Promoting Cosmocentric Worldview in Literature: A Case Study of *We Are Water Protectors*

Xinyi Zuo

Capital Normal University, School of Foreign Languges, 100000, Beijing, China

ZuoXinyi1007@outlook.com

Abstract. Carole Lindstrom's childhood was shaped by a scarcity of Native children's literature and the historical marginalization of Indigenous traditions in North America. Against this cultural background, *We Are Water Protectors* emerges as a significant work of Indigenous storytelling. By adopting postcolonial and ecological theories, this research finds that, rooted in a cosmocentric worldview and animist beliefs, the book emphasizes the reciprocal ties between humans and nature and critiques the ecological harm caused by modern industrial projects. The imagery of the black snake in the work aligns with a symbol in Ojibwe cultural philosophy rather than a mere individual narrative within the book. From a cosmopolitical perspective, the repetitive expressions of "water life" and "water has a soul" endow water as a sacred entity, not a resource for human use. The work reflects the Indigenous cultural belief that all living things hold their own spirit and inherent value and resists the neoliberal anthropocentric views that put capital before ecological health. From an ecological perspective, the Indigenous girl's role as a water protector embodies intergenerational responsibility for the land, rivers, and species of the future. This picture book exerts a unique educational effect on young readers, using visual and simple storytelling that fits children's cognitive level and passes Indigenous ecological knowledge and environmental awareness to them in an approachable way. This case study of the picture book also points to the broader meaning of Indigenous children's literature; such works carry and pass on Indigenous cultural and ecological ideas; they nurture children's environmental justice awareness from an early age and shape their sense of duty to nature across generations. By analyzing the embedded Ojibwe cosmocentric worldview, this article calls for a renewed awareness of environmental justice. It also advocates for rebuilding a balanced relationship between humans and the natural world through sustained intergenerational efforts rooted in the ecological wisdom inherited from Indigenous cultures.

Keywords: Carole Lindstrom, We are Water Protectors, Cosmocentric worldview, Intergenerational Responsibility.

1. Literature Review

Carole Lindstrom, an American Indigenous author who mainly composes children's picture books, has received numerous awards, including the Golden Kite Award for Picture Book Text, ALSC Notable Children's Books (1995-2025), and the Charlotte Huck Award (2015-2026). Among her works, the most successful is *We Are Water Protectors* (WWP), which was included in the "American Indians in Children's Literature (AICL): Lists of Best Books, 2010-2024" in 2020. Based on the marginalized experiences of Indigenous children in the US's white-dominated society, Carole's works primarily center on Indigenous children's literature. Recognizing that people of color often face more severe limitations of natural resources and pollution compared to white Americans, Lindstrom strongly advocates for an eco-centric worldview based on ethnicity, urging humanity to live in harmony with the natural environment in WWP. This picture book that carries profound ecological and ethnic connotations, has become a focus of academic research, yet relevant studies still leave certain research gaps to be filled.

In the current academic discourse on Lindstrom's work, significant attention has been given to the application of Indigenous Ecological Knowledge (IEK) and cosmocentric worldviews in contemporary society. In her book *First Opinion: Autumn Peltier, Water Warrior*, Lindstrom illustrates Indigenous peoples' protection of water resources through the story of Autumn Peltier, thereby demonstrating the application of IEK and cosmocentric worldviews in contemporary society

[1]. Additionally, the special issue of *Climate Literacy in Education* explores educational practices related to water conservation, focusing specifically on the application of IEK as depicted in Lindstrom's work, the practice of maintaining natural resources through cultural practices and traditional knowledge, and this practice is closely related to the application of IEK and cosmocentric worldviews [2]. Regarding environmental justice and the human-nature relationship, Lindstrom emphasizes the importance of water conservation and calls for action in *First Opinion: Autumn Peltier, Water Warrior*, highlighting the close connection between environmental justice and the human-nature relationship [1]. The special issue of Climate Literacy in Education discusses educational practices of water as a public resource, citing Lindstrom's *Autumn Peltier, Water Warrior* to show how Indigenous peoples establish a deep relationship with nature through cultural practices, thereby highlighting the educational significance of environmental justice and the relationship between humans and nature [2].

