

Local Wisdom and Educational Values In the Kayan Oral Epic *Takna' Lawe'*

Albert Rufinus
Zahir bin Ahmad
Yaacob Harun¹

Abstract

The *Takna' Lawe'* is a set of long epic poems (7057 verses as published, over 45,000 lines) about love and heroism, part of the mythology of the *Kayan* community. The *Takna' Lawe'* embodies local values whose meaning and function can be absorbed through educational practices. The poems could provide advantageous learning materials for school-based or local curricula. In the epic, there are rich signs or symbols, verbal and nonverbal, that are worth exploring for such purposes. For example, the main character, *Lawe'*, is a hero who often fights for love of his community, showing his loyalty by protecting his people, and his strength by his success in destroying his enemies. This paper discusses the relationship between representative signs or symbols in the poem and the forms of wisdom worth practising in the community, in school settings and in family life. I analyse this relationship through description and analysis based on Peirce's triadic modes in semiotics, the triad being sign-object-meaning: ideas in words, sentences, and verses of the poem are viewed as signs (*representamen*), which stand for their referents (*object*), as referents stand for meanings (*interpretant*). I conclude that such meanings are local community (ethnic) wisdom which can be interpreted as useful values: educational values.

Key words: *Takna' Lawe'*, *Lawe'*, oral literature, epic poetry, Peirce's triadic modes, local educational wisdom, values, school-based curriculum.

¹ Albert Rufinus, Doctor of Philosophy in traditional literature, is now teaching and director of School of Teachers and Education (*STKIP*) in Ngabang Landak Regency of West Kalimantan.

Zahir bin Ahmad is an Associate Professor in Traditional Literature Malay Studies of University of Malaya.

Yaacob Harun is a Professor in Anthropology Malay Studies of University of Malaya.

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1. Introduction

Heroism represents the ideal of citizens transforming civic virtue into the highest form of civic action, accepting either physical peril or social sacrifice (Franco, Blau, and Zimbardo, 2011). Campbell (1968) states that a hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won; the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man.

Lawe' is the hero of the *Takna' Lawe'* in Kayan oral literature. The published text in five volumes, edited and translated into Indonesian as *Syair Lawe'* by Pastor A. J. Ding Ngo, SMM, comes from the Kayan community in the Mendalam in the Kapuas Hulu of West Kalimantan, Indonesia, but the same stories exist among other Kayan communities, including those in Sarawak, where these epic tales are called Belawan (Balawaan, another name for their hero Lawe'). In this long epic poem, Lawe' symbolizes heroism in at least three ways: he is a strong and handsome man, a brave warrior, and at the same time a spirit. Lawe' means human, warrior, and spirit. Through his heroic figure and character Lawe' embodies rich and valuable traditional meanings, in that the poem provides so many symbols of local wisdom concerning Kayan ethnic identity, as shown in ethno-astronomy or ecology, traditional art, architecture, healing, and agriculture. In their beliefs about the origins of the world (cosmos) and their way of life, people of this community live in a system of customary law (*adat*) that directs them in their customs or beliefs system of life and work: through birth, growing age, and death; in land use and land management (the farming cycle from land choosing, clearing, harvesting, to the harvest festival), always in a close relationship with their environment.

For the purpose of utilization, empowerment, and development, there must be activities within the community to help young people acquire and appreciate these local wisdoms and cultural identities. In the modern world, educational programmes and curricular design in local Kayan schools can help the community, school-age young Kayans especially, learn knowledge and skills.

This paper discusses some meaningful signs in the *Takna' Lawe'* and the ethnic symbols of the epic poem specifically in regard to educational wisdoms and values representing Kayan local identities with reference to their particular customs and characteristics. The symbols should contain educational messages, and for sustainable purposes they should also be appropriate parts of educational settings at school. In approaching such signs, semiotic concepts developed by Charles Sanders Peirce are useful and will be first discussed.

2. Charles Sanders Peirce's Semiotics and the Takna' Lawe'

2.1 Peirce's Theory of Signs

From the mid-19th century to the early 20th century, Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914), an American philosopher, developed the analysis of sign theory which is known as semiotics theory. Semiotics means general signs dealing with systems of symbols in human life, relating signs to human psychology. Sanders Peirce's ideas have been the centre of interest, further developed by his fellow scholars in semiotics, among which are Umberto Eco, Roland Barthes, Jonathan Culler, Charles Morris, Micheal Rifatarre, Jurij Lotman, and Jacques Derrida.

In one of his many definitions of a sign, Peirce writes: "I define a sign as anything which is so determined by something else, called its Object, and so determines an effect upon a person, which effect I call its interpretant, that the later is thereby mediately determined by the former. "

The description of signs basically refers to the objects they represent, on which the experiences the objects undergo are based. This situation is in relation to the model of sign Charles Sanders Peirce has proposed, as quoted by Daniel Chandler (2002:32). Peirce offers a triadic model, in three parts: (1) the *representamen*, or form taken from the sign itself (not necessarily the material form); (2) the *interpretant*, which is not the interpreter but the sense made by the sign itself; and (3) the *object*: something referred to by the sign itself.

Peirce's Theory of Signs (2006, 2010) states that signs consist of three interrelated parts: a *sign*, an *object*, and an *interpretant*. For the sake of simplicity, we can think of the *sign* as the signifier, for example, a written word, an utterance, smoke as a sign for fire etc. The *object*, on the other hand, is best thought of as whatever is signified, for example, the object to which the written or uttered word attaches, or the fire signified by the smoke. The *interpretant*, the most innovative and distinctive feature of Peirce's account, is best thought of as the understanding that we have of the *sign-object* relation. The importance of the *interpretant* for Peirce is that signification is not a simple dyadic relationship between *sign* and *object*: a sign signifies only in being interpreted. This makes the *interpretant* central to the content of the sign; the meaning of a

sign is manifested in the interpretation that it generates in sign users. More technically, Peirce affirms that the means of communication can be described by a triangle which frames the three relations as in the following Figure 1 (Daniel Chandler, 2002:34).

