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Two-Spirit Development: How Indigenous Gender and Sexuality Result in Decolonization

Emma Tomb
Winona State University

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HIST 495

When prompted with the question "What does being Two-Spirit mean to you?" Lenny Hayes (Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate) responded "to me Two-Spirit identity means my connection to culture and spirituality, and my identity as a Native person."[1] The term Two-Spirit emerged in 1990 at the third annual Spiritual Gathering of Gay and Lesbian Native people in Winnipeg.[2] It is a pan-Indian term, that originates from the word *niizh manitoag* from the Northern Algonquin dialect. This means to literally have two spirits within one's body, implying both a male and female presence in one being. This term came about after 15 recorded years of community building and activism from Queer Indigenous North American activists, and is an important milestone in the creation of modern Indigenous identity and reclaiming of ancestral knowledge.[3]

The creation of the term Two-Spirit drastically changed the ideas and actions of Queer Native activism, because it not only helped to legitimize the connection that Queer Indigenous people had to their culture, but it also created and revitalized language for people to talk about sexuality from an Indigenous perspective. For many Queer Indigenous people like Hayes, the Two-Spirit identity has played a vital part in helping to identify themselves as an Indigenous person, as well as continuing to develop culturally significant roles in modern Native culture, despite the cultural genocide that happened alongside the colonization of North America. But, how did this identity shape the Queer Native movement in North America? This project seeks to

[1] Lenny Hayes, Interview by author, July 15, 2018. This is a common sentiment in all interviews I had. Many people stressed both the spiritual and cultural connection that this identity brought them. Many times, it was not a discussion of sexuality. This was very important in shaping my ideas of what this identity really meant in the contemporary context.
[2] Richard La Fortune, "A Postcolonial Colonial Perspective on Western [Mis]conceptions of the Cosmos and the Restoration of Indigenous Taxonomies" (Two-Spirit Papers, The Jean-Nickolaus Tretter Collection in Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Studies at the University of Minnesota, Box 1 folder 22.) 5.
[3] Throughout this paper, I use the terms "Queer Native People" and "Queer Indigenous people" interchangeably as an umbrella term to describe any gay, lesbian, non-binary, Indigenous, or third and fourth gendered Native North American person.

understand how this modern identity allows for the revitalization of historic third and fourth gender roles.

The creation of the Two-Spirit identity allowed for Queer Indigenous people to combine their sexuality and spiritual culture in a way that has allowed their historical queer roles to exist in the present day. This revitalization of ancestral and cultural knowledge into the contemporary setting as a form of identity and healing subsequently began to decolonize modern Indigenous North American culture. Before the creation of this identity, many Queer Indigenous people associated themselves with the contemporary LGBT community that was forming. Yet, they felt underrepresented as a minority group and faced both violence and rejection from their own Native groups. In the beginning of this period of Queer Indigenous activism, knowledge of many third and fourth gendered roles ceased to exist in tribal histories. This is because of the deliberation actions of the United States and Canadian government to erase the significance and existence of these third and fourth gendered people from historical discourse through assimilation of Native people to the new settler culture.[4] These actions of destruction and

[4] M Owlfeather, "Children of Grandmother Moon," in *Living the Spirit: A Gay American Indian Anthology*, ed. Will Roscoe, (New York, NY: St. Martins's Press, 1988.) 103.
Owlfeather, in a reflection of gay and lesbian Native people prior to 1988, mentions that knowledge of the "berdache" role, which is another term for third and fourth gendered people, has practically died off. Many people during this period, according to those in the gay community like Owlfeather, did not see themselves or their peers connecting to spiritual roles in their community that legitimized their sexuality.
Elizabeth Hoover, "You Can't Say You're Sovereign if you Can't Feed Yourself": Defining and Enacting Food Sovereignty in American Indian Community Gardening," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* (2017): 35. Accessed December 12th, 2018, DOI 10.17953/aicrj.41.3.hoover
In Hoover's article, she references Potawatomi philosopher Kyle Powys Whyte in her argument about Native food sovereignty in a way that applies to the loss of sexual sovereignty in this project. In the article Powys Whyte states that "many settler actions are tacit or involve ignorant moralizing narratives, when it comes to food sovereignty, U.S. settlers deliberately endorsed actions of erasure to undermine Indigenous collective self-determination." This was done to erase "the capacities that the societies that were already there—Indigenous societies—rely on for

assimilation to the settler lifestyle caused a cultural genocide and resulted in many Native nation's loss of sovereign knowledge.[5] These actions included the boarding school system which removed several generations of Indigenous children from their homes and prevented the passing of tribal knowledges from their elder to them. In other ways, it included either the murder of Queer Indigenous people by the government or in their forced assimilation to their biological sex while in the boarding schools.[6]

A final way is through academic cultural genocide where early anthropologists and ethnographers interacting with Native nations for the first time did not understand these spiritual third and fourth gendered people within the context of Indiginious society and downplayed their significance in Native culture. This left an extremely limited and very misunderstood set of histories existing about historical Queer Native people today. Misrepresentation in academia so that contemporary Queer Native people could not do research on their historical knowledges beyond asking elders in their community severely contributes to this loss of sovereign knowledge and had for many years prevented Queer Indigenous people from understanding the connection between their sexuality and their culture.