At present, there is no academic research dedicated to WWP, and all existing relevant studies focus on another book by Lindstrom [1], yet the present research also explores and addresses the same thematic focus as these existing studies. Most research focuses on Lindstrom's work on ecocentrism, which concludes that most scholars discuss Ecocriticism, Indigenous literature, and ecological awareness. However, the practical application of cosmocentric worldviews and Indigenous Ecological Knowledge (IEK) in contemporary children's literature, especially in picture books, remains underexplored. This gap is significant given the potential of these perspectives to promote environmental justice and intergenerational responsibility.

The research on ecological children's literature emerged along with a series of problems: the widespread consumerism, the overexploitation of natural resources, the increased threats for colored people under the unpredictable climate changes and natural disasters [2], without systemic research on ecological children's literature. In the context of Indigenous literature and ecological awareness, scholars have conducted multifaceted studies on the manifestations of Indigenous Ecological Knowledge (IEK) in literature and poetry. Research shows that IEK, as a knowledge system for ecosystem sustainability grounded in indigenous customs, beliefs, and philosophies, is vividly presented and transmitted through literary works. For instance, from ecohumanity, Leslie Marmon Silko's "Ceremony" explores the connection between land and identity through Tayo's journey, as well as the relationship between healing and environmental care; generationally, Louise Erdrich's "The Plague of Doves" showcases the resilience of indigenous peoples in the face of historical trauma through the Ojibwe tradition, emphasizing the importance of intergenerational narratives in transmitting ecological knowledge and cultural resilience; contemporarily, Eden Robinson's "Monkey Beach" combines the Haisla myth with modern ecological issues and emphasizes the importance of maintaining the vitality of indigenous knowledge through storytelling. These studies have revealed the role of literature in promoting IEK, cultural resilience, and ethical environmental management, thereby laying the foundation for the analysis of the text's ecological and cultural aspects in this research. Aforementioned dimensions manifest indigenous ecological knowledge (IEK) from the perspectives of ecological ethics, cultural resilience, and environmental ethics, highlighting the interdependence between humans and nature, ecological balance, and the value of cultural inheritance; it also engages in cross-cultural comparisons to assess the manifestations and influence of IEK in different cultural contexts, aiming to elucidate its significance in modern ecological discourse [3].

Based on this, this literature review will address gaps in understanding the practical application of cosmocentric worldviews and Indigenous Ecological Knowledge (IEK) in contemporary children's literature and their implications for environmental justice. This research will further explore environmental justice and the human-nature relationship by examining Carole Lindstrom's work, *WWP*, and how cosmocentric worldviews and Indigenous Ecological Knowledge (IEK) can be applied in contemporary children's literature to promote environmental justice and intergenerational responsibility beyond previous research.

Studies on the cosmocentric worldview, such as those by [4], focus largely on its theoretical potential for personal transformation and sustainable behavior but lack evidence of its practical use in education and its long-term influence on minority communities. Additionally, research on Indigenous Ecological Knowledge in literature, as highlighted by [3], often centers on a small number of classic texts and overlooks the diversity of Indigenous voices and contemporary works. These studies have also made important contributions by stressing the value of integrating Indigenous perspectives into ecological discussions and by recognizing storytelling as a key part of cultural resilience. However, existing research remains restricted by its narrow focus on adult literature and well-known texts. Most studies also center on white readers and white-authored works, leaving Indigenous children's literature and picture books significantly understudied. Studies on the cosmocentric worldview, such as those by [4], focus largely on the theoretical potential for personal transformation and sustainable behavior but lack empirical evidence on its practical implementation in education and on the long-term societal impact on minority groups. Additionally, research on IEK in literature, as highlighted by [3], often centers on a few well-known texts, neglecting the diversity of indigenous voices and contemporary works.While these studies have clarified core ideas of cosmocentrism and IEK in literary analysis, they remain constrained by their narrow focus on adult literature and mainstream texts, with little attention to Indigenous children's picture books. This study builds on existing scholarship to broaden the scope by exploring the expression of cosmocentric worldviews and IEK in contemporary Indigenous children's literature. Given the limitations of existing research, this study further explores the manifestation of the cosmocentric worldview in contemporary children's literature and its implications for environmental justice through an in-depth analysis of Lindstrom's *WWP*. Specifically, this study will interpret *WWP* from the two dimensions: cosmocentric worldview and postcolonial feminism, reveal how it presents indigenous ecological knowledge (IEK) from the perspective of cosmocentrism, and explore its contribution to environmental justice in a multicultural context, to provide a new perspective for understanding the role of indigenous literature in contemporary environmental movements.