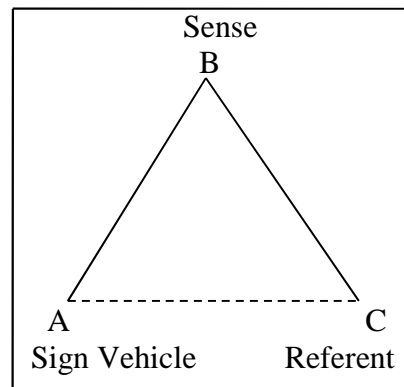


Figure 1: A Semiotic Triangle

Figure 1 above is one version of the process of sign interaction dimension between three components of relationship of A (*sign vehicle*), B (*sense*), dan C (*referent*). According to Chandler (2002:241), *sign vehicle* is a term sometimes used to refer to the physical or material form of the sign (e. g. words, images, sounds, acts or objects). The Peircean equivalent is the *representamen*: the form which the sign takes. The *sense* is the thought or the interpretation for the meaning the sign vehicle is referring to. While *referent* is object, the referent of the sign or what the sign 'stands for'. The broken line at the base of the triangle is intended to indicate that there is not necessarily any observable or direct relationship between the sign vehicle and the referent. The referent for which the sign vehicle stands is crucial to direct the sense in mind more contextually: sense of topic, or process, or a pragmatic context, for example. As an instance, in the word "mother", *sign vehicle*, the direct *sense* is a female, a female parent, with the context or *referent* is a person who is full of love, care, warmth, nurturance, etc.

To refer to the interactional relationship between *representamen*, *object*, and *interpretant* according to Peirce is called 'semiosis'. For example, Peirce gives a model of a sign function in traffic lights (the *object*), i.e. the red light as the *sign* of "stop" for the vehicles at the crossroad (the *representamen*); the vehicles stop, and the idea stated is that a red light indicates the vehicles must stop (the *interpretant*). In the triadic related semiotic process, Peirce (as noted in Everaert-Desmedt, 2011:6-7), finds three other categories in the respective model of *representamen*, *object*, and *interpretant*, which he calls the trichotomy of firstness, secondness, and thirdness. Peirce goes on to say that: "The *representamen* can be (1) a *qualisign* (firstness), meaning a quality that functions like a sign; (2) a *sinisign* (secondness), meaning a specific spatio-temporal thing or event that functions like a sign; or (3) a *legisign* (thirdness), meaning a conventional sign. A *representamen* can refer to its *object* by virtue of firstness, secondness or thirdness, that is, through relationships of similarity, contextual contiguity or law. Following this trichotomy, the sign is called (1) an *icon*, (2) an *index* or (3) a *symbol*, respectively. In the sign trichotomy of

the *interpretant*, the sign is called (1) a *rheme* (firstness), (2) a *dicisign* or *dicent sign* (secondness) or (3) an *argument* or reasoning (thirdness).

Peircean triadic sign concepts of firstness, secondness, and thirdness are described more technically in Table 1 below.

Table1. Relationships of Sign, Object, and Sense

| Trichotomy Category | Sign (<i>representamen</i>) | Object (<i>Object</i>) | Sense (<i>Interpretant</i>) |
|---------------------|--|--|--|
| Firstness | Quality of sign (<i>Qualisign</i>) | Similarity of object (<i>Icon</i>) | Sense of Possibility (<i>Rheme</i>) |
| Secondness | Thing/event functions like sign (<i>Sinsign</i>) | Contextual contiguity of object (<i>Index</i>) | Sense of Shape of actual existence (<i>Dicisign</i>) |
| Thirdness | Conventional sign (<i>Legisign</i>) | Law or convention of object (<i>Symbol</i>) | Sense of Reasoning (<i>Argument</i>) |

Modified from Monelle (in Abdul Hamid Adnan and Tengku Intan Marlina Tengku Mohd. Ali, 2010)

Table 1 above briefly describes Peirce's trichotomy model in semiotics. First is of a sign as *representamen*, which implies three relationships: *qualisign* as firstness, *sinsign* as secondness, and *legisign* as thirdness categories under a sign. A sign in *qualisign* according to Peirce (1965; cf. Tengku Intan Marlina Tengku Mohd. Ali, 2014:13-17) is a quality which is a sign. *Sinsign* is a thing or an event, an image which functions like a sign, while *legisign* is a sign of conventional context. To take an example from Kayan culture: the colour red is a sign of social or cultural identity in its quality, in that the feeling and attitude of bravery, courage or passion or strong desire is the sign implied. The colour red is commonly worn by both Kayan men and women, as in *lavung* (headdress, headcloth), *basung* (jacket) or *ta'ah* (a woman's skirt). For this, the sign red qualifies the process of the sign itself into *sinsign*, that is, the existence or factual red colour in Kayan clothing as mentioned above. This red colour is then accepted as a conventional sign, which is *legisign*, in the Kayan community.

The second element of the trichotomy is the *object* to which the sign refers in *icon* as firstness, *index* as secondness, and *symbol* as thirdness in the *object* categories. Peirce states (noted in Tengku Intan Marlina, 2014:17), that *icon* is what the sign refers to as an object of similarity.

Index implies an object representing a sign that expresses the relationship between a signifier or form and its signified object. Chandler says that *index* is a mode in which the signifier is perceived as relating, physically or causally, to the signified in a certain way that it is possible to recognise or comprehend.

Next is *symbol* which is the implication of an object in its role as a mode in that its signifier is arbitrary or conventional in nature, relating to the law of general ideas. Symbols are present in the forms of linguistic elements (pronunciations, letters, words, phrases, sentences, etc.) in which they are the object representation as arbitrarily or conventionally formed and communicated.

With reference to the object and its three implied relationships, the colour red in Kayan art and life, as a specific colour of icon (*firstness*) represents an icon of a noble leader. On formal occasions a Kayan lady wears *lavung and ta'ah* with *kalung* (designs) in brightly colored sequins and beads, which show that she is a respectable leader with traditional skills and expertise. The red colour together with the other meaningful colours on the traditional costumes implies also the object, i.e., the Kayan noblemen and noblewomen, as *secondness*, namely *index* of an impression of strength, bravery, and respectability as a handsome hero or a fine lady. For *symbol* the third category in *object* representing the sign is a Kayan who is respected and admired in the community because of his/her prominent figure. The red colour in costumes is the *symbol* of accepted law or convention in the Kayan community.

