

it. They all require the call to

a voice to call us to the circle,
dancing and to bring us close
a hope: that our voices rising
me before us, as well as those
ful of this moment, "The fire
es. We are still here. Dancing
ing witness to all our dreams
still here."

TOWARD A NATIONAL LITERATURE "A Body of Writing"

Lee Maracle

Apparently, we have a literary tradition. Some refer to oratory as our literature, in some sort of attempt to equalize the two, but that muddies the water and is not necessarily helpful. Literature, according to the *Oxford Canadian Dictionary*, means "A body of writing." If this is so, then most of Europe's English literary tradition is primarily ships' logs, transfers of payment, debt records, accounts payable or receivable, trade transactions, and all the mercantilist, tribute reconciliations, along with the legal and public policy and bureaucratic writings, that travel with establishing and maintaining an imperial world. Along with that goes the modern print media, which today includes advertising, junk mail, film scripts of all sorts, popular magazines and books, political platforms, debt reduction schemes, followed by the fastest growing body of writing in North America—pornography. But most of the world of academia and much of the public does not share the same definition of literature with the *Oxford Canadian Dictionary*. Well-crafted novels, poetry, short stories, plays, etc. are generally what come to mind when the word literature is used. Such writing actually makes up a tiny part of the vast bodies of writing in this society, so I wonder about the necessity for the door-closing practice currently known as literary criticism.

If the dictionary definition is used, then our literary tradition is the converse of imperialism. It largely consists of band council resolutions, which are still sent to the mother country for approval, program descriptions, grant applications, and the reports required to substantiate the receipt, use, and continuation of grants, transfer payments, and so forth. The combined foregoing forms the bulk of the tonnage of paper consumed in the short writing history of Indigenous people in North America. I am sure that many readers of this collection are not concerned with the above as literature, except to insist that we rise above it.

In the northern section of North America, we have an oral story or performance art and poetic tradition that precedes our literary tradition,

some of which is comprised of what we actually think about when we hear the word literature: story, poetry, and drama. While First Nations oratory, oral story, poetry, and drama are thousands of years old, our literary tradition is very new. There is among the Cherokee some writing from the nineteenth century onward (see Klausner), some of which has become recognized as the foundation of our Native literary tradition. In Canada, E. Pauline Johnson is recognized by many First Nations writers as the mother of Indigenous literature north of the 49th parallel. Following her came the published works of Mourning Dove and D'Arcy McNickle, both authors with Salish relatives on either side of the 49th parallel.

The advent of residential schools created a dearth of any sort of literacy by and from Indigenous people in Canada, though there were novels written about us during the era of residential schools from non-Native award-winning writers. These included Aboriginal characters penned about us who bear no resemblance to who we are and who we will always be, or to our journey through this long dance of colonialism. In 1892, E. Pauline Johnson wrote a critique of the treatment of First Nations women in her article "A Strong Race Opinion: the Indian Girl in Modern Fiction," in which she protested the obvious racism in the novels about First Nations women.

It was not until we began writing ourselves that the treatment of Aboriginals in literature began to change. There was and in some places still is the stereotype of First Nations people having difficulty learning English because many of us were semi-literate or illiterate until very recently. There were very few writers prior to this century. The reasons for this lack of literary production are simple; Canadian residential schools, while they forbade the use of original languages, did not actively teach English or writing or any other academic subject for that matter.

In the past fifty years of Indigenous history, we have experienced a veritable explosion in the literary arts, beginning in the sixties with the publication of poetry in a number of community newspapers, such as *Akwesasne Notes* and *Native Alliance for Red Power (NARP)*; of contemporary oratory of the political and social sort in *The First Citizen*, a private newspaper edited by Floyd Favel; and of organizational publications such as *The Indian Voice* and *B.C. Indian Homemakers Association*. Short stories began appearing in the 1970s in *Tawow*, published by the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs. Following that were autobiographies by Maria Campbell (*Halfbreed*) and Lee Maracle (*Bobbi Lee: Indian Rebel*); and finally two landmark novels marked the beginning of the explosion of fiction writing, Jeannette Armstrong's *Slash* and Beatrice Culleton's *In Search of April Raintree*. The nineties was the decade for playwrights: Tomson Highway founded Native Earth and launched *The Rez Sisters*, Drew Hayden Taylor launched *Baby Blues*, and these two were soon joined by Columpa Bobb's *Dinky*, Ian Ross's *Farewell*, Joseph Dandurand's *No Totem for My Story*, and Marie Humber Clement's *Accidental Women*. It is now impossible to keep up, as the numbers of published authors increases exponentially, verifying that we did not have a problem learning English, we had a problem being included in the education process.

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While we have not been short of the sort of bureaucratic writing, which cripples Aboriginal communities, keeping us locked to government granting, policy shifting, and economic goodwill begging, we have been short of the above sort of literary production. That is beginning to change as new writers, such as Eden Robinson, Richard Van Camp, Cherie Dimaline, Michael Paul-Martin, Kateri Akiwenzie-Damm, Louise Halfe, Marilyn Dumont, Marie Ann Hart Baker, and others burst onto the scene.

We are also short of the sort of writing rooted to our oracy. So few First Nations people understand the connection between the oral process of myth-making from oratory and the function of myth-making from our various national perspectives. We have not had the time, space, or venue to study and apply scholarly research and analysis to the oral cultural foundations that our original societies provide. Universities and research funders are less than willing to provide the dollars necessary to assist us in moving oracy to literacy. This inhibits new authors from creating the concomitant literary products necessary to facilitate the rejuvenation of our original cultural bases. We are not necessarily short of persons committed to the process of literary creation from our original oratorical cultural foundations that will lead us in the direction of liberation, but we are short of the opportunity to study those foundations. Yet our emancipation from our colonial condition and toward some place that will reconnect us to our original historical continuum in the process of modernization is dependent upon the study and reclamation of our original story. The transfer of our original knowledge foundations in writing and the development of fiction from our original story depend on our ability in this century to rectify the above deficiencies.