2. Theoretical Framework

Cosmocentric worldview (Astronism), an official worldview of the religion and philosophy founded by Cometan, represents an animate and spiritually potent wholeness. By placing the universe at its core [5], it typically contrasts with the literary centrism of pre-Astronist centrities, such as theocentrism and anthropocentrism [5]. It highlights the irreplaceability of nature for human beings [6]. In the context of Cosmocentricity, the significance of this irreplaceability lies in its capacity to view nature as an integral component of the whole, and it calls for the cultivation of ecoprotectivism and a Deanthropocentrism in contemporary society.

In the aspect of Ecocriticism, Cosmocentrism Worldview is an important concept counterpart to Anthropocentrism. Unlike anthropocentric worldviews that prioritize human interests or biocentric views that focus primarily on nature, it recognizes the intrinsic value of the cosmos and all its components, including nonliving elements and the relationships among them [7]. Recently, studies emphasize the psychological and transformative potential of adopting a cosmocentric worldview, for profound personal transformations, fostering a deeper sense of connection with the natural world and a greater motivation to engage in sustainable behaviors [4], which provides a theoretical background to interpret how the author advocates public to build their intergenerational responsibility in *WWP*.

Meanwhile, there is a growing interest in understanding how indigenous cosmologies, which often embrace cosmocentric principles, can contribute to contemporary sustainability efforts. These studies highlight the importance of respecting and integrating indigenous knowledge systems into global environmental governance [8], which echoes indigenous identity in *WWP* and challenges the current white-dominated, human-centered framework across the diverse backgrounds of US society. Postcolonial feminism brings together postcolonial theory and feminist criticism to stress the recovery of matrilineal knowledge and explore how Indigenous communities can take colonial language and

use it for resistance. Postcolonial feminism examines how gender and colonial power shape Indigenous women's lives, noting that colonial discourse often presents Third World women as helpless victims in need of rescue, a portrayal that ignores their agency [9], while also aligning women with nature as disorderly subjects in need of control. Plumwood and Shiva extend this view to show how colonial and capitalist systems dominate women and the natural world in parallel [10]. Indigenous women face double oppression from both colonial rule and patriarchal structures. Conversely, postcolonial feminism highlights their agency, showing that they remain crucial to cultural survival and ecological protection [11]. Postcolonial feminism thus stresses the recovery of matrilineal knowledge. It also explores how Indigenous communities can take colonial language and use it for resistance.

In WWP, the story ties the female narrator closely to water. The narrator identifies as "water and its child." This line places female identity within the life-giving power of the natural world (Lindstrom 6). The text also uses water to show continuity across generations. It notes that water sustained people in the womb and continues to support them on Mother Earth (Lindstrom 8). These ideas place Indigenous women's authority within a worldview that does not separate human and nonhuman life. They follow the Ojibwe belief that "women are the protectors of the water" (Lindstrom 38). The text creates linguistic resistance through the chant "MNI WICONI / No DAPL." This slogan pairs an Ojibwe phrase with an English protest statement. Capitalized for emphasis, it claims Indigenous linguistic sovereignty while using colonial language to oppose colonial projects. The chant puts Bhabha's theory of ironic appropriation into direct practice (Lindstrom 37). The book links harm to nature with gendered injustice. The black snake's destruction of water weakens the cultural role of women as stewards. It also supports resistance that grows from the lived experience and active voice of Indigenous women.

The term cosmocentrism denotes a worldview in which the universe is regarded as the primary priority. In academic research, its contributions are mainly reflected in religion, ethics, and literature. The religious aspect of cosmocentrism is reflected in the exploration of spirituality and the exploration of alternative perspectives on religious texts. Meanwhile, the ethical aspect of cosmocentrism is reflected in its concern with real-world issues, such as global conflicts and space colonization. By focusing on real-world issues, cosmocentrism further emphasizes the significance of all things in the universe, especially nature, to humanity and calls on readers to establish an intergenerational responsibility for protecting nature.