The third mode of the trichotomy of the sign is the *interpretant*, which implies the interpretation of a sign's meaning as consisting of three other categories of steps of meaning, namely *rheme* as firstness, *disisign* as secondness, and *argument* as thirdness. According to Chandler (2002: 230), in Peirce's model of the sign, the *interpretant* is not an interpreter but rather the sense made of the sign. Peirce does not feature the interpreter directly in his trichotomy, although he does highlight the interpretative process of semiosis. *Interpretant* is thought as a sign in the mind.

With regard to *interpretant* or the meaning implied in a sign (*representamen*), *rheme* as firstness, is a sign of qualitative possibility or, according to Paul Cobley and Litza Janz (in Tengku Intan Marlina Tengku Mohd. Ali, 2014:30): "a *rheme*, where the sign is represented for the interpretant as a possibility." Here, any sign as *sign vehicle* (things, words, images) or some sound can be interpreted for its meaning as a meaning of possibility. For example, *representamen* in the Kayan phrase *naa' lulun hanaar*, the making of a rolled cigarette by a Kayan woman, may be interpreted as a conventional form or an act of politeness, respect, or expression of care and love for a man. It is possible and indeed quite common that *lulun hanaar* serves as a means of formal communication and interaction between women and men.

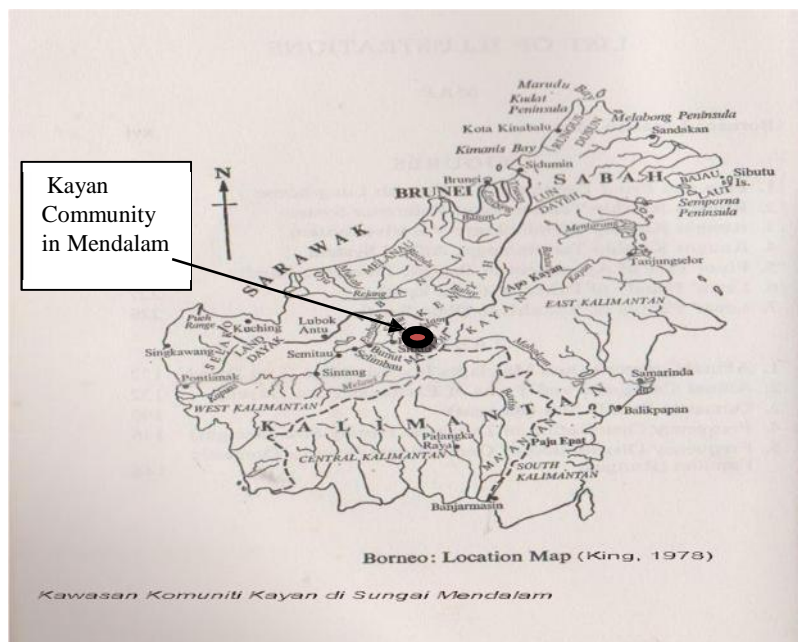
Dicisign or *dicentsign* as secondness of *interpretant* is the interpreted sign to mean the sense of shape or actual existence in which in its interpretation processes the meaning as factual or informative. Peirce (in Tengku Intan Marlina Tengku Mohd. Ali, 2014:31) says: "A *dicent sign* is a sign which, for its interpretant, is a sign of actual existence." In fact, an act of making and giving *lulun hanaar* may be understood as an encounter implying a love tie or a marriage.

As for *argument* as thirdness for a sign interpretation, according to Peirce: "An *argument* is a sign which, for its interpretant, is a sign of law." *Argument* is one step of a meaning process by logical and reasonable interpretation. For example, a Kayan woman makes and gives *lulun hanaar* (cigarettes) to a certain man. It is a sign of fact that Nyalo rolls a cigarette for Lawe' when he comes to sit by her in the sun (TLNY 1053) because both Nyalo and Lawe' have

achieved great heroism, Lawe' has learned to behave politely to her as is the custom in Kayan communities, and her response is culturally meaningful. *Lulun hanaar* is a reasonable sign which shows that they may be in love with each other following the correct customs in the community.

With reference to the theory of sign in semiotics and to the ideas of Charles Sanders Peirce and his followers in literary work, especially Roland Barthes, 1970; Chandler, 2002:5; Puji Santosa, 1993; and Culler, 2001, the concepts of sign meaning should make sense through the analyses of signs in words, phrases, and verses of the *Takna' Lawe'*. Such signs should mean signs of qualities, facts, and laws described in Lawe's heroic figure and mission, that is, Lawe' as a human hero, a divine hero (descended directly from the Supreme Being), and a warrior hero (whose skill in war as a powerful and undefeated fighter is established and acknowledged in every part of the epic). Such signs may be about cleverness, love, kindness, self-sacrifice, strength of will, togetherness, bravery, and power. Such signs are at the same time messages and values of Lawe's heroism² in his triple nature: human leader and lover, spirit with more than natural power, and strong warrior.

2.2 Semiotic Concepts and the Kayan Community³



Map 1: Kayan Community in Mendalam of West Kalimantan

Taking the literary point of view, A. Teeuw (1983:6) presents the idea that semiotics is a model in literature covering responsible factors essential for understanding a literary work, since literature is the representation of the (local) community where the works should correctly be communicated and appreciated. Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic concepts can be a fundamental and useful contribution to analysing the epic *Takna' Lawe'* as an indigenous work

³ Kayan community of Mendalam in West Kalimantan is one of the other Kayan groups in East Kalimantan and Sarawak Malaysia.

of oral literature. Such sign concepts are in line with the concepts of Lawe's heroism and Kayan beliefs about the cosmos and the creation of life. The illustration below (Figure 2) shows what Kayans have believed to be the manifestation of human and spirit lives according to traditional cosmology.