There is a reason we are short of all of the above. We have been deliberately disconnected from our original bodies of knowledge. This disconnection was orchestrated by the legal, military, and state machinery of the colonizer who aborted the process of knowledge transmission among First Nations knowledge keepers and their children through a variety of means. The very transfer of Indigenous knowledge from the keepers to the citizens of our nations was outlawed in what became known as the potlatch laws, which prohibited cultural practice. Prior to this law, many of the transmitters were murdered in a series of devastating, sometimes accidental and sometimes deliberate, state-created epidemics, alcohol-induced suicide missions, and outright murder. Much of the knowledge was appropriated without documenting the source, and then it was altered to serve the mother country or consigned to museums and archives to which First Nations people had no access until recently. The final disconnection occurred through the removal of the subjects of transmission—the children.

In the course of the exploitation of First Nations territories, our knowledge, medicine, land, and objets d'art were appropriated by anthropologist Franz Boas and others. Knowledge was bowdlerized and transformed in the service of Euro-profit makers. The continuous physical death toll renders effective resistance nearly impossible, which is why I insist on writing the way I do. We must enjoy at least one murder-free decade in order to restore belief in ourselves.

These deliberate attacks by the colonizer are inherent in the process of conquering North America (see Smith). Signified by murder, the physical replacement of Aboriginal people by Euro-settlers, black slaves, and Chinese impressed workers had as its object the cynical task of depleting the original population and narrowing the space occupied by First Nations people, which is what chronic invasion is all about.¹ Northern America's first use (Greenland and the Arctic excluded) was as a dumping ground for pre-industrial Europe's surplus labour. Its second use was as a financial base from which to indulge the mother country's aristocracy. The fur trade's induction of slaves and the building of massive cotton and sugar cane plantations served this end. Although slavery in most of its forms has been eradicated, the use of First Nations land as a dumping ground for surplus humans has not; it has changed its face from a European only to a global dumping ground, but it remains a dumping ground. It is further used as a natural resource plunder zone, and this now includes the oil rich Arctic.

What we have left are cultural skeletons remembered by elders who escaped capture, or the disconnected thin memories of elders who were children when they received their knowledge, some of whom have as yet to find a context for recalling or articulating the knowledge. Some of our knowledge lives on as the notes and translations constructed and documented by priests and anthropologists who viewed our knowledge divorced from the intimacy of interaction from within that knowledge. The transmission of knowledge during the cultural prohibition laws required clandestine organization (i.e., secret societies) and the careful selection of children who would not talk or tell. Knowledge was parcelled out to each child without the child knowing who else was receiving this sort of secret national education. This all had to occur before the child was six, and so the children grew up not having a clue of the value, nature, or substantive praxis of the knowledge they held. Because the children were disconnected from other children who received some of the knowledge, the bodies of knowledge became scattered and separated and nearly useless to the keepers. A narrow sense of what constituted knowledge in the individual keepers was the result. Because the articulation of knowledge associated with understanding and creating story was not recorded by those who chose to document original story, and the translations were simplistic at best, the process of story creation and the theoretical foundations of the function of story are sometimes lost on the keepers. Since there is no location, institution, or systemic process for the ordered aggregation, synthesis, and transmission of First Nations knowledge and none of the systems that once existed for the cultural reproduction of the First Nations as a nation, the keepers have become partial doorways to being, which they have no way of opening except as powerful Traditional Healers or Teachers for hire. Those with traditional knowledge, then, become power brokers, in the sense that they possess bits and pieces of knowledge that everyone wants but few possess. Some of these keepers have entitled themselves the right to call the shots

1 Willie Ermine, "The Space Between Two Knowledge Systems," Indigenous Scholars' Conference, University of Alberta, Edmonton, 9 March 2006; Lee Maracle, "Sharing Space and Time," Stanley Knowles Guest Lecture, University of Guelph, Guelph, ON, 2001.

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on the door to access. All sorts of new rules about knowledge acquisition
 have surfaced, requiring the students to prove their worthiness, which has
 nothing to do with the past forms of transmission.

How Did We Come to Be Disconnected?

Colonization, to be successful, requires the disentanglement, dislocation, and
 cultural, social, and systemic demolition of the structures, the knowledge,
 and the bonds of those being colonized. In North America's case, it required
 the destruction of the original citizens of the colony. To be successful, the
 mother country must dismantle all vestiges of the social power that serves
 the original society and dismiss and dissipate the hold on the colonized of
 any vestiges of knowledge that can neither be expropriated nor bowdlerized
 and that might assist the independent survival of the colonized. This knowl-
 edge, then, must be replaced by the notion that the European aristocracy is
 here by divine right of discovery and the acceptance of the notion that the
 colonizers brought some form of civilization to those who were in the dark
 about humanity, kept out of the loop of culture, knowledge, and humanism
 by a merciless god or pagan deities. False ideas about pre-industrial societ-
 ies as somehow simplistic, primitive, lesser, static, and lacking in dynamics,
 science, medicine, or significant knowledge were and are prerequisites to
 admission into their exclusive club.

All things Indigenous, then, must be rearranged to serve the colonizer.
 The economy is the first arena of rearrangement. Ownership changes hands;
 management of the environment is replaced by the colonizing country's offi-
 cials, policies, needs, and interests. Original plants and animals are slaugh-
 tered and access to the resources to be exploited forms the foundation for
 the delineation of the new borders of the nation. Limits to colonized peo-
 ple's involvement in the superstructure and infrastructure of the colony
 must be established legally and upheld militarily.

