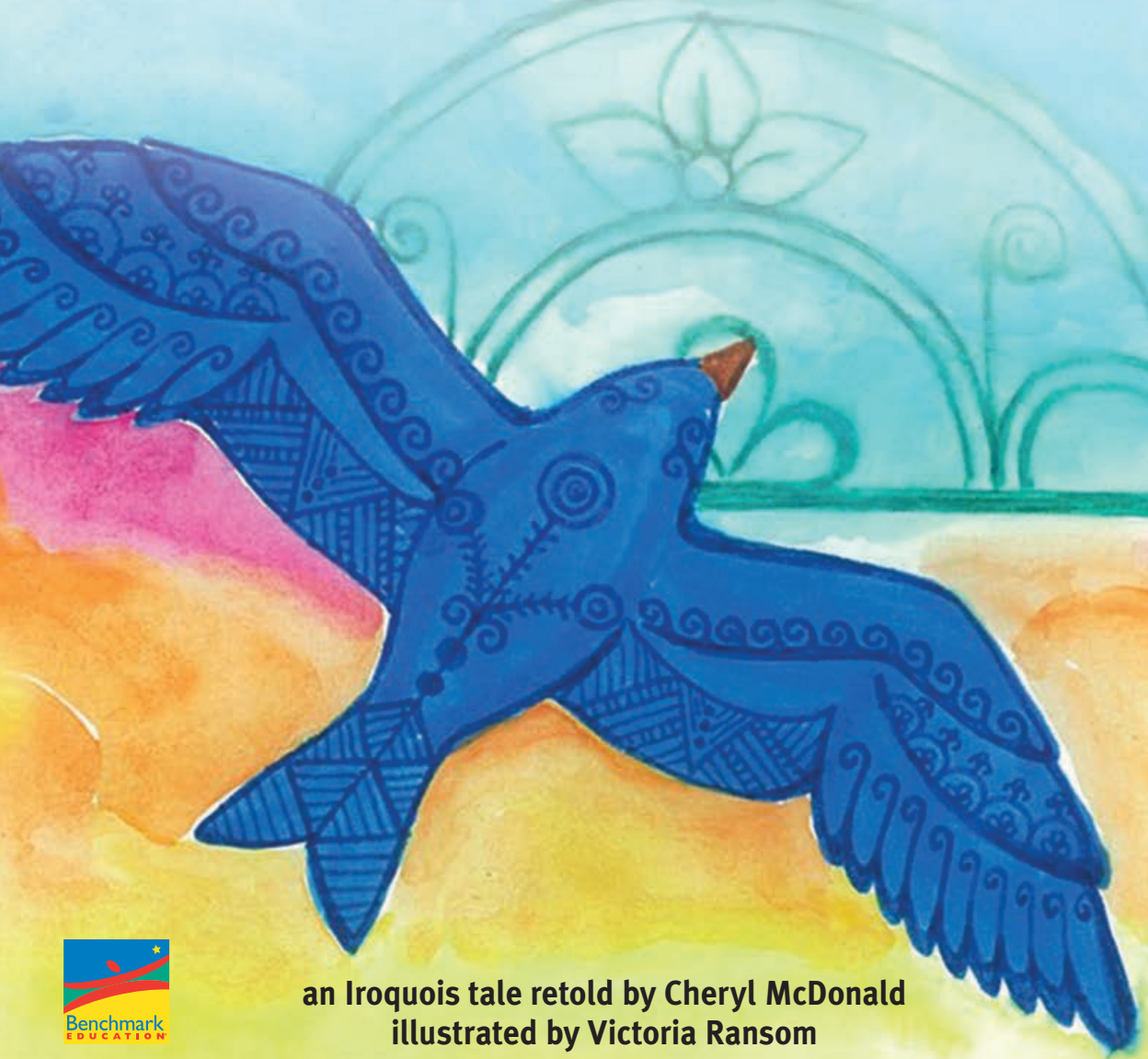


The Legend of Morning Star



Folktale

Look for the genre features noted below as you read this book. Use the features to help you understand the text.



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Chasing the Great Elk

There was once a Mohawk boy named Sosondowah (SO-soon-doh-wah). He loved to sit by the fire and listen to his father and grandfather tell tales of the great spirit elk. The elk could change into other animals. This power helped the elk escape from many hunting parties.





The name Sosondowah meant “he of the big night.” In time, he grew to be a great Mohawk hunter. One day, he set out to find the great spirit elk and learn its secret.

After years of searching, he followed the elk’s tracks to the highest mountain in the east. *Surely the elk will come down to drink at the river here,* thought the hunter. Then he fell asleep under a pine tree.

A loud waw, waw, waw woke Sosondowah. A pale pink light peeked through the dark sky.

“I am here to welcome you to the land of Dawn Woman,” said a large snow owl. “She will be here soon. May I ask why you are so far from your village?”