Cosmocentrism is manifested in literature as a focus on personal transformation, particularly on how to cultivate a deeper connection with the natural world and greater motivation to engage in sustainable behaviors [4]. The narrative approach of cosmocentrism weaves the personal journey with the fate of the environment by placing characters in a broader ecological context. For instance, in Li Hua's analysis of Chinese science fiction, he explores cosmocentrism by examining the relationship between humans and nonliving Spaces and the ethical implications of terrestrialization [12]. By placing the transformation of individuals within this cosmic-centered framework, cosmic-centrism thus makes literature a powerful medium for reimagining human agency and fostering a deeper commitment to sustainable development.

This research refers to it as an overall worldview centered on the universe, emphasizing the intrinsic value of the universe and its components, as well as the close connection between humans and the universe. Specifically, the research is split into two parts. The first part examines the interdependence between humans and nature from an ecological cosmocentric perspective, analyzes the actual damage modern industrial projects cause to ecosystems, stresses the wholeness of nature, and defines the concrete responsibilities humans hold for ecological protection. The second part analyzes relevant content from a postcolonial feminist perspective, focuses on Indigenous women who take water protection as their duty in tribal cultures, looks into how industrial colonial forces infringe on their cultural duties and weaken their cultural authority through ecological damage, and analyzes how Indigenous people base on the bond between female bodies and nature and use the colonizers' language to mount ironic resistance against the patriarchal industrial colonial order.

2.1. Ecological Cosmocentrism

Ecological Cosmocentrism is a further refinement of the Cosmocentric worldview, emphasizing nature as an important component of the universe as a whole and an irreplaceable foundation for human survival and development. It advocates that modern society cultivate a sense of stewardship of nature, viewing it as a vibrant and spiritual whole, and guiding people to re-examine the relationship between humans and nature (Wildcat, 2022)[13]. The book structures the narrative around three core entities: the nonhuman natural world (macrocosm), the Indigenous community embodied by "we" (microcosm), and the colonial "black snake" as the opposing force.

From the thematic perspective, the previous sentence, "We stand with our songs and our drums. We are still here. But it will not be easy" illustrates the unity and resilience of the Indigenous villagers in the face of challenges, as well as their commitment to their culture and traditions (Lindstrom 24 25). The following sentence further extends this theme by broadening the scope of protection from human beings to the entire natural world: "We fight for those who cannot fight for themselves: The winged ones, the crawling ones, the four-legged, ..., the Earth. We are all related. The black snake is in for the fight of its life" (Lindstrom 27).

In terms of rhetorical analysis, the sentence initially uses the rhetorical device of "salience" by using vivid and detailed terms such as "winged" and "crawling" instead of the more abstract and generalized term "animals." This consistent focus on specific nonhuman beings maintains a steady thread of attention to the natural world throughout the narrative. This choice of words anchors the macrocosmic perspective of nonhuman life, reflecting the Ojibwe people's intimate connection with and respect for all living beings in nature. On a deeper level, this way of speaking also shows the sharp difference between the Ojibwe farming culture and the colonizers' glorified industrial culture. The tribe describes animals in its own traditional language and even uses western words to mock and criticize colonial values. Rather than adopting an anthropocentric or colonialist perspective that views nature as an inexhaustible commodity, they construct a network of relationships between humans and nature centered around various forms of life.

Lindstrom advocates for community unity to safeguard water and land, thereby transcending anthropocentrism by perceiving nature as a vibrant and spiritual entity. Lindstrom emphasizes the concept of "we", which extends the call for the protection of nature to all humanity and reflects Indigenous notions of community and interconnectedness. She also conveys deep reverence for nature, as evidenced by the belief that "Water has its own spirit," which motivates characters to defend the environment and demonstrates a commitment to ecological justice.

In terms of narrative person, the passage transitions from specific creatures to the broader Earth and even includes "we", suggesting that the call for equality and harmony extends beyond the Indigenous village to encompass all human beings and living entities across the planet, painting a vision of an ideal world. This shift in person is a typical narrative strategy of "from small to large". The collective pronoun "we" guides readers' attention from the part to the whole and enables them to think about the harmony between humans and nature from a macroscopic perspective.