Once the Europeans dominated the populations in Canada and the
 United States, First Nations merchants, traders, and businessmen were dis-
 connected from the citadels of European capital production and aggrega-
 tion through prohibition laws of an economic sort. The removal of the
 children and the failure of the state to actively educate them served a colo-
 nial end; both facilitated the continuous land expropriation, relocation,
 and poverty-creating policies and the crippling economic campaigns (e.g.,
 don't buy Indian goods) that continue to hamstring us today. All of which
 facilitated the cultural, economic, and intellectual collapse of Indigenous
 peoples and their social, intellectual, and cultural reproductive and knowl-
 edge transmission systems.

The disconnection of Aboriginal peoples from their original knowledge
 through murder, prohibition, legislation, and mass child removal trans-
 formed and scattered the fragments of First Nations knowledge into clan-
 destine secret societies—and nearly eradicated Indigenous knowledge.

**"We Are about Story and Nothing Else"
(Thomas King, *The Truth About Story*)**

Our oratory (spoken word) covered all areas of knowledge: history, sociology, political science, medical knowledge, aquaculture and horticulture, law, science, as well as stories. Stories, however, are much more fun, seemingly innocuous, less harmful, and much more entertaining than science or medicine. Stories do not indicate the sort of knowledge attached to genius, at least not in quite the way that science and medicine do in Western society, so, to some degree, stories survived the virulence of colonial attack. Western society values science. Because this society is unable to recognize any intelligence among Indigenous societies, it refuses to recognize those aspects of Indigenous society that would force it to value Indigenous people. It is as if the devaluation of all things Indigenous travels along with their colonial hold on our lands. The pattern of colonialism continues to obsessively devalue all things Indigenous.

Although our knowledge was scattered, it was not totally destroyed. There are still First Nations keepers, for instance, who can recite the oratory that shows the range of environmental science held by their nation and the connection between all beings in their specific bioregion. There are those who can deliver the understanding First Nations people had of the interconnectedness of plants, animals, rivers, soil, water, sky, and humans in a way that can be transmogrified and transliterated into a study-able science, not necessarily by the person who holds the information, as often he or she has no idea how to evaluate or transmit this information.

Although, as a mass, we remain largely disconnected from the knowledge base, an organized venue to study this knowledge and a systemic way to gather, synthesize, and transfer this knowledge is vital to our survival. This systematization of knowledge is required before writers can write from within the culture. Unless we write from within the culture and from our original knowledge, we cannot grow culturally, and the current problems of social anomie will continue unabated. Further, the systems of transmission have been destroyed, and the condition that made this knowledge viable no longer exists. We need both the institutional venues and the time to engage in national discourse about our original knowledge and the method of rendering it relevant to the modern world. We need to understand both the separation of oratory as knowledge and its relation to oratory as story. Thomas King's statement, "We are about story and nothing else," tends to be simplistic and opens the door to reducing our cultural past to amusing anecdotal stories.

In the past, our societies contained processes through which scholarly debate around law, politics, environmental science, national management of resources, and story (as well as other knowledges) took place. Those institutions barely exist now. They are, however, being revived through the work of Indigenous women across Canada.² Without full understanding of the above

2 Andrea Smith is currently collaborating, with a number of First Nation women scholars, to create a discourse and witness process for the book, *Indigenous Feminism: Without Apology*.

areas of knowledge: history, sociology, aquaculture and horticulture, law, and so on. These, however, are much more fun, seemingly more entertaining than science or medicine. The knowledge attached to genius, art, and medicine do in Western society, but the influence of colonial attack. Western society is unable to recognize any intellectual or cultural aspects of those who refuse to recognize those aspects of their own value Indigenous people. It is as if they travel along with their colonialism continues to obsessively

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number of First Nation women scholars, to see, *Indigenous Feminism: Without Apology*.

and its praxis, literary criticism of Indigenous story cannot naturally arise out of our full oratorical foundations, nor can we call it Indigenous criticism.

The object of story in Salish societies is to guide transformation and conduct. Thus, we discuss not how good the story is, whether it really is a story or sociology masquerading as a story; rather, the discourse is about whether we see ourselves in the story, and how we make it right with creation. The discourse is about the lessons, the teachings, and the conduct that we must arrive at personally and collectively to make the story work for us and to work with the story. Our discourse centres on the sort of oratory that is largely unacknowledged, such as politics, laws, sociology, and medicine. Western literary criticism fails to make any kind of full, fair, or just sense of Indigenous work because its orientation—its *raison d'être*—is to diminish Indigenous work, to confine writers to canons that narrow the field of participation to those arising from the mother country. Aboriginal thinkers tend to evaluate the story in connection with the national direction and their specific historical continuum, which is a very different sort of discourse. Salish people treasure *Ravensong* as a story that shows who we are and always will be. They study it in a specifically Salish way and come to know Raven as the transformer, not merely as a childlike trickster figure who is sometimes silly and foolish. They need to answer only one question: Is this story connected to our oratorical body of knowledge, our sense of Raven the transformer, and could it happen, even if it didn't? We already know that Raven is a major transformer, not a silly little trickster. He called us into being, stole light that we might see both the shadows and the brightness of our humanity, that we might study shadow land and daylight and reach backward and forward for our humanity.

All understanding, no matter what the subject, is achieved through continuous study and discourse. Europeans study their literature, their folk tales, their archetypes, symbolism, and metaphor on a continuous basis from birth. The grading and awarding of excellence is attached to those literary works that have advanced the original canon and upped the stakes and stature of literature without distancing the canon and without altering the foundations of society. The apple is not intended to fall far from the tree. The nature of story, the defining of story, was usurped by Europeans at the turn of the twentieth century and promulgated globally. Canada, in its arrogance, continues to apply pressure on non-European writers to apply themselves to mastering the canon and to abide by the Euro-traditional story. This insistence helps to maintain Canadian white-settler primacy in defining and re-creating a literary tradition.