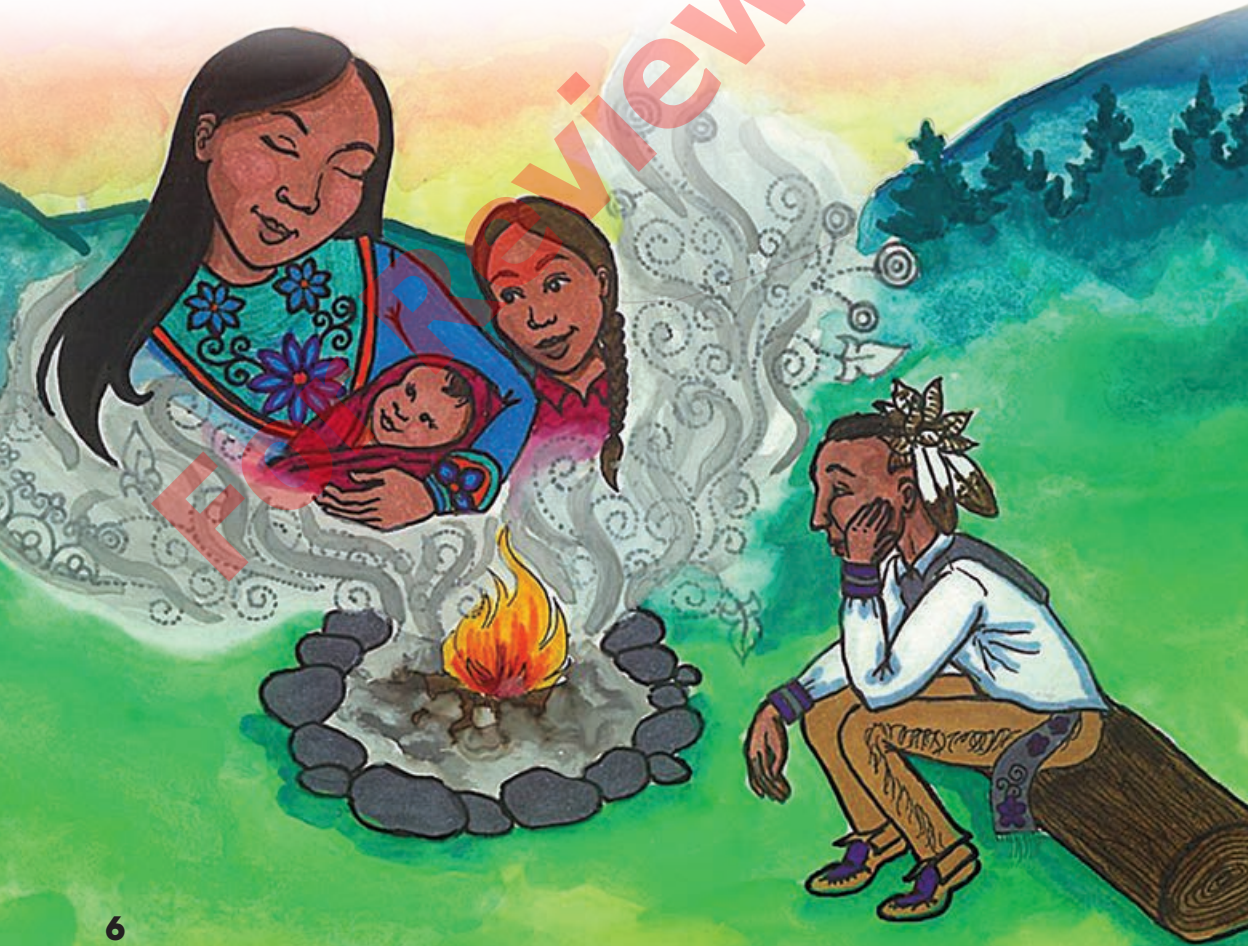


“I have been following the tracks of the great spirit elk,” said the hunter.

The beautiful white owl looked knowingly at the hunter. Then he said, “You have done well to get so close to him. But sadly, the great elk is getting too old to walk down to the valley.”



Sosondowah's shoulders slumped. He feared he would never learn the elk's shape-changing secret. Then he gazed into the coals of the fire. He thought about all the years he spent hunting the elk. *I never made time to have a family of my own.*





Then, from the east, the hunter saw a figure walking toward him. As it got closer, he heard a voice call out, “Say gooh. Skenna go ah.” Sosondowah recognized the Mohawk greeting. It meant “I hope you are at peace.”

“I am Dawn Woman,” said the figure. “Thank you for not pointing your arrow at the snow owl. He watches over the valley at night.”

Sosondowah stood and bowed to the goddess. "My people do not hunt snow owls. They are a respected winged spirit animal. Plus, the owl's message spared me from spending the fall and winter waiting for the great elk. I will return to my home now. I am sad, though, that the great elk will be leaving us."

"You will give up your hunt?" asked Dawn Woman. "That is an honorable deed." Then she, too, looked knowingly at Sosondowah. "I will tell you a secret. The great elk was disguised as the owl."

Sosondowah thought about this for quite some time. *I could have shot the owl and then captured the elk. But would I have shot the owl? No. I would not.*

Dawn Woman could tell what the hunter was thinking. Then she announced, "The great elk has grown old. I need to find a new guardian of the sacred lands. You have shown great respect for all living things."

