through *captik^w* in human language and in human contexts. In so doing, they are experienced by us as the mystical story beings to be revered as spiritual beings that are ever present, both in the seen world and the unseen world of human knowledge. The *tmix^w* surround us constantly, as our teachers in the real world to be seen and observed in their physical knowable forms. In that way *captik^w* knowledge is based on the physical knowledge of Nature's beings; their interrelationships are known in turn as intimately as the human lifeworld. *captik^w* deeply influence how the Syilx knowledge of environment is continuously accessed and taught, as well as how that Syilx knowledge informs human conduct toward each other and toward Nature's lifeforms.

For Syilx society, and indeed for its writers who are familiar with *captik^w*, it is clear that *captik^w* influences their perspective in regard to contemporary conflicts in the internal landscape of the human as individual as well as within their society in relation to their environment. The stories continue to deeply influence how such knowledge is imparted at all levels and guides the effects it has on community, the individual, and therefore the land and its protection.²

My focus here is the novel *Cogewea* (1981), in which Okanagan storyteller Mourning Dove maintains the formal intent of *captik^w* within the framework of a frontier romance fiction. Alanna Kathleen Brown, who has researched and written extensively on Mourning Dove, describes the novel as a work that reflects the sense of Mourning Dove's oral tradition and innate storytelling skills. She further suggests that Mourning Dove wrote to create space for Okanagan consciousness in that time of a suffocating dominant cultural obtuseness (Brown 1993, 51-58). Mourning Dove's perspective, and orientation toward a Syilx audience, is as clear in the novel as it is in her 1976 published collection of Okanagan stories. In Mourning Dove's response to her editor McWhorter in 1930, she explains that in recasting her stories for him she has omitted many things, but that "an Indian that knows the story can read between the lines just the same" (Mourning Dove *Letters to*, n.d.). Similarly, in

2 My dissertation "Constructing Indigeneity: Syilx Okanagan Orality and *tmix^w*centrism" provides several other examples of contemporary writing which utilize *captik^w* conventions.

1976, Donald Hines published a retrieved original manuscript of the 38 Okanagan stories provided by Mourning Dove in which her comments in the preface reveal her clarity about the purpose of her writing. In this preface, Mourning Dove explained that her primary interest was to write novels to show the Okanagan viewpoint, and that she had been reluctant to collect and write the Okanagan stories in English (Mourning Dove 1976, 14). However, she revealed that she was clearly influenced by the knowledge carried in *captik*^{wɥ}. Also that she had found a rich field of story untouched by non-Okanagans she was now translating, because before that non-Okanagans could not understand what an Okanagan would see in the stories. She clearly viewed the stories as being of great importance to the younger generations in the conviction that her reward would be knowing that she has preserved for their future the folklore of her ancestors (1976, 12-14).

In brief, the novel *Cogewea* disguises and frames the fictional romance of the protagonist Cogewea within the template of a common and well-known *captik*^w. It is clearly the story of *q^wəq^wc^wiyaʔ*-chipmunk and *sninaʔ*-owl monster, referred to above in the use of eyes as an overarching analog of seeing through to the truth, which envelops the story theme. The novel's storyline is centered on Cogewea, a half-breed Indian girl, and two men competing over her attentions, a greedy English Easterner and a respectful half-breed cowboy. The novel's title *Cogewea*, Mourning Dove's anglicized version of the word *q^wəq^wc^wiyaʔ*-chipmunk, sets out the associative networking of the story, not only in terms of the dangerous naiveté of Cogewea, but also the new generation of Okanagans who she represents and whose culture is now half non-Okanagan. The *captik*^{wɥ} of "Chipmunk and Owl Woman" (Mourning Dove 1933, 41-59) was one of the feature stories Mourning Dove translated in a tamed-down version for her collection, and is a story known by virtually all Syilx people mainly as Chipmunk and Owl Monster, even in contemporary times.