Most of the world, including some of us, sees our oratory as a bunch of funny stories told by doddering, old storytellers. Our children are busy studying the story, culture, knowledge, and science of European society in Canada, and little time is allocated to the recovery and study of original knowledge. While some time is allocated to story and storytelling, the sensibility of Indigenous story is simplified and dumbed down to "trickster stories" (children's oratory, kindergarten culture type stories). Limited to this dumbed-down, simplified cultural remnant, young and disconnected

older writers get the feeling that these simple little children's tales comprise all we ever had.

Europeans developed several schools of thought surrounding literary criticism, schools that not only acknowledge systemically the nature of their society but serve to perpetuate the status quo and further the development of the social structures from which they arise. Beginning with Aristotle, on to hermeneutics and structuralism and deconstruction, and now to post-colonial theories (which serve to validate colonialism's existence by including the colonized as primitive adjunct literatures underneath the canon), literary criticism rebuilds both hierarchy and conquest. It does so, first, through its insistence on Euro-colonial teaching and authority over the defining of literature, and, second, by maintaining the exclusivity of Euro-colonial dominion in the reshaping of literary structures and the defining of literature as story through the practice of literary criticism. The only means by which we may attain the sort of credentials First Nations people imagine will give them a better life and somehow lead us to freedom is to ascribe to one or more of the above colonial or post-colonial theories or to create a gate-keeping philosophy of our own, one that appears to come from Indigenous roots but has the function of disqualifying, limiting, and prohibiting entry to those whose stories may or may not be completely tied to Indigenous myth-making principles. The flip side of this commitment is the dominant notion that pre-colonial theories of literary creation cannot arise out of original oratory. Underneath, this notion is tied to the very racist superstition that Indigenous people had no theories until Europe brought "The Enlightenment."

Theorists are comprised of those individuals with a broad and solid foundation in their own society's knowledge, who exercise unique brilliance and apply clear analysis and imagination to the existing base to devise structurally sound hypotheses for the development, advancement, and augmentation of the existing foundation. We have words in our languages for such people, and we have specific processes for conducting such discourse. They do so through a careful and connected study of old and recent literary products that clearly arise out of the original story base. This cannot be done by disconnected individuals who apply themselves to studying another society's knowledge, foundations, history, and its definitions of the production of literary products from those cultural theories and who then use what they have learned in the analysis of the scant remains touted as oratory and modern writing. It cannot be done by those who merely live within the culture either. It can only be done by those who live within the culture *and* who have studied the base, the oldest texts and the newer literary products, and applied the original theoretical principles along with selected learned theories to the texts. This has the capability of leading to the development of criticism, whereas colonial education in and of itself is deficient as First Nations literary criticism.

Today we have many scholars studying First Nations writing and writers, many of them Europeans or European-educated students, armed with colonial definitions and post-colonial theories. These scholars pay little or no attention to the study of the original culture from which the author arises

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and have no idea what the history of disconnection has been. Certainly, they cannot be expected to concern themselves with reconnection with the original oratory. A First Nations graduate of First Nations literature automatically becomes an expert in Salish, Ojibway, Oji-Cree, Iroquoian, and Cherokee writing, without having to know much about the nations and the national story or oratorical tradition of those nations. Few First Nations writers are in a position to take the time to comb through the oratory, story, drama, and poetry in its original form and glean the principles of First Nations story creation from it.

The body of our oratory in its totality and original form, free of the so-called interpretive teachings, is the oldest oratory and constitutes our sacred texts. In order for criticism to arise naturally from within our cultures, discourse must serve the same function that it has always served. In Euro-society, literary criticism heightens the competition between writers and limits entry of new writers to preserve the original canon. What will its function be in our societies? In my society, story creates discourse around healthy communal doubt, which inspires us to face ourselves, to grow and transform ourselves through the augmentation of the house (a metaphor for clan knowledge) by adding rafters to the house, and it calls us to create myth from the new and transformed being. The process of gathering together to find what is new and being born, to learn as an ensemble, to discover as a group is the appropriate process for Salish people to examine story. The purpose for examining old story is first to understand it; second, to see oneself in the story; and then to see the nation, the community, and our common humanity through the story and to assess its value to continued growth and transformation of the community and the nation.

From this discourse, we then create a whole new series of transformation myths based on the old story set in the modern or contemporary context. The new stories are transformation myths designed to get us to alter our direction or behaviour, clear old obstacles, and point us all in the direction of the good life. It is the responsibility of every Sto:lo to enter the world, to go out and create new stories so that we don't return to our ancestors boring. In one of our creation myths, we come here to create new story, to gain some sort of awareness of the impact of behaviour on hidden being (mind, spirit, and heart), so we can return to the world of hidden being and teach about consequences.

The deployment of the historic and the continued use of original processes become part of the responsibility of the myth-maker. The original processes of myth creation required that the myth-maker use the original processes and spring from original story in the interest of the nation. The nation becomes the recognition body and is the basis for interaction with the myth-maker, which can invoke the processes for story creation from within the culture. The nation is the ultimate judge of the success or failure of the student or author in the mastery of text and story. In Salish Raven stories, transformation is not only at the centre of our oratorical story tradition; it is the objective of life itself. Salish people were once referred to as natural poets (E. Pauline Johnson, *Tales of Vancouver*), natural sociologists, and great rememberers. We are still, by and large, an oratorical society,

and I do not consider this a backward thing, nor do I believe that my stories are illegitimate little bastards because they follow the responsibilities, principles, and objectives of oratory and oral myth-making from a Stoic perspective.