From the perspective of cultural values, the transformation of personal pronouns from "my" to "we" profoundly reflects the deep understanding of the concept of "community" in Indigenous culture. In many indigenous cultural systems, the term "we" is by no means confined to human groups; its scope extends widely to all living things in nature and the entire ecosystem. "The kin, or relatives, include all the natural elements of an ecosystem." [14] This concept forms a sharp and strong contrast with the human-centered worldview in the Western tradition, emphasizing the inseparable and closely connected intrinsic relationship between humans and nature.

The inclusive vision of "we" further reaches out to colonizers and the colonized alike to let go of past grievances, regarding all people as global citizens and returning to a cosmic view that the universe and the Earth are one interconnected entity. The text incorporates "we" into the protection of nature and the pursuit of equality, conveying a global perspective that transcends racial, cultural, and geographical boundaries, and calling on all of humanity to jointly shoulder the sacred responsibility of protecting the Earth.

In terms of metaphor, WWP, ecological cosmocentrism is reflected in the relationship between humans and nature and the emphasis on ecological wholeness. Lindstrom employs the metaphor of the “black snake,” which symbolizes the ecological devastation wrought by modern industrial projects, to reveal the inseparable connection between humans and nature.

Lindstrom’s narrative, rooted in an animist belief, emphasizes the reciprocal ties between humans and nature and critiques the ecological harm caused by modern industrial projects symbolized by the “black snake,” as shown: “They [the indigenous villagers] foretold that it (the black snake) wouldn’t come for many, many years. Now the black snake is here” (Lindstrom 17). The description of the “Black Snake” pipeline in the text frames the pipeline as a product of industrialization. WWP is precisely based on the ethical predicament that indigenous people face in their lives: the pipeline issue [15]. This unexpected emergence of the ecological destroyer is demonstrated by the temporal contrast between “foretold,” a word that essentially means a prophecy, and “now,” which not only intensifies the atmosphere of urgency and tension within the community but also emphasizes the immediacy of ecological threats.

To illustrate, the narrative consistently centers on the land inhabited by the Ojibwe people. As mentioned in “Spoil the water. Poison plants and animals. Wreck everything in its path” (Lindstrom 15), key terms such as “spoil,” “poison,” and “wreck” are used to highlight the extensive damage inflicted on the natural environment by the “black snake,” including the destruction of flora and fauna and the contamination of vital water sources. Contrary to expectations, the “black snake” has arrived much sooner than the prophecy suggested. They demonstrate that ecological degradation is far more than mere defoliation; it is a matter of life and death for the region’s people. The interdependence of humans and nature is undeniable, as they form an inseparable whole.

The “venom” of the black snake, which Lindstrom describes as “… burns the land. Courses through the water…”, represents not only a fatal assault on local water resources and land but also a profound violation of the integrity of nature. The verbs “burns” and “courses through,” which vividly illustrate the destructive impact of these actions, threaten the health and sustainability of the entire ecosystem. Such destruction is irreversible and ongoing, posing a severe threat to the stability and future development of the local environment. As Hurlbert note, “The significant decline in land productivity and the increasing scarcity of safe drinking water will further exacerbate poverty and decline within the Indigenous community,” emphasizing that the land, water, and all living beings are integral parts of a holistic and sacred whole. [16]

The Ojibwe culture has a long history and aligns with transcendental thought, holding the belief of humans and nature as one and linking closely to the cosmos. Linear time stands side by side in the narrative, revealing the unique features of this indigenous culture that set it apart from Western white culture. The in-betweenness of this culture reveals the cultural subjectivity of the non-colonized nation, and mirrors the same worldview of humans and nature as one. This worldview clarifies that harm to nature is no one-time act, never a thing of the past, and endures the future. The Indigenous people stand firm against ecological damage for this very reason.

The third appearance of the black snake is to describe it as a severe threat: the black snake “… burns the land. Courses through the water…” directly poses catastrophic impacts on this Indian village. Lindstrom writes: “I must keep the black snake away from my village's water. I must rally my people together. To stand for the water. To stand for the land. To stand as ONE. Against the black snake.” (Lindstrom 21) Building on the understanding that humans and nature are interdependent, the Indigenous girl calls upon all members of her community to unite in the struggle to protect their village's water and land. Her identity as an “I” reflects the importance of intergenerational responsibility in the process of environmental protection, a role that is crucial for safeguarding the well-being of the entire community and future generations. This perspective showcases the intrinsic value of all elements of the natural world and the necessity of protecting them, highlighting the critical role of women in nature conservation.

