

Abstract

The interdisciplinary study explores the preservation and transmission of Indigenous land-based and place-based ecological knowledge systems, onto-epistemologies, and relational kin-based philosophies of Northwest Coast First Nations through the lens of storytelling and performance art of *kota*. Focusing on selected Indigenous stories and *kota* string figures from British Columbia, this research gives voice to Indigenous peoples and demonstrates that these cultural expressions not only embody complex relational worldviews, but also serve as a knowledge-making praxis, providing Indigenous people with guidance on respectful and reciprocal interactions with the sentient land and its living entities, foregrounding anti-anthropocentric perspectives. This thesis illustrates the importance of land-based storytelling and *kota* in culturally reclaiming the early Indigenous storytelling tradition, their land-based ways of knowing and relational philosophies.

The study begins with an exploration of the author's transcultural positioning, research as a ceremony, and a thorough review of the literature on the topic of Indigenous storytelling and ecological knowledge. As discussed in Chapter 3, this research adopts Indigenous storytelling as a decolonizing and indigenizing methodological framework and method to examine traditional stories, life-experience narratives, and *kota* string figures as repositories of land-based and place-based knowledges and ancestral teachings on harmonious living and relationship with the land, and the human and more-than-human worlds. Drawing upon Marshall's Two-Eyed Seeing framework and Archibald's principles of *storywork*, the study reveals how these narratives and *kota*, as a form of pattern literacy, embody a kinship relationship between humans and all beings, reflecting the interconnectedness of Indigenous experiences and their onto-epistemologies.

Chapter 4 delves into the distinct nature of Indigenous storytelling, focusing on the rich oral traditions of the Northwest Coast and highlighting its importance as the underpinning of Indigenous lifeways and acts of survivance in the present. Building upon this foundation, Chapters 5 and 6 analyze selected narratives and *kota* string figures to show how mnemonic aids and tactile and embodied learning facilitate the transmission of ecological relationships among various species, medicinal and technological applications of plants and animals, availability and location of resources, land stewardship, sustainable harvesting and management practices, and instruction manuals of fishing technologies. Recognizing the kincentric philosophy and interconnectedness of all living beings, these stories and *kota* are lived expressions of Indigeneity, connecting Indigenous peoples to their territory and creating

holistic ties defining who they are. As a pedagogical tool, *kota* collaborate with various stories to reinforce teachings on sustainable harvesting and management practices, shape the codes of ethics discouraging disrespectful and wasteful treatment of resources, and foster responsibility and conservation. The analysis also reveals that certain *kota* patterns serve as a form of performance cartography, illustrating landmarks within an ancestral territory and locating sacred resource sites. Accompanying stories contribute to the imagery of the map-making in the form of string by situating geographical names on the string formation and the repetition of specific names.

As the final chapter concludes, the revitalization of Indigenous stories and the performance art of *kota* and storied knowledge may serve as acts of restoring relationships with the land and fostering Indigenous resurgence in the form of re-engagement with traditional lifeways and ways of knowing. This process weaves together elements of resurgence, resilience, and reconnection with the holistic concept of the land to disrupt the mechanism of settler colonialism, re-indigenize Western academia, and foreground the importance of reclaiming Indigeneity in Eastern/Central European minority Slavic cultures, with a focus on re-indigenizing Upper Silesia functioning within a larger dominant narrative. By highlighting the voices, perspectives, and worldviews of Indigenous Elders, scholars, and critics, this research contributes to the on-going discourse on the decolonization of mainstream colonial perspectives and geopolitics of knowledge.