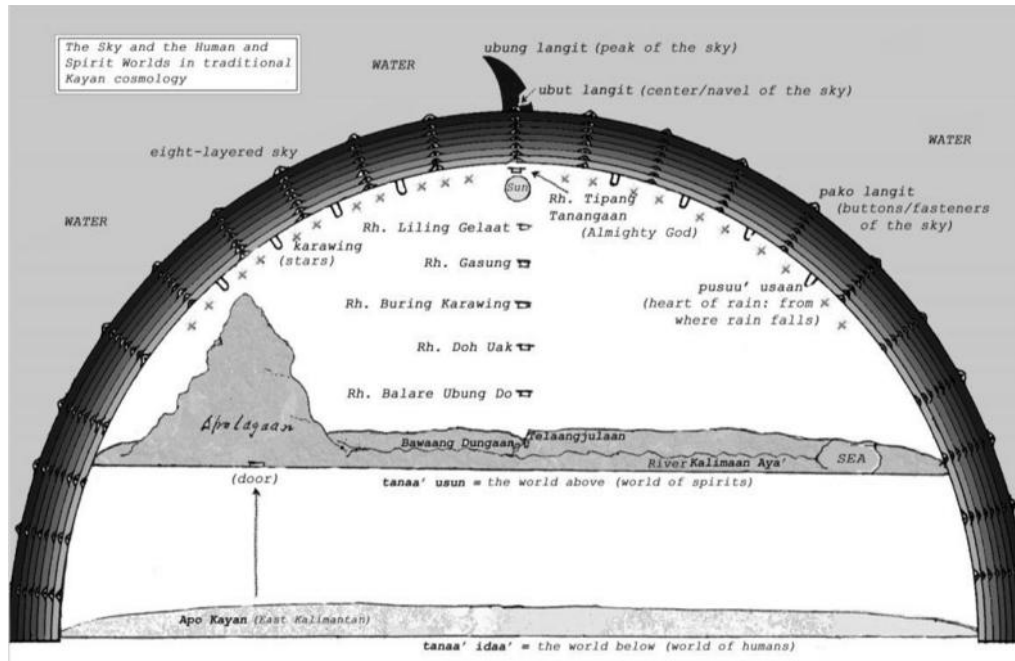


Figure 2. Kayan traditional cosmology (map by Ding Ngo, in *Sejarah Orang Dayak Kayan*, 1989/2015; Sej:022b: digital edition and map edited by S. Morgan)

In old Kayan stories the cosmos was formerly very small, originating in worm dung (see the *Takna' Lawe'*, TLJA 366). The world of human Kayans was made of earth and the sky above covered it like a gigantic round-bottomed cooking pan.

The sky was believed to consist of eight layers (TLNY 1057, TLTM 0973). At first, the sky was very low. Then it happened that a woman fed her pigs using her long leading stick to send away the other pigs, and the end of the stick stabbed into the sky, which made the sky so angry that it lifted itself up very high as it is today. There are two layers of land, the earth below for common humans and the upper world for the good and bad souls and for noble spirits like Lawe', who live just like traditional Kayans.

Between earth and sky are the stars (*karawing*), the sun (*mataando*) and the moon (*bulaan*). There are three stars in a line called the Sword-sheath or *karawing tukar dumaan*, which measure the year, marking the dry time, when Kayan farmers burn and sow in their swidden rice farms. There are other named stars and constellations such as the *karawing maraseh* meaning East Star or Morning Star (the planet *Venus*), or the *karawing kuhung bavi* meaning pig head stars as the shape shows. Figure 2 above is rich in indigenous knowledge ordering the community's system of living according to natural mechanisms. There are more than

a dozen names describing natural cosmic objects and processes and their relationship to community beliefs and actions.

Beliefs associated with indigenous astronomy are linked in the *Takna' Lawe'* with formulaic descriptions of women and their class and appearance. The position of the sun and moon in the sky formerly represented a woman's age, but now are just used for rhyme, with the general meaning that the woman's beauty and nobility make her shine like the sun or moon. In the *Takna' Lawe' mataando tubuu'* (the sun rises) or *idaang do nyinaa'* (the sun begins to rise) formerly were used for young girls who were fresh and pretty, beginning to shine. Kayan proper names often derive from astronomical and mythological and ecological references, such as *Karawing* (star), *Bulaan* (moon), *Avun* (cloud) or names taken from supernatural river dwellers like *Silo* (the crocodile lady) and *Sangiaang* (cobra dragon), and noble men may have formulaic names related to wild creatures believed to have great power and glory, such as *Kuleh* (leopard), *Lejo* (tiger) and *Tingaang* (hornbill).

The phases of the moon are associated with beliefs about values and actions. When there is a full moon (*kamat*) for example, Kayans are prohibited from starting a house or a rice field hut, because this may lead to harm or misfortune.

These concepts and beliefs are expressed through works of indigenous literature: legends and myths and poems such as the *Takna' Lawe'* convey certain messages and values. Peirce's trichotomy of categories matches the concepts of heroism in the *Takna' Lawe'*. Heroic Lawe', the main character in the *Takna' Lawe'*, embodies and inspires values of cleverness, strong will, self-sacrifice, power, bravery, and love. These are stated as well as implied in the whole set of epics, showing how Lawe' struggles against his spiritually powerful opponents and successfully uses his heroism for his people and for his wives (Lawe' is also well-known as a hero for lovers).

The trichotomy of semiotic concepts related to the *Takna' Lawe'* concepts can be stated as in Tables 2-4 below. The concepts, drawn from all five parts of the epic cycle as detailed in the list of References, summarise the meaningful instances of the *Takna' Lawe'* in their relationship with the life of the community in the past and at the present time. (References to the epics are given by abbreviated title and verse number, for instance, TLLK refers to the preliminary part of the epic cycle, standing for *Takna' Lawe': Lawe' and Karigit* (in translation, *Pahlawan demi Kekasih*), and so TLLK 001 is the first verse of the whole epic.)

Table 2

Trichotomy 1: *Representamen*: Thoughts with Signifiers

| | |
|---|--|
| <i>Qualisign</i> (sign quality in words, phrases, verses) | Signifiers related to the qualities: the verses of the <i>Takna' Lawe'</i> contain words, phrases, and verses that represent their unique and rich literary elements and structures: heroic rhymes and verses sung (and now sometimes danced and accompanied by the Kayan <i>sape'</i> or traditional lute) are all <i>qualisign</i> in lyrics and movement. |
| <i>Sinsign</i> (facts in words, phrases, verses) | Signifiers related to facts: lyrics, songs, music, and dance all united are signs representing <i>sinsign</i> , typical Kayan culture and attitudes. |
| <i>Legisign</i> (sign of) | Signifiers related to laws: signs representing laws and conventions of the |

| | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| laws in words, phrases, verses) | Kayan community are all <i>legisign</i> of good and appropriate qualities such as cleverness, power, love, attention, cooperation, determination and kindness. |
|---------------------------------|--|