Regarding justice and responsibility, the girl and her community do not advocate solely for their own people. This stance carries a transcending meaning, linking human groups with the natural world

and affirming the spirit within all natural elements [17]. They firmly believe in the animistic principle that "Water has its own spirit (Lindstrom 34)." Despite colonialism, they remain committed to protecting more vulnerable groups in nature who cannot speak or fight for themselves, demonstrating a strong commitment to the integrity of the natural world.

2.2. Political Cosmocentrism

Cosmopolitically, the repetition of phrases such as "water is life" and "water has a soul," which highlight water as a sacred being rather than a human resource, reveals a worldview that attributes spirit and intrinsic value to all forms of life, as opposed to neoliberal and anthropocentric ideologies that privilege capital over ecological well-being.

In Ojibwe culture, women are the protectors of the water… (Linstrom 40). In *WWP*, the author conveys the themes and connotations of the work from three aspects: the isomorphism between the body and nature, the authority of matrilineal knowledge, and the dual violence of ecology and gender, in a pictorial and textual manner.

From the perspective of the female body, the text directly links female flesh to water. The story that sees the female body as the source of life is a quiet fight against the patriarchal industrial system. The line "I am water/and its child" firmly connects female flesh to water in a natural way, shaping and respecting water as a motherly symbol that nurtures life, including feeding life and passing down tribal blood (Linstrom 6). It becomes a key link between individual life and all things on earth.

Besides, the parallel sentence "We come from water. It nourished us inside our mother's body. As it nourishes us here on Mother Earth" strengthens this matching effect with literary writing (Linstrom 8). The first two parts say the womb is where life begins; the last part shows Mother Earth feeds human beings. There, Linstrom uses water as a thread to connect these core images, comparing small-scale body reproduction and large-scale nature nourishment, while lifting the human-nature relationship from living together to a deep life bond. It prepares for the later talk about ecological and gender topics. This idea of life bond, based on the female body and centered on water, is also passed down and deepened in tribal motherly knowledge. Linstrom takes Nokomis (Grandmother of Girl)'s words as the core of motherly wisdom about water. She shows the sacredness and authority of tribal motherly knowledge in many ways. It builds a cultural fight of feminism against the patriarchal system.

Nokomis tells "me" that "Water is the first medicine," showing the Ojibwe women's understanding of nature and life living together, passed down through generations. It makes clear the special attitude of the motherly group to protect and respect water (Linstrom 7). She further tells "me" that "Water has its own spirit (Linstrom 34)" and "Water is alive. Water remembers our ancestors/ who came before us. (Linstrom 35)". These authoritative Ojibwe motherly ideas give water two qualities: spirit and memory. They set the sacred position of water in tribal culture. In the Ojibwe culture, grandmothers pass down motherly blood and knowledge. Their words carry the cultural task of protecting water and the earth. Linstrom uses three lines from Nokomis to show how the authority of motherly knowledge supports people's faith in protecting water. With these authoritative motherly words, people learn the sacred value of water. They become more determined to fight the black snake and protect water sources.

In terms of the water image, the text takes water as the core link to build a shared-life bridge between nature and the human body. In the text's symbolic system, amniotic fluid, which stands for life origin and reproductive power, is sharply contrasted with fire, which stands for industrial civilization. Based on this contrast, the author uses the black snake as the core symbol to think about ecological issues in the work. The author first writes about the destructive ecological violence caused by the black snake in plain words. She shapes it as an evil force that tramples on natural tribes. The predictive line "My people talk of a black snake that will destroy the land. Spoil the water, Poison plants and animals. Wreck everything in its path" shows the black snake's full damage to land, water, plants, and animals (Linstrom 12). The scene description "Now the black snake is here. Its venom burns the land. Courses through the water (Linstrom 1819) further show the terrible ecological

situation when the black snake runs wild. These two lines directly expose the irreversible harm to natural ecology caused by the pipeline it stands for. They express the tribe's fight against ecological damage. The shared life represented by water is also sharply contrasted with colonial robbery brought by industrial fire. The Ojibwe people see colonizers as pipelines of "industrial progress". They reimagine colonizers as a black snake with metaphors that colonizers can understand. This way of showing the harm of colonial resource robbery through colonizers' own language system achieves an ironic overturn of colonial words. The line "My people talk of a black snake that will destroy the land. Spoil the water, Poison plants and animals. Wreck everything in its path" uses colonizers' language logic to make a metaphor (Linstrom 12). It calls their industrial behavior a destructive evil force. It mocks their act of forcing industrial expansion on Aboriginal land. The line "Now the black snake is here. Its venom burns the land. Courses through the water" uses the colonial words framework to expose the lie that colonizers say pipelines are "safe and harmless" (Linstrom 18-19). It shows the destructive nature of colonial behavior in the colonizers' own words.