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the sake of exercising their own collective self-determination over their cultures, economies, health, and political order." These ideas are important in the context of any forced loss of knowledge.

[5] Sovereignty is define as the authority of a state or people to govern themselves. Indigenous Nations are sovereign nation within the United States and allowed to govern themselves as well as control their own systems of beliefs and knowledges. The beginnings of tribal sovereignty were granted in the 1800's. However, when the United States deliberately works to assimilate the beliefs and ideas of Indigenous people it begins to impede on their ability to govern their own beliefs and ideas, meaning that it begins to take away their sovereignty.

[6] Scott L. Morgensen, "SETTLER HOMONATIONALISM: Theorizing Settler Colonialism within Queer Modernities," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 16 no. 1-2 (2010): 115, accessed October 25, 2018, doi:10.1215/10642684-2009-015.

After the loss of these tribal knowledges during assimilation, Indigenous people instead began to identify with mainstream gay and lesbian identities that settlers brought to North America. What the Two-Spirit identity did after 1990 is begin to revitalize tribal specific roles so Queer Indigenous people could then begin to combine their identity as both Indigenous and Queer. This came after more than a decade of organization and research from Queer Native groups who worked to try and heal from the loss of tribal knowledges in their community and reclaim their legitimacy in their culture as modern Queer people. My research is a comparison between the work and identity of early activist groups like the Gay American Indians and the American Indian Gay and Lesbian association between 1975 and 1990, and contemporary Two-Spirit people today to see how traditional tribal knowledges are present in the modern day and what has changed between the two eras.

When discussing the history of sexuality in North America, one cannot escape the topic of colonization and its systems of oppression. Scholars across several disciplines beyond history are clear in their understanding that systems of assimilation are the reason for the destruction and suppression of Queer Native culture. While I agree with this, my research takes this idea one step further to understand how the contemporary development of the Two-Spirit identity leads to processes of decolonization. This development is important to understand because I see it as a start to the transformation of Modern Native culture in a way that has allowed Native people to take back the control of their traditional beliefs and make them relevant in the modern day, despite the cultural genocide their beliefs have been through.

Before colonization and assimilation, all tribal cultures saw early third and fourth gendered people differently. Each one had a specific role in society, and were highly respected. Though he provides a contemporary perspective from the late 1990's, prominent Minneapolis

based Two-Spirit activist Richard La Fortune (Yupiit) in a speech about his own life as a Two-Spirit man, offers a concise explanation to how tribes viewed third and fourth gendered people before assimilation:

> Each human being is born because a Man and a Woman are joined in creating each new life, and all human beings intrinsically bear their imprints, although some individuals may manifest more qualities more completely than others. In explaining this term, I hope it is absolutely clear that it does not in any way determine genital activity. It does determine the qualities that define a person's social role and spiritual gift.[7]

Here, Lafortune is stressing that Indigenous society determined a person's role by their spirit and not their reproductive organs. Not only were there spiritually important third and fourth gender roles in Native cultures, but some sources say that same sex intercourse among biologically assigned males or females was also very common.

Indigenous societies do not naturally have heteronormative, single family units and do not determine someone's role in society from their sexual organs. For example, Native cultures did not concern themselves with defining gendered roles through their language. In the English language, pronouns like him and her in describing a person come along with a set of assumptions, most often about a person's masculinity or femininity, that we can place on a person before even meeting them. This is not something that was present in the early Dakota language. Lenny Hayes in working with elders from the Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate community came to discover that things like pronouns did not previously exist in Dakota culture. Hayes explained that yes, the Dakota had language to describe men or women, but the language itself did not gender words and the Dakota just treated everyone like a human being, in Hayes' words.[8]

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[7] Richard La Fortune, "A Postcolonial Colonial Perspective on Western [Mis]conceptions of the Cosmos and the Restoration of Indigenous Taxonomies" (Two-Spirit Papers, The Jean-Nickolaus Tretter Collection in Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Studies at the University of Minnesota, Box 1 folder 22.) 5.
[8] Lenny Hayes, Interview by author, July 15, 2018.

According to Hayes, this is how Native cultures existed, with little to no emphasis on basing one's gender on their biological sex, and third and fourth gendered people, who existed as a combination of male and female roles in society, were highly respected. This would not be the case after colonization and anglicized assimilation.

The history of Queer Indigenous identity is inherently multidisciplinary. Scholars from Native Studies, Gender Studies, Anthropology and History have all contributed to the scholarship on this topic. Sue Ellen Jacobs was one of the earliest Anthropologists to do studies in "berdachism" during her graduate studies in the 1970s.[9] Most of the recent research focuses on the early and pre-contact histories of Queer Natives, to try and re write the history that early twentieth century researchers omitted. This in in conjunction with the efforts of Queer Indigenous people working with elders in their community to try and collect tribal knowledge of historical queer roles as well as the understanding of non-gendered language, to try and create a deeper connection for contemporary Queer Indigenous People to their culture. However there are a number of prominent pieces of scholarship that talk about the 1975 to 1990 era of Queer Indigenous activism.

Two of the first prominent writings about Queer Native History are by Walter L. Williams in his book The Spirit and the Flesh, and Paula Gunn Allen's (Laguna Pueblo-Sioux) The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions both of which they first