Dexter Fisher, in her introductory comments to the reprinted novel, observes that the novel is inspired by the Okanagan story of "Chipmunk and Owl Woman" (1981, v-xxix). From a Syilx perspective, the formal structural devices and intent inherent in *captik*^{wɥ}, as discussed in the core premise of this paper, are clearly the anchoring foundation to Mourning Dove's approach, rather than inspired by them. As an Okanagan storyteller, Mourning Dove would have purposely selected the correct *tmix*^w character of Chipmunk who appears in other Okanagan *captik*^{wɥ}, because of her masterful knowledge of Okanagan oral story associative networks and the story analog of the eyes of the Owl Monster. She employs the *captik*^{wɥ} method to reflect on and thereby speak to her own contemporary societal conflict issues through a *captik*^{wɥ} lens, in order to warn succeeding generations not to be fooled and captivated by the colonizing culture's professed intentions, but to see its real motives in regard to Indigenous lands. The novel speaks Mourning Dove's view of early settler colonialism in true Syilx *captik*^{wɥ} method, revealing the tension confronting the new generation of Syilx Okanagan in cultural transition and the knowledge of the dangerous choices before them.

Mourning Dove uses *captik*^{wɥ} as a framework to speak to the Syilx Okanagan about the dynamics of the frontier mentality. When analyzed from a Syilx oral story perspective, using an associative-network lens, what becomes visible is that Mourning Dove selects the script of the parentless orphan *captik*^{wɥ} Chipmunk, with only grandmother to care for her, to embody the character of Cogewea who, in the novel, also has only her grandmother to guide her. Old Grandparent, in Syilx culture, is an analog representing the guiding nature and knowledge of the past. The use of the parentless child, a well-known script of an innocent young person who needs security, care and guidance, provides a way for Mourning Dove to portray the real circumstance faced by the tiny population of Okanagan, the last survivors of a smallpox epidemic.³ Mourning Dove referred to them in her autobiography, published in 1994, as living in “a pathetic state of turmoil” (Miller 1994, 3). She highlights this image in the novel when she writes that upon the Easterner’s arrival, “he had expected to see the painted and blanketed aborigine of history and romance; but instead he had only encountered this miniature group of half-bloods and one ancient squaw” (1981, 43-44).

Mourning Dove would have been aware of the role of Chipmunk as the tragically innocent orphaned child forced to go out alone to pick berries, with only her old and helpless grandmother’s warnings to protect her. In this script, we know that Chipmunk is prey for a monster who eats little girl’s hearts. The intent of the script in the story grammar of *There-Were-People-Living captik*^{wɥ} is to identify and characterize a malevolence that is a threat to the people. In the *captik*^{wɥ}, Chipmunk escapes at first but is betrayed, in return for a payment, so she still loses her heart. The grandmother is helpless and cannot protect her from the monster, who finds her and rips out her heart. Chipmunk is restored to life and to her grandmother, however, through spirit power, which replaces her missing heart with a Saskatoon berry. Saskatoon Berry, a *captik*^{wɥ} story chief, appears in one of the most significant stories related to the Syilx land ethic, and is both food and seed. It is a well-known analog representing coming new generations. The script of being revived to life by something from the land is found in many other *captik*^{wɥ}. The inferred use of Saskatoon Berry analog is present in the healing of Cogewea’s broken heart. In fact, Mourning Dove ends the chapter titled “The Cost of Knowing” with the line “To Cogewea, the world was dead” (1981, 279). Together with the analog of returning to the healing care of old grandmother representing land knowledge, the novel speaks eloquently about the necessary change which must be achieved through the security of the Syilx land ethics in their traditions. It is clearly not an accidental choice in the novel’s resolve and its underlying meaning.

3 The waves of smallpox in the Pacific Northwest in 1782, in 1835 and in 1852-53, among other diseases, were responsible for reducing the Indigenous population in the interior of the Pacific Northwest by two thirds (Burns 1966, 13).