The author further focuses on the womb image. She completes the matching between body and nature. She explains the double thinking about ecological and gender issues in the work. Around this body-nature matching, the author hides gender violence in the story of ecological violence. The line "In Ojibwe culture, women are the protectors of the water and men are the protectors of the fire (Linstrom 38)" makes clear their protective tribal culture. This is also the base of tribal cultural authority formed by body-nature matching. Here, the female body is not a passive thing watched by colonizers. It is the subject that holds up nature. It is the subject that chooses to keep being a protector through children. The random damage to water sources by black snake can be seen as consumer culture that ruins ecology, directly violating the female cultural duties of the group, built on body-nature matching. This weakens women's gender cultural authority. It makes their water-protecting task lose its support. This hidden gender violence and ecological violence happen at the same time and mix. They together form the core of double violence. Taking body-nature matching as the cultural base, from the postcolonial view, with Homi Bhabha's postcolonial resistance theory, the author writes about the Ojibwe people's water-protecting struggle. She turns the shared-life link between the female body and water into a resisting force. She shows the postcolonial practice of Aboriginal people's ironic resistance using colonizers' language. Black snake, as the core symbol, becomes a key tool for Aboriginal people to rebuild colonial words and carry out cultural resistance. Bhabha (1994) says that in the postcolonial context, colonized groups can copy and rebuild colonizers' language and symbols. They can break their word control with irony. They can turn colonial words into a tool to criticize colonial acts. This is an important way for them to realize postcolonial cultural resistance. Bhabha sees the colonized people's strategic adoption and reworking of colonial language as mimicry and ironic resistance against colonial authority (Bhabha, The Location of Culture). This kind of mimicry takes concrete shape across WWP. The Ojibwe people mix their own cultural core with colonizers' language. They make colonial language a tool to show aboriginal positions and criticize colonial acts. The line "We are water protectors WE STAND! MNI WICONI No DAPL (Linstrom 37)." uses "No DAPL", the English phrase from colonizers. Aboriginal people put it together with their own motto, "MNI WICONI". They shout the slogan against industrial colonialism in colonizers' language. Notably, these capitalized letters appear in intentional uppercase. This capitalization echoes the rhythm of Indigenous oral protest and ceremonial speech, marking these phrases as collective, performative declarations rather than descriptive text. It visually asserts the linguistic sovereignty of "MNI WICONI" alongside the political weight of "No DAPL," refusing to subordinate Indigenous voices within colonial syntax. This mixed language expression shows the real use of Bhabha's (1994) postcolonial ironic word theory.

3. Conclusion

This study takes the cosmocentric worldview as the core and combines the perspectives of ecological cosmocentrism and postcolonial feminism to conduct a case study on Lindstrom's

children's picture book, *WWP*. It explains the connotation and expression of the Ojibwe people's cosmocentric worldview in the book.

From the perspective of ecological cosmocentrism, the study sorts out how the book criticizes the ecological damage caused by modern industrial projects through the symbol of the black snake. It also expounds the Ojibwe cultural core of humans and nature being one, clarifies the interdependent relationship between humans and nature, and shows the Indigenous people's collective sense of resistance and intergenerational responsibility in the face of ecological threats. From the perspective of postcolonial feminism, the study uncovers the isomorphic connection between women's bodies and nature in the book and reveals the cultural identity of Indigenous women as water protectors and the inheritance value of matrilineal knowledge. It analyzes the intertwined state of ecological and gender violence, and also shows how the Indigenous people carry out anti-colonial discourse practices by using the colonizers' language, highlighting the subjectivity and resistance of local culture in a colonial context.