Table 3

Trichotomy 2: *Object*: Facts with Objects

| | |
|--|--|
| <i>Icon</i> (similar to the objects and signifieds) | Clever, brave, handsome, and powerful Lawe', for example, is an <i>icon</i> to Kayan men. Beautiful and determined Nyalo is an <i>icon</i> to Kayan women. |
| <i>Index</i> (impression of the objects and signifieds) | The expression: "Lawe', a hero for lovers, " for example, impresses and gives an <i>index</i> sign to love, power, and attention. |
| <i>Symbol</i> (conventional to the objects and signifieds) | The <i>Takna' Lawe'</i> is the <i>symbol</i> conventionally linked to celebrations of the <i>Dange</i> harvest festival when every April and May the Kayan community in the Mendalam comes together to thank <i>Tanangaan</i> the Almighty in connection with the successful rice harvest. |

Table 4

Trichotomy 3: *Interpretant*: Thoughts with Signifieds

| | |
|--|--|
| <i>Rheme or Seme</i> (possibility sense of the signs and objects) | Signifiers related to possible sense of the objects to be interpreted: the heroic lyrics of the <i>Takna' Lawe'</i> can be <i>rheme</i> interpreted as signs of the ideally brave, powerful and also respectful or kind-hearted Kayan community. |
| <i>Dicent or Dicisign or PHEME</i> (information of sense of the signs and objects) | Signifiers of heroism that inform the sense of what is signified: lyrics of the <i>Takna' Lawe'</i> and the indigenous music with <i>sape'</i> show details of Kayan arts and culture. |
| <i>Argument</i> (logical reasons of sense of the signs and objects) | Signifiers for the signifieds are related to logical reasons: messages, lyrics, and music make senses for typical Kayan arts and culture and they are entertaining, linking togetherness, motivating feelings and mental spirit. |

3. Local Identities and Symbols in the Takna' Lawe'

Local identities are a set of signs or symbols in physical, material, or behavioural forms which specifically identify an individual or group of individuals as different from others (cf. Goodenough, 1976). Symbols here mean things or words that represent or stand for something else, especially a material object or linguistic representation for something abstract. They are part of indigenous traditions or customs that may provide a positive response towards human as well

as natural resources management systems. Experiences and a number of reports note that "Indigenous perceptions and practices must be understood and taken into account" (Brokensha *et al* In Ahimsa, 2011). This statement is important for at least two reasons. First, indigenous knowledge should be learned and understood since the local people are believed to possess deep and accurate knowledge about various life and environment systems of their own whereas other people may have neglected or ignored such systems. Second, social development projects will only be successful if they are in line with the local people's perceptions and practices (cf. Brokensha *et al*, In Ahimsa, 2011: 3).

In the *Takna' Lawe'*, local identities are expressed in rich symbols showing the ways of life of the local community, namely the Kayan community in the Mendalam in West Kalimantan, Indonesia. These identities can be analyzed into their ethnological categories, i.e., the beliefs and activities of the Kayan community or ethnic group, whether associated with cosmology (Figure 1), or art, ecology, history, or communal or individual healing. The philosophical or cosmological identity is concerned with indigenous knowledge and views about their world, and the creation and origins of humanity. Artistic identities are related to indigenous knowledge and practice in the practical and fine arts (carving and architectures, music, songs, etc.). Ecological identity relates to Kayan knowledge about their environment and its management systems and conservation (land, forests, rivers, etc.).

In the following examples of stanzas from the *Takna' Lawe'* and from Kayan prayer, we can discover potential educational messages, descriptions, and meaning.

Stanza 1 (TLNY 0006)

*Aring Lawe' paknap sang te
nyebung ayur hunge,
ataa Kalimaan ade,
delo' Awing Tanyaang Lahe,
delo' Tuva' Jumaan, Avun Julaan peging Hukang Jo, kayo la'aan tavaan...*

Then Lawe' thinks of going
to splash in the flowing river,
the water of the Kalimaan,
together with [his friend] Awing Tanyaang Lahe
and [with other friends] Tuva' Jumaan, Avun Julaan and Hukang Jo, once prisoner of war...

Description:

The stanza is usually sung by one main singer with at least two men as chorus at the ends of lines and the end of the stanza. The lyrical forms are full of symbols:

hunge "river" may symbolize nature (natural resources), and the river's local importance as the source of fish and road for transport, and the place for folks' informal meetings while bathing and washing, and for life protection and support by clean and fresh water or good spirits in it.

nyebung ayur hunge "splash" may refer to the courage and skill to make use of natural resources, as by bathing.

hunge Kalimaan "Kalimaan river", is the big river in the spirit world where Lawe' and his people and wives live in their longhouses, the place of his adventures and battles.

delo' Awing Tanyaang Lahe "together with Awing (and other friends) may signify cooperation or solidarity. Lawe' is almost always accompanied by his friends who help him travel and fight.

Themes: courage, loyalty, determination etc.

Messages: There should be belief in the values of human courage, love, loyalty, determination, cooperation, and responsibility.

Stanza 2:

This is a traditional prayer by *dayungs* (shamans) when they chant while pounding the rhythm (*neguk*), recorded by the high Dayung Tipung Jawe' (In Ding Ngo, ~1970:21-22.)

Barkat Benii'

*Aii' Tipang,
barkat Im benii' ani',
Im batu', Im piara n'ina',
gerii' haar di alang sayuu'.
Im naa' nah urip na' sayuu',
gerii' jalimuu' langit,
am maju ina' san tulaar kanii',
atang na' ne ngavuaa' jamaa' langaan,
sang baguna man lu'ung barua'.*

Prayer for paddy seed to plant in the rice field

Oh Almighty,
bless this seed.
You will help it, take care of it,
Let a good wind blow on it,
Give it a good life,
bring down the dew from the sky,
don't let it be eaten by animals,
till it produces many fruits
valuable for our life in body and soul.

This indigenous prayer begs the Almighty for blessings, and for good and successful work through the growing grain to give a fine harvest so that people can live well both physically and spiritually. There is deep and rich educational content for classroom learning interactions in

the theme and messages in these stanzas and others, showing that good will and faith produce love and welfare: as the rice grains grow, so love is kept growing in a way that may produce togetherness, responsibility, and loyalty.

As shown by these two stanzas as samples from the *Takna' Lawe'*, the community (the Kayan community) possesses powerful local traditional values that they keep and practice. Through *Lawe'*, the main character of the poem, the community presents its indigenous wisdom about the environment and traditional technology. They show these in stories, songs, dances, and carving to symbolize and express their indigenous talents and attitudes.