Decolonization is a global phenomenon. In its simplicity, the process of decolonization has been marked by violent wars of revolution in which the original people living within the boundaries of the colony struggle to remove the colonial authority. New nations are established from within the new boundaries. The boundaries of these nations remain suspect and dubious, as they were drawn in the "mother" countries of nineteenth-century Europe without consideration of the original Indigenous boundaries. In order to free the nation, the colonized must engage the colonizer in some sort of unified way from within these externally imposed boundaries, despite the destroyed original territoriality and connection. After having engaged one or another of the colonizing countries in wars in which each is an enemy that kills the sons of the other, one or the other relinquishes participation in the war. Very often it is the colonizing country that seeks peace, as the cost of killing eventually outstrips the reward of winning. The colony then disconnects from the colonizer. This disconnection has occurred in many previously colonized countries on the continents of Asia, Africa, and South America with very mixed results.

Grinding poverty and dependence build inside the colonized, cumulatively, the longer colonialism lasts. In the first leg of decolonization, the process of cultural reclamation by intellectuals born of the people and the disciplined study of original oral history and story paves the way for the creation of a new body of writers. Alongside of this, a growing social and political activism and economic struggle directed at independence must occur. Reclaiming knowledge must become recognized as legitimate courses of study. Unfortunately, those who struggle for the above are educated in the colonizing country's culture and knowledge and often are tied to its economy for their livelihood. The results are often tainted with dual loyalties and accompanied by suspect simplicities and narrowed points of view by the educated Native elite.

The cumulative result of poverty coupled with the political and economic distortion of the colony in the service of the colonizing country is bound to be disastrous. Withdrawal of capital and cessation of transfer payments exacerbated by the shutdown of old imperial extractive enterprises and the loss of profits from the former colonial trading partners cripple the newly liberated former colony beyond imagination. The other imperialist countries' loss of faith in the new society prevents economic interaction, which aggravates the already crippled condition. Freedom from the yoke of colonial oppression produces a new kind of stasis. The previously colonized become international hostages to the entire bloc of former empire-building countries. The newly liberated must then behave in the way the colonizing countries need them to behave or endure an entire litany of punitive consequences. The "mother" country, which gleaned enormous profits from the colony continuously over hundreds of years, is now in a better position to extract greater wealth without having to set aside small amounts

nor do I believe that my story follow the responsibilities, all myth-making from a Sto:lo

In its simplicity, the process of wars of revolution in which the colonies of the colony struggle to be established from within the nations remain suspect and dubious countries of nineteenth-century colonial Indigenous boundaries. In the process, the colonizer in some ways internally imposed boundaries, and connection. After having been in wars in which each one or the other relinquishes the colonizing country that seeks the reward of winning. The disconnection has occurred on the continents of Asia, Africa,

Inside the colonized, cumulative leg of decolonization, the people and the story paves the way for the social and directed at independence must be recognized as legitimate courses for the above are educated in and often are tied to its often tainted with dual loyal and narrowed points of view

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to be transferred to the various governors of the colonies for policing, administration, and, at times, settler health and education. The loss of these transfer payments generally leads to communication and transportation breakdowns, radio shutdowns, newspaper closures, and school and clinic closures, and the roads, buildings, and other infrastructures fall into disrepair. (For example, within a year of Mozambique's liberation, there could not be found a single functioning toilet or factory.) What quickly becomes evident to the newly independent country is the depth, breadth, and extent of the rape of the country, intellectually, culturally, and physically.

The Euro-educated elites invariably reconnect to the former colonizer economically and politically, as a means to "rescue" their people from the horror of poverty that always follows within a few months or years. This reconnection comes in the form of coercive aid and loans, from which the nation will never be able to extract itself. Africa, Asia, and Latin America have been reduced to inclusion in the global economy at the lowest possible level, and the proletarianization of their populations as a continuous source of cheap labour has been the result. In Canada, where tourism has been touted as the solution to economic development for First Nations communities, economic development has been marked by significantly lower wages than in the Canadian sectors for exactly the same work. For example, carpenters in Indian country are paid ten dollars an hour, half of Canadian union rates. In Africa, colonization began as the disenfranchisement of Africans as humans and their transformation into commodities to be bought and sold on the global market. Although slavery has ended, the extraction of wealth continues unabated. The structural reorganization of the colonies was a *fait accompli*. Today, Africa exists on the brink of total annihilation. In the Americas, the exploitation of the fruit of the land, the murder of the four-legged and two-legged and plant species led to the alteration of the very landscape of the Americas, and global warming threatens all. The destruction of food and food production, distribution, and consumption rendered recovery of First Nations next to impossible. There is not a single place in the Americas that has not been included in this destruction. The export of surplus labour and the chronic shifting of Indigenous populations to suit imperialism are signature features of capitalism and colonization in Canada and the United States today, just as economic boom (investment of capital) and bust (withdrawal of capital) mark the economic nature of capitalism. This shifting, this dislocation of whole populations guarantees the survival of the capitalist/imperialist economic infrastructure. The newcomers inherited land grant privileges and economic advantages over the recently disempowered Aboriginal populations.

The appropriated Aboriginal lands of Canada and the United States and, to a lesser degree, South America, Australia, New Zealand, the Southern African cone, and Israel have been the receivers of the shifting of surplus populations from Europe. After the slave trade was outlawed in the nineteenth century, Africans were prohibited from exporting their surplus populations, and the export of Asians was carefully controlled by the colonial authorities in such a way that surplus Europeans loyal to capitalism were the only people entitled to export their surplus labour.

The revolutions in Africa and Asia only served to include their populations in the shifts from colony to the settler nations of, for example, the United States, Canada, and Australia, in recent times. While I am not advocating the exclusion of Africans or Asians in the process of immigration, I am arguing that continuous immigration to Canada and the United States is a phenomenon that recreates land appropriation chronically and renders impotent the continuously depopulated and disenfranchised Aboriginal populations' struggle for nationhood and threatens eventual access to whatever fragmented and inadequate land bases still exist free of settlement in the aforementioned countries.