This case study defines the educational value of Indigenous ecological-themed children's picture books. Such books can pass on ethnic ecological knowledge and cultural identity to Indigenous women, let ethnic minorities perceive the value of local ecological wisdom, and also convey diverse views on nature and the concept of environmental justice to the mainstream white group, promoting different groups to understand and recognize Indigenous ecological culture. This study has certain limitations. It only selects a single picture book as the research sample, making the research scope narrow. Moreover, it mainly relies on textual analysis, without an indepth exploration of the visual image elements of the picture book, nor has it conducted comparative and intertextual analysis between this book and other Indigenous ecological-themed children's picture books.

Future research can expand the sample scope and include more similar picture books for comparative analysis, and conduct a comprehensive interpretation by considering both textual and visual image elements of picture books. The research can also explore the common and unique features of similar works through intertextual analysis, enrich the research dimensions of Indigenous ecological-themed children's picture books, and make relevant research more diverse in content and perspective.

References

[1] Lindstrom, Carole. *First Opinion: Autumn Peltier, Water Warrior.* Roaring Brook Press, 2023. p. 1-2.

[2] Yoon, Stephanie Rollag, Alexandra Panos, and Candance Doerr-Stevens, et al. *Climate Literacy in Education.* University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, 2024.p.1.

[3] Suma, K., and Dr. Kashif Ilyas. "Roots and Deep Respect: Indigenous Ecological Knowledge in Literature and Poetry." *International Journal of Research Publication and Reviews.* Vol. 6 (2025) No. 4, p. 7347-7348.

[4] Otero, Iago, et al. "Exploring the Personal Sphere of Transformative Change in Researchers and Stakeholders Working on Nature." *Ecosystems and People*. Vol. 21 (2025) No. 1, p. 3-13.

[5] Cometan. *The Story of Astronism and the Beliefs of the World's First Cosmocentric Religion That Was Founded in Lancashire.* 2021.p. 1-2.

[6] Deb, Pranay. "*Cosmocentrism: A Paradigm of Environmental Ethics.*" *Journal of Applied Research in Humanities, Language and Social Sciences*. Vol. 1 (2021) No. 1, p. 39.

[7] "Cosmocentric Value Systems." *Sustainability Directory*, 25 Dec. 2023, https://pollution.sustainability-directory.com/term/cosmocentric-value-systems/.

[8] Billiot, Shanondora, et al. "Indigenous Perspectives for Strengthening Social Responses to Global Environmental Changes: A Response to the Social Work Grand Challenge on Environmental Change." *Journal of community practice.* Vol.27 (2019) No. 3-4, p. 296-316.

[9] Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, edited by Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, University of Illinois Press, 1988, p. 271-313.

[10] Plumwood, Val. *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*. Routledge, 1993. p. 41-42.

[11] Smith, Linda Tuhiwai. *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples.* Zed Books, 1999. p. 21.

[12] Li, Hua. “Chinese SF and Environmental Criticism: From the Anthropocentric to the Cosmocentric.” *SFRA Review*. Vol. 51 (2021) No. 2, p. 116-123.

[13] Wildcat, Daniel R. “Earth – a place for indigenous solutions” in *A companion to public philosophy*. eds. L. McIntyre, N. McHugh and I. Olasov. 1st ed Hoboken: Wiley, 2022, p. 95-105.

[14] Salmon, Enrique. “Kincentric Ecology: Indigenous Perceptions of the Human–Nature Relationship.” *Ecological Applications*. Vol. 10 (2000) No. 5, p. 1327–1332.

[15] Hu, Shelia. “The Dakota Access Pipeline: What You Need to Know.” NRDC, 12 June 2024. https://www.nrdc.org/stories/dakota-access-pipeline-what-you-need-know.

[16] Hurlbert, Margot; Acharibasam, John Bosco; Datta, Ranjan; Strongarm, Sharon; Starblanket, Ethel. “Decolonizing Indigenous Drinking Water Challenges and Implications: Focusing on Indigenous Water Governance and Sovereignty.” *Water*. Vol.16 (2024) No.5, p. 8-13.

[17] Sobolievskyi, Yaroslav (2024). Philosophical and cosmological concepts in American transcendentalism. *Herald of Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv* [Вісник Киї вського національного університету імені Тараса Шевченка]. Vol. 2 (2024) No. 11, p. 46-48.