The *Takna' Lawe'* is rich in cosmological symbols and messages. *Lawe'* is a divine hero, a human hero, and a warrior hero who is shown to have fought for courage, love, loyalty, solidarity, determination, and responsibility. These are relevant and useful for community ways of life relating to leadership, bravery with politeness, fairness in daily activities in the family, socio-cultural interaction, teaching and learning at school, and in certain religious, economic and political matters.

For these purposes, it is true that the Kayan community still makes use of the *Takna' Lawe'* in traditional activities, for instance as in the *Pesta Dange* or Harvest Festival in April and May every year. They set up a committee for festival and celebration, and practice chanting or singing and dancing as is described in the *Takna' Lawe'*. They celebrate in church using the language of the *Takna' Lawe'* in their prayers, have communal meals and spend time telling stories, dancing and talking about *Lawe'* as a hero, a spirit, and a human.

Ethno-healing is also a part of the *Takna' Lawe'*, as shown when *Lawe'* heals Puvan (TLJA 344+) and brings Hingaa Jaan back to life (TLTM 1761+). Traditional medicine is in large part spiritual and carried out by dayung, but also makes use of local knowledge through indigenous treatments and techniques. Natural resources such as herbal resources in certain plants and fruits are rich in medicinal substances that can help heal certain illness. These are technologies and skills that can be useful to acquire and appreciate through learning activities in local educational activities, so that appropriate understanding and awareness about their deep messages and values can be developed among the young people.

The following chart, Table 5, shows sample categories in a matrix of local identities related to subjects and symbols in the *Takna' Lawe'*. Significance and interpretation are used here to denote the basis for estimating cultural identities.

| Table 5. Local Identities in the <i>Takna' Lawe'</i> : Sample stanzas | | | | |
|---|--------------------------------|---|--|--|
| # | Ethno- identities | Sample Stanzas from the <i>Takna' Lawe'</i> | Translation showing symbols in the sample stanzas | Significance and Interpretation |
| 1 | Ethno-philosophy and cosmology | (TLNY 0789) Ju' pakilung nah hinang nare' bataang arung, atang liling do ngahung, ha' ubung langit napung, marhaa' tulaa' nah hibaan tipung, Nyalo ha' ubung kirung, Nyalo h'alam liling do madaang ha' ubung tesun, lulun avun luvaan. | <i>Then the gaze of the noble lord, host of harvest feasts, turns to the round sun at the summit of the sheltering sky, and there clear to be seen is the noble lady Nyalo at the summit of the sky, Nyalo inside the round sun soaring at the summit of the sky white-curved with flying cloud.</i> | Lawe' sets out to the sun in pursuit of Nyalo, the lady he loves, who has hidden herself there to escape him. The sun is very hard to reach but it is part of the human cosmos. |
| 2 | Ethno-arts | (TLLB 1922) Sayuu' mannyung nah kanhe' sape' kalung t'ujung kevahango ujung usuu' bataang arung, Lawe' naa' daak tingaang nilung man idaang do ngahung Karigit Ipui Mebaang Ubung dawa' hibaan Lalang Julaan t'awaa' Lung Leno, komdo aring nidaan. | <i>High and clear is the sound of the patterned sape', at the touch of the noble lord's fingertips, as Lawe' plays the tune of the indwelling hornbill for the lady Karigit Ipui Mebaang Ubung with lady Llang Julaan, [as they dance] on the veranda at Lung Leno, where the low sun lies down.</i> | Lawe' and his friends and family make merry with his guests. Music from the carved and painted lute, and fine dances by men and women, show off Kayan traditional skill and art. |

| | | | | |
|---|---------------------------|---|--|---|
| 3 | Ethno-healing and ecology | <p>(TLTM 1802)</p> <p>"Ingaan, im tavanga' baa', "</p> <p>kan bataang uraang leraa'</p> <p>man Hingaan Jaan Buaa';</p> <p>"akui mete jelaa', "</p> <p>kan Lawe' duaan Hingaan</p> <p>Jaan t'awaa' Idaa' Luno, davaan kanaan tulaar.</p> | <p><i>"Hingaan, open your mouth, " says the lord bataang uraang to Hingaan Jaan; "I'll put the tongue in it, " says Lawe', speaking to Hingaan Jaan on the veranda at Idaa' Luno, under the banyan where birds and beasts find food.</i></p> | <p>Lawe' has freed Hingaan Jaan from the banyan that swallowed him, and now Lawe' puts in Hingaan Jaan's mouth the tongue of a monitor lizard, so that Hingaan can speak. The lizard gave half his forked tongue out of pity for Hingaan; other animals did not want to give their tongues because they only had one, and their need was respected. Animals and birds are all part of the human cosmos.</p> |
| 4 | Ethno-healing and ecology | <p>(TLJA 338)</p> <p>Lawe' mangjah</p> <p>Tipang ha' ubung alah,</p> <p>ake perah Puvan mam ayaan nah Iting Luno, davaan kanaan tulaar.</p> | <p><i>Lawe' calls upon the noble ruler at the summit of the sky, asking that Puvan's hurt be taken away: so speaks Iting Luno, crest of the banyan where birds and beasts find food.</i></p> | <p>Lawe' asks the Almighty to cure the wound Puvan got defending his longhouse against the invaders; Lawe', who is like a fruitful tree to his people, prays and heals his wound.</p> |

Ethno-identities here are the local wisdoms of the Kayan community, including their customs and views of the universe and its origin. In the several parts of the *Takna' Lawe'*, events show the inspiration to humans that comes from the hero in his superhuman capabilities: he was able to reach the sun to find the spiritually powerful lady Nyalo, he destroyed the great army of the monster invader To' Magung, and he restored Hingaan Jaan to life. In the realms` of ethno-arts and ethno-healing, Lawe' also generates local wisdom, being highly skilled in the many arts of the Kayan community such as dancing, carving, painting, music, and architecture, and also skilled in healing, as he restored Puvan's terrible spear wound with the help of the Almighty. In the stanzas above, (1) shows Kayan community beliefs in seeking love and spiritual powers within the cosmic mysteries, (2) shows Kayan community customs with their knowledge and

skill in dances, playing traditional music like *sape*', and (3) and (4) show divine healing in the context of the natural world.