On the one hand, this continuous export of surplus labour has strengthened capitalism in those areas where Europeans dominate the population in general. On the other hand, in the colonies, the recent export from former colonies has led to a brain drain and the constant depopulation of former colonies, which, under the current circumstances, cannot effectively rebuild their nations because their intellectuals are constantly skimmed and exported.

In the process of capitalist/imperial augmentation, the citizens of the imperial centres fought and won certain privileges hitherto only accorded to the aristocracy: literacy and education, cultural reproduction rights, and human rights are all part of the gains made by Euro-settler workers and their educated citizens. These privileges depend on the continuance of imperialism and capitalism as a global social-economic order, which serves, first, the upper classes and, second, the people of Europe and their descendants at the expense of the colonized. Although we are witnessing the corrosion of these privileges in the name of national security, the head start and the attitude this condition of privilege inspires remain tenacious. Even while imperialism implodes and can barely afford its own citizens, the re-establishment of economic rape privileges in all its former colonies is being fought for militarily, and the population doesn't seem to mind.

What Does All This Have to Do with Literature?

National (anti-colonial) movements for liberation have consistently been led by urban Euro-educated elites who have adopted one Euro-system or another as the structural framework for governance and economic development; the popular choices are limited to bourgeois democracy, Hitler-style military dictatorship, or dogmatic, Euro-defined socialism or communism. Reclaiming original knowledge, reconstructing original systems, and rebuilding the national economy from original bases and exacting war reparations from the former colonizer country have not been put on the agenda except by Aboriginal writers and even then only in small fits and starts. Our options continue to be to study dead white people, become competent, get a PhD, and borrow a better structure, better knowledge, and better framework from Europeans than the framework we last used.

I have a deep and abiding respect for PhD scholars. I am not advocating abandoning such scholarly pursuits, but nationalists need to be clear—much of what they will learn by studying Europeans is about Euro-culture,

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Euro-systems, analyses, philosophies, structures, and so forth, and, when we finish school, if we are to begin the arduous task of nation building from a literary standpoint, we will, upon completion of our doctorates, be compelled to begin the arduous task of studying the skeleton of oratorical knowledge still functioning in our nations and replace or re-examine the Euro-knowledge (which we fought so hard to garner) through the newly acquired old filters of original knowledge that colonialism disconnected us from in the first place.

Some First Nations scholars have spent the past years studying oratory or orality, our original systems and land masses, and national and inter-national relations that existed prior to colonization. There is a great deal of new work being written on the subject, some of which, however, is suspect in that the foundations tend to be skewed by the narrowing of being established by their colonial heritage. In Thomas King's landmark work *The Truth About Story*, he states that "We are all about story and nothing else." I confess I know very little about Cherokee knowledge, either piecemeal or systemically. I do know this, that when I was sick or about to give birth, I wished to get well or deliver a healthy baby. As such, I did not search for the best storyteller in my nation; I searched for the best medical personnel: a herbologist, body mechanic, diagnostician, therapist, or midwife, as the case required. As a gardener, a fisherwoman, a shellfish cultivator, I know that we have oral knowledge about the science of agriculture or aquaculture directed at the production of all the above. The oral knowledge is called Indigenous science in English, and story has nearly nothing to do with it. Stories arise out of social engagement or praxis.

What is absent from the above statement is the recognition that we came to the table full banquet, that we had bodies of knowledge, that each and every one of us was familiar, in varying degrees, with those bodies of knowledge, and that there were positions of competence measured through very definite governing processes for acknowledging, measuring, and recognizing experts in the various fields of knowledge. Further, schools of thought were attached to the specific bodies of knowledge, and these bodies formed a larger and much more important part of our oratory. I am familiar with the concepts that guide the various knowledge systems used in my novels. I am familiar with a great deal of our medical knowledge, our psychological knowledge, our mediation systems, our governance knowledge, and how we see the business of social transformation. I am somewhat familiar with our trade, environmental, midwifery, and management knowledge, though I often need to consult other Sto:lo experts in the writing of my novels.

I am aware that stories transfer the essence of the required discipline to guide our conduct as a result of the knowledge we have acquired over time in our very long history here, but they do not necessarily embody or reflect the knowledge itself. Knowledge is a separate oratorical framework and requires a separate process of study. I contend, however, that our oratory as knowledge is more significant and worthy of study and reclamation than is European literature, both for us and the world. More than that, I am aware that the oral transference and development processes of coming to understand our environment, coming to reconcile ourselves to our sur-

vival in the least obtrusive and invasive manner in relation to that environment is an oral scientific principle that was discovered through centuries of interaction, observation, discourse, and synthesis among some very brilliant thinkers, some of whom are my ancestors. Reclaiming our national bodies of knowledge is a precondition for the development of a national literary criticism. We need to appreciate the full scope of oratory and its function in our contemporary world, or we will be in danger of participating in the very colonial practice of reducing Aboriginal culture to simplistic, narrowed wedges of being.

On to the Development of Sto:lo Literature

For the Sto:lo, art and way of life are one and the same. The creation and re-creation of literary culture is a function of education. Education is the system by which a nation develops and transfers knowledge. The study of literature is the business of examining story and poetry and drama in the above context. The creation of literature for me, then, is a result of the study of original oratory and its connection to original story and its re-imagining by the individual in the context she or he inherits and the painting of character and story under an individual or family's unique circumstances, which reflect the social condition (colonialism) and story up the necessary changes in conduct and relationship that the new context requires. This is the business of story for the Sto:lo, but we must be clear that story is the end run of the process of oratorical study of original oratory in the context of colonialism. In the Sto:lo tradition, the original knowledge exists independent of story and story co-exists with the original knowledge.