Mourning Dove is very much aware of the underlying associative connection that she establishes through Chipmunk and Owl Monster. Cast in the character of the Easterner is the devious monster character that portrays the colonizing culture capable of consuming the Okanagan people and their lands. We get a sense of this deeper tension as a sub-text of the choices confronting the Okanagan between the world of the Syilx and the world of the non-Syilx, through the story of the half-blood Cogewea, representing her people's cultural transformation. Cogewea is a "half-blood" caught between the grandmother's world and the world of the Easterner by "being lured to a shadowy trail of sorrow by the deceiving Shoyapee" (1981, 244). Just as Cogewea's trusting heart is ripped open by the thieving treachery of the Easterner, Mourning Dove makes clear that the monster that rips the heart out of the remnants of the vulnerable Okanagan people after smallpox is the "soulless creatures who have ever preyed upon us" (1981, 283). What also becomes clear in the meaning of Chipmunk's return to life by spirit power is Mourning Dove's resolve in the return of Cogewea and her half-breed lover to live in the ways of grandmother, as half-bloods in the "corral erected round us" (1981, 283). This may refer to being corralled both culturally and physically, in the establishment of reservations. Either way, Mourning Dove provides clarity that although the transformation to living half-and-half of each culture cannot be avoided, because the Shoyapee culture surrounds their everyday lives, the best choice is to remain insulated within the teachings of their ancestors.

Mourning Dove wrote as one deeply influenced by knowledge in the *captik*^{wɬ} in the way she utilized and relied on *captik*^{wɬ} to convey her main teachings regarding the dangerous times and lack of morals and ethics of the newcomers regarding the land and its people. The work she undertook in collecting, translating and publishing the *captik*^{wɬ} has indeed continued to influence each new generation of Syilx in the form of their continual telling in English in the education of our children and adults. Her novel is studied and read by Syilx people who penetrate and appreciate its layers of meaning as *captik*^{wɬ}; it continues to be told and studied both in *nsyilxcn* and in English in the Syilx communities. The contemporary interest in Indigenous knowledge as a source of remedy for the societal and environmental problems being experienced as result of the lack of an appropriate land ethic has increased a wider Syilx community interest in our *nsyilxcn* language and the *captik*^{wɬ} as a source to be relied on.

Mourning Dove's intent to use *captik*^{wɬ} to warn future generations against the loss of Syilx values and ethics was clear to me as a *captik*^w teller when I read the novel for the first time. As a Syilx person who is a fluent speaker of the Okanagan *nsyilxcn* language and a storyteller in the *captik*^{wɬ} tradition, I am constantly reminded by *captik*^{wɬ} that the animal world's creatures are our benevolent relatives who feast us within their covenant to feed each other so all could live in health. The animal people of the stories are our spiritual teachers, teaching reciprocity and restraint, respect and responsibility; they are the guardians of a knowledgeable, peaceful and

spiritual human society now and into the future through *captik*^{wł}. I have chosen to utilize the insight and knowledge within *captik*^{wł} regarding the living land and our relationship to it in order to focus my view on societal values and environmental ethics that require transformation, following the intent of *captik*^{wł}. In that way, the interfaces between Indigenous knowledges and Western discourses may be enhanced through an effort to 'read' through the stories and penetrate their meaning, thus learning from *captik*^{wł} and understanding how human knowledge and behavioral protocol toward the land is contained in such narratives and stories. Perhaps wider society, in learning to 'read' such stories for such knowledge, can begin the necessary changes in its behavior towards the environment. Perhaps western literatures may be influenced toward new conventions focused on literatures creating reciprocal and spiritual relationship with the living beings surrounding them.

My own land ethic and societal values emanating from the knowledge in *captik*^{wł} have influenced everything I have written, and everything I have done in my life's work to maintain and make available, through education, the *captik*^{wł} to as many of the new generations as possible.

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