4. Educational Wisdom and Values in the *Takna' Lawe'*

Local wisdom and local identities can be valuable to education, in that such wisdoms can have a positive impact on furthering understanding of how the local people live with their customs or traditions. Such wisdoms can be useful and appropriate to put into practice at school as the content of local knowledge learning materials. It is time to understand how the forms and values of this wisdom contribute to human welfare and human development in general. For this purpose, there are two aspects of knowledge of indigenous literature such as the *Takna' Lawe'* which need to be approached in the educational or learning context, and these are (1) the knowledge of local customs and beliefs (ethnographic understanding) and (2) the knowledge of literary aspects of this material (literary appreciation).

4.1 Educational Values in Aspects of Kayan Ethnic Identity

It is a general principle now in education and development that "indigenous perceptions and practices must be understood and taken into account" (Brokensha *et al* in Ahimsa, 2011). It is important to put such knowledge into its correct and appropriate place, with consideration of context and educational goals. The rich and useful content as well as meaning of indigenous knowledge must be acknowledged and recognised by those who are concerned and involved in any kind of social development, in such related sectors of professional study as economics, politics, forestry, law, and education. In terms of educational wisdoms as perceived and put into practice, we can review the three already mentioned aspects of ethnic identities that can be found in the *Takna' Lawe'*, that is, philosophical and cosmological views, arts, and healing.

Ethno-Philosophical and Cosmological Views: As noted above (Table 5), the messages and meaning of Kayan views on the universe provide lessons about spirituality. Kayans traditionally acknowledge the power and mystery and magnificence of the All-Highest (Tipang Tanangaan), and ask for divine protection and help. Lawe' does this many times in the tales to save himself and friends from danger, as he does to save Puvan in example (4) above.

Ethnic Arts and Identities: Educational values are evident in the lessons of ethno-arts messages and meanings. Example (2) above provides ideals of aesthetic quality, besides expressive ones, in that the educational lessons are about beauty and pleasure: Lawe' beautifully plays the *sape*' in a tune expressing qualities of hornbills, relating art to the natural world.

Ethnic Rites of Healing: In examples (3) and (4) in Table 5 we see how in ethno-healing, the educational values appear during healing treatments by Lawe', expressing kindness and spiritual power. Strength, compassion and faith link personal power to religious belief and so to ethno-cosmology. Clearly in example (4) it is Lawe's role to communicate with God and to get permission for the cure. He was powerful and compassionate and through him the wounded Puvan was healed.

4.2 The Value of Literary Knowledge in the School Curriculum

Study of the *Takna' Lawe'* as a work of literature and oral poetry can begin with a look at its literary form and structure. These include (1) its sound patterns: rhyme, assonance, alliteration, and metre; (2) complex poetic language: formulaic figures of speech, simile and metaphor; (3) the images: what is seen, heard, touched, tasted, and smelled; and (4) word meanings, both denotation and connotation. These elements are interesting and useful in themselves and can be the substance of topics, objectives, and materials in school learning activities. With this knowledge, the local community at school, in particular, will acquire the skills to understand traditional literature and complex epic poetry such as the *Takna' Lawe'*. This is then useful also for appreciation of other indigenous literatures in their own community.

For the purpose of learning activities, the literary elements above should be made part of the supplementary learning materials to support the existing subject materials, using national and international languages like Indonesian and English, for example. In such a context, the classroom activities may include learning to identify, memorize, practice, and analyse the elements of the poem (the *Takna' Lawe'*), for instance by reading aloud the stanzas, the lines, the phrases, and the words under its topics or subtopics. Technically, the learning may take place through learning for language skill acquisition, i.e., the acquisition and practice of skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Learning words or phrases for their meaning can be done as a supporting element of the language skills, so that the learners may listen to, speak, read, or write the words and phrases in the poem. As for the poem in the *Takna' Lawe'*, the learning process may take place by reading aloud following the stanzas. Learners then may spend time following the singing patterns and dancing. The *Takna' Lawe'* is an epic poem performed by a singer and chorus, like an opera presentation.

In each stanza of the *Takna' Lawe'* there is a single rhyme at the end of each line, except for the last, which ends in one of a small set of formulaic phrases called *habe*, each linked to a name. The end-rhyme structure of the poem is thus organized as a-a-a-a-[...]-b. The stanzas vary in number of lines, from as few as 3 to as many as 12 lines. In recital, a person sings the stanzas, and at the end of each line and the last line in every stanza at least two men in the audience join in to *nyabe*, singing the last line in chorus with the reciter.

The pattern can be observed in the two examples below.

(TLLK 096)

"Yah akui ne
muvui bataang uraang jane
pelo' Awing Tanyaang Lahe,
Tuva' jumaan hunge,
Avun Julaan, Hukang Ingaan, " kan Nangin Buring,
Buring Tivak Nutaan...

Yes, I've come
to call the lord bataang uraang jane
and Awing Tanyaang Lahe,

Tuva' jumaan hunge,
and Avun Julaan and Hukang Ingaan, says Hangin Buring,
Buring Tivak Nutaan...

(TLLK 102)

Aring ne ngalisah
nah layo' bato' ingah,
lejo tajam tevah
te' so Hure Ukah,
doh bi'ik kamah,
ngalisah nah Lawe' t'ujung legan siaan na' t'awaa' Leno
komdo_aring_nidaan...

Then he moves,
the deadly charmstone,
tiger bold and fierce,
the grandson of Hure Ukah,
Porcupine lady with short-palmed paws:
Lawe' moves on his turtle seat on the veranda at Leno
where the low sun lies down.

With these stanzas, for example, learning process may take place by reading for the poetic or rhyming sounds in that the reading puts emphasis on the identical sounds or pronunciations like those in the end rhyme. That is the final syllable *-e* in *ne, jane, Lahe, hunge*; and *-ah* in *ngalisah, ingah, tevah, Ukah, and kamah*. The next process may take place on other elements such as assonance (neighbouring words with identical vowel sounds in medial position). Examples are *-aa-* in *Muvi bataang uraang jane; Avun Julaan, Hukang Ingaan*; and also *-a-* in *Nah layo' bato' ingah; Ngalisah nah Lawe'*.

Later, the students may learn both denotative and connotative meanings for the words, exploring figures of speech and symbolic images, and for higher stage of learning they might practice rewriting freely the stanzas in prose form.