The storyline is kept by individuals assigned to carry the story. The business of story creation by Sto:lo nationalists requires that the myth-makers engage in discourse with the intellectuals of the nation whom they recognize as understanding the context we inherit. The myth-makers, with the aid of the keepers of story, decide which of the stories is most likely required to guide our conduct, and then they must create the new myth from the old independently of the keepers with whom they consulted. If the storier is a woman, the focus is a Ravenesque social transformation story, as women are responsible for the social relations within the nation. Sto:lo story, poetry, and song express people's spiritual connections to the earth; they embrace the human journey from the past to the present and strive to prepare us for the future in a way that keeps the nation connected to the earth and all living beings without dictating direction or personal conduct.

Art is a reflection of Sto:lo national and social being, expressed as an imagined state of human collaboration with the world. The destruction of our economy; the systems of aggregation of wealth; and the limits to the aggregation of wealth and its distribution, ownership, and access deleted the necessity to retell some of our stories. The murder of whale, moose, deer, seal, dolphin, fish, and much of our plant life, along with the concomitant destruction of the means of reproducing and tilling our gardens, deleted the necessity to tell the stories and orate the environmental regula-

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tions governing the above praxis. Scientific understanding of the environ-
 ment, agriculture, and aquacultural practices atrophied. The ceremonies
 that surrounded the reproduction, accumulation, and cultivation of food
 and wealth have suffered tremendous blows as well. The elimination of
 entire forests, grasslands, and gardens has eliminated the necessity of trans-
 ferring the knowledge attached to the management of those forests, the till-
 ing of the gardens, the maintenance of the grasslands in perpetuity, but the
 stories and the concepts stubbornly cling to our imaginations.

Whole systems of engagement, of relationship, of agreement of knowl-
 edge and the stories that went with them are endangered and need to be
 revived and studied. The knowledge foundation of production, reproduc-
 tion, relationship, engagement, and environmental management is oratory,
 but not story. To pretend that we were docile forest creatures who sat about
 telling stories without ever acquiring any sort of scientific appraisal of our
 world is just plain ludicrous. The foundations of knowledge are concep-
 tual, transferable bodies of information, understandings and theories of
 development that the myth-makers can then use to create the story nec-
 essary to reshape human conduct to accommodate the new condition or
 understanding.

The elimination of the necessity of transferring original knowledge
 diminishes the nation's capacity for the creation and re-creation of life,
 liberty, economy, political communion, and social interaction between the
 peoples, whose transfer systems then wither and die for lack of context.
 This narrows the frame in which myth-makers create story. It also narrows
 the sense of which stories need telling. It narrows the rememberers' sense
 of significant story, and it narrows the field of study for those who would
 become national myth-makers—those who seek to create fiction. It further
 narrows the field for those who choose to become critics of the myth-mak-
 ers, but it does not eliminate our responsibility for its re-creation.

While the murder of the population reduced our nation's capacity for
 knowledge reproduction in the past, our limited ability to look inward and
 face ourselves; our unwillingness to research and restore our knowledge
 in its fullest, broadest, and most complete sense; and our hesitancy in re-
 examining our original systems of knowledge transfer and in collaborating
 globally with other Indigenous people are seriously hampering us in the
 present. As long as the foregoing is the condition that drives or hampers us,
 some of us will slavishly capitulate to the canon to relieve ourselves from
 being not just hampered but paralyzed. However, those of us who capitu-
 late, even partially, become caricatures of our former selves, shrinking our
 own possibility of growth and transformation, which is the foundation of
 Sto:lo individual and social being.

We are operating from a diminished capacity to imagine a future not
 because we are not capable of brilliance but because the knowledge we
 were to inherit was seriously diminished, is scattered, or has been altered
 as a result of appropriation and Christian bowdlerization and patrifica-
 tion, and so we gaze continuously at colonization, its encumbrances, engage
 in criticism around it, in the hope that somehow the means by which to
 decolonize from ourselves to ourselves will show itself to us—or worse, we

hope that the colonizer will see the error of his ways and pave the road to decolonization with some magic program.

The angle from which we gaze is not from within our original knowledge and systems of study but rather from the angle of the colonized standing just beneath the colonizer, and the vision produces not much more than his posterior. This terrible habit comes from believing that colonization is a *fait accompli*, and so it must have some validity. We are unable to finish the sentence. We might say brilliant things, but then we retreat from exploring the brilliance. A simple example: there is power in naming; this is a tenet of Sto:lo sense of being in relation to social power. Because we are anti-slavist, having ended our slaving past, this tenet requires that we engage one another in studying subjects we seek to name, engage each other personally and collectively prior to naming, as the name should reflect Sto:lo respect for independent being and also the manner in which the being chooses to relate to the Sto:lo. Our future connection to its being is based not on our desire to appropriate or exploit but rather on its continuance as an independent and thriving being. Its name must reflect all of the above. In Taiaiake Alfred's great work *Wasáse: Indian Pathways of Action and Freedom*, he speaks of the settler renaming everything from the position of *fait accompli* rather than from the position of the Indigenous nation that still has the capacity to name; because of this, the systems of original knowledge around naming, and the development and transference by the Iroquois people, are never discussed in *Wasáse*. After complaining, he fails to hear the significance of what he has written and to finish the sentence with how his society names things.

The term oral tradition is a diminished term. We feel obligated to use it when speaking English to refer to the various bodies of knowledge once maintained in Aboriginal societies. What exactly does it say? That traditionally we spoke. Intellectual heritage, literature, and theoretical frameworks are all terms used to defer to Euro-knowledge, while the limited nonsensical term that denotes nothing but speaking is used by us to refer to our bodies of knowledge transferred through complex oral processes. The term does not imply a systemic means to embrace complex systems of knowledge and their development in the same way that European terms do. The term oral tradition does not spark images of systemic being, organized transference, serious study, and measurement of competence; rather, it creates a diminished image of elders telling stories, endlessly chatting with one another, an image that minimizes the importance of these carriers of knowledge. The reality of a process of educating and reproducing and transferring organized bodies of knowledge through a complex system of designated rememberers is thus seriously negated. Our original economic, political, and national knowledge to promote our well-being, our very existence as independent peoples, is savaged and erased. The oral tradition as a reduced form of spoken word has come to denote anything that is said, in simple broken English, even in the eyes of some of the nations from which the oracy arises. Story is not all we are.

In its reduced state, literary creators advocate for orality—not as a systemic mode of study and dynamic being, not as a means of collaboratively

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creating and re-creating knowledge of science, medicine, politics, literature, and art, but rather as a diminished storytelling style of writing (Wickwire). Hence, when Arnold Krupat and others exclude fiction as oracy or hint that the literature of Maracle is not conversivity (Brill de Ramirez) or authentic Indigenous writing, two things are accomplished: one is the reduction of oracy to some form of broken English style poetics as advanced by Wickwire and others, and the second is the recolonization of who we are as Aboriginal people.

When an Aboriginal person says that the imposition of labels and definitions of identity on Indigenous people has been a central feature of the colonization process from the start, it is a complaint coming from the position of *fait accompli* colonization and victimization, not from the place of authorship of our history, our story, our knowledge, and our being. It is not what First Nations people need to know. That we are colonized is clear to anyone with two brain cells clanging about in the head. We need to know who we are, who we were, who we always will be and study the knowledge derived by our ancestors so that we may create the foundation and, from that foundation, a national literature.

More than critique what they did to us, I want to know how we developed story, science, governance, sociology, psychology, health, and well-being, how we transferred that knowledge so that we can re-create our nations in the way we always re-created our cultures and systems. I prefer to speak from within the nation from which I arise and choose not to gaze at the colonizer. I seek to engage Coast Salish people in some form of national/spiritual/cultural revival and renewal through story. The place from which we look at the world determines, in part, the result. I am not standing on some bridge hoping to legitimize Canada and experience a share of whatever leftovers Canada has to offer the Sto:lo nation. I am looking to spring imperialism into the air and rebuild the Coast Salish nation of which the Sto:lo are a part. I seek to supplant the colonial laws and systems with Salish laws and systems of physical, cultural, and national reproduction of being.

When the Sto:lo name things it is from the position of collaboration and future engagement with the subject being named. Thus, Snauq becomes our gardens as a result of several generations of scientific, social, spiritual, and storied engagement with the beings who were part of the garden and who, as a result of our having studied them and engaged in an agreement of continuous growth and development with them, sustained us. The beings in the garden became part of our nation with the same rights, privileges, and obligations as the human Sto:los.

When Europe names things, it does so from the position of conquest, hence the use of the now nearly dead Roman conquerors' language, Latin. The colonizers' propensity to rename things is the least of our worries. What I want to know is how it is that the Iroquois, Cree, and others name things, and what their relationship to other people on this Island is. What are their laws governing relationship, oratory, story creation, and being? Where do our stories intersect and commune?

The Sto:lo nation was once the home of the biggest trees on earth; it is now a wasteland of clear-cut, urban concrete and European style farms,

which grow inferior forms of hybridized and Euro-food stripped of nutritional value. The rivers of the Sto:lo once teemed with salmon. The salmon have been committing suicide for some 10 years now as their numbers dwindle to next to nothing. Clam beds, oyster, sea asparagus, cabbage, dozens of riparian sea vegetables, mushroom and asparagus beds, camas fields, berry fields, and hundreds of original medicinal plants have been destroyed and supplanted by hybridized vegetation that was not hybridized to increase nutritive value but to heighten production or sweetness. I am a Sto:lo. I still have contractual agreements with the salmon, the camas, the trees, the sea vegetables, the berries, the Squamish, Lushootseed, Hunqumnum, Halkomeylem, and Hul'qumi'num people. No matter where I am on this Island, I am called upon to uphold those agreements. I am a Sto:lo. We still have political relations and agreements with the Salish people of the Okanagon, Swepmc, Naulaqualmucw, and Tsil'cotin territories. In that spirit, we now have new agreements with other First Nations. As a Sto:lo myth-maker, I am required to engage Salish peoples and their nation's relations in spirit-to-spirit relations and reproduce myths from original knowledge in the context I inherit to find freedom in this context and to transform the journey into the future, into stories of conduct that will uphold that knowledge. This is a sociological, political, economic, medicinal, and psychological responsibility, and it travels with myth-making.

Our stories belong in and to our future. I am required to engage in the process of the creation of oracy as literacy and, at the same time, maintain the story structure of our longhouses no matter where I am. I do so by studying the structure of our oracy in the way we have always studied: collectively and personally from the vantage point of Sto:lo philosophy and oracy. The original agreements between the Sto:lo and the Salish world, between the Salish world and other beings of this Island still govern my actions and the creation of my literary products. The system by which we arrive at story still exists as a theoretical framework, and there are people who engage this framework. The story we are studying today is the story of imperialism, its coming into being and its going out of being from the place of Salish independent being. Over two hundred years before the Europeans appeared on the west coast we abrogated slavery. The abrogation of slavery required discourse and imagined story creation. I am compelled as a Sto:lo to participate in the continued realization of this story. I am not a writer who happens to be Indian but rather a Sto:lo cultural producer.

I was given a fierce mask and a soft mask, a fish weir and a war club. I inherit story, knowledge, and governance and am governed by my inheritance. As a member of an ex-slave-owning society, I am required to engage the world in a reproductive and mutually beneficial manner. I am expected to re-create story in the way that my ancestors did through the study of old story, through the structural, mythical, and artful creation and reproduction of original story, different, but the same.

Everything I write, every word I commit to the page is guided by the restoration of Sto:lo/Coast Salish nationhood and being. Coast Salish people are bound to the colonized everywhere in the world by circumstance, system, and exigency. Hence my literary capacity must add new rafters to our

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