Learning design activities may be created as in Table 6 below, which has been created with reference to prevailing curriculum concepts in education.

| Table 6. Learning Design ⁴ in the <i>Takna' Lawe'</i> Literary Work | | | | | |
|--|----------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| No. | Learning Topics | Learning Competencies | | Learning Objectives | Learning Proficiency |
| | | Core Competence | Basic Competence | | |
| 1. | Alliteration and Assonance | 1. Spirituality | a. Respect b. Adore c. Thanks | Be able to appreciate, adore, thank. | Elementary, Intermediate, Advanced |
| 2. | Rhymes: | 2. Social | a. Cooperation | Be able to learn in | Elementary, |

⁴This design is created with reference to the prevailing curriculum concepts in education.

| | | | | | |
|----|---------------------------------------|--------------|--|---|------------------------------------|
| | internal and end rhymes | | b. Hardworking c. Fairness d. Acknowledgement | group, learn independently, be fair in truth and falseness. | Intermediate, Advanced |
| 3. | Denotative and connotative meaning | 3. Knowledge | a. Identify b. Understand c. Comprehend d. Analyse e. Evaluate | Be able to mention, pronounce, differentiate, say in categories, give opinions, ask questions. | Elementary, Intermediate, Advanced |
| 4. | Figures of speech:simile and metaphor | 4. Skills | a. Apply b. Speak, read, write c. Count, point, walk | Be able to speak on introducing oneself, to read in correct pronunciation, to write in correct grammar and mechanics. | Elementary, Intermediate, Advanced |

This curricular design is a guideline to syllabus and lesson plan composition, which might include supplementary textbooks to be integrated with the other related learning subjects like the Humanities, Natural, and Social Sciences. A model of a lesson plan design, such as the one following, may be set up to accompany the classroom learning process.

4.3. A Sample of Lesson Plan Design

This is one model the language or literature teacher might prepare for their Lesson Plan. The teachers with reference to the school syllabus should discuss and do the writing in teams or groups, and should vary their learning materials by using the resources of any other different local communities, such as the Dayak Kayan, Kantuk, Iban, Kanayatn, and also Malay resources from different areas in Kalimantan. The categories and steps of this sample are modified from the standard curricular design for Indonesian model lesson plans.

Part A: School and Subject Identity

1. School : Junior High School
2. Field/Subject : Language/English
3. Grade/Semester : VII/I.
4. Text : Poem (the *Takna' Lawe'*)
5. Topic : Indigenous Wisdoms "*Reading Poem*"
6. Language Skill : Integrated Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing
7. Time Allocation : 2 x 35 minutes per meeting (2-3 meetings a week)

Part B: Curricular Competencies (competencies to measure the attitude, cognitive, and Psycho-motor abilities).

1. Core Competencies: spirituality, social, knowledge, skills
2. Basic Competencies: (the sub-competencies under each core competence)

It is suggested that (1) and (2) here follow and copy the standardized competencies in the curriculum. Core competencies are the ones for the learners' competences in nature towards the lesson; spirituality refers to their individual competence of spiritual aspects as in appreciating, praying, adoring, and working hard; social, as in cooperating or collaborating with classmates in group learning; knowledge, as in knowing and comprehending the organization and content of the lesson (the main ideas of paragraphs or lines, names, locations, times, and events); skill, as in fluency and accuracy in speaking (pronouncing, expressing ideas in short sentences) and writing (spelling and short sentences) about the content of the lesson. These four competences generate more practical basic competences. The teachers follow and select the correct and appropriate basic competences printed in the curriculum under each core competence. Each core competence may have 2 to 3 basic competences.

Part C: Learning Indicators: this is the guideline in the curriculum or syllabus that leads towards the learning objectives.

Part D: Learning Objectives: (for example) learners are able to read the lines of the poem for fluency and accuracy; learners are able to tell and write about the Kayan hero Lawe' with knowledge and appreciation.

Part E: Learning Materials: selected topics based on the learning sources, as in the selected themes and poems in Takna' Lawe'.

Part F: Learning Methods and Techniques: the teachers' ways of teaching the lesson.

Part G: Learning Media: teaching aids like pictures, cards, and maps.

Part H: Learning Activities/Classroom Process: the steps in teaching-learning activities in each lesson meeting. These are Opening Process, Pre-activity Process, Activity Process, and Post-activity Process.

Part I: Learning Evaluation. This is what helps teachers and learners to measure their ability or competences (spirituality, social, knowledge, and skill) of the lesson.

Part J: Evaluation Rubric: the profile of scoring to the lesson evaluation.

Appendices:

1. Learning Tasks based on local wisdom resources.
2. Instructional Facilities/Equipment
3. References

With regard to this Lesson Plan model, the teaching-learning process may run accordingly to reach a beneficial and adequate set of learning targets. In so doing, local content and wisdom are fulfilled for learning needs, interests, and appreciation.

5. Conclusion

- 5.1. As a heroic epic, the *Takna' Lawe'* demonstrates many rich and valuable traditional forms and symbols of local wisdoms, some of which are Kayan ethno-philosophy or cosmology, ethno-arts and architectures, ethno-healing, and ethno-agriculture.
- 5.2. Peirce's semiotics is helpful to relate *signs* in forms of words and phrases in the *Takna' Lawe'* to their contextual *objects* as referents and *interpretants* as references.
- 5.3. The *Takna' Lawe'* contains much educational wisdom and could be adopted in the teaching-learning process for local-content materials, to correct and enhance perceptions and practices concerning indigenous peoples.
- 5.4. As a form of curricular design, there should be created school learning materials on local cultural identities in Kalimantan and all Borneo: stories, poems, etc. The epic poem *Takna' Lawe'*, for example, can provide one set of local materials to teach educational values such as honesty, leadership, cooperation, responsibility, and love.
- 5.5. This great literary work with its supplementary introduction and explanations, and many associated literary, historical and linguistic works by Pastor A. J. Ding Ngo and other Mendalam Kayans, are still almost entirely the heirlooms only of Kayans and their friends, since most exist only in manuscript (typescript). The five-volume *Takna' Lawe'* (with foreword by Michael Dove) was printed in 1984-85 and only in Kayan and Indonesian, still with typing errors, and is long out of print. It is hoped that a newly edited digital edition and future English translation will be much more widely recognised as an important part of world literature and a great contribution to the development of world understanding of and respect for indigenous peoples in years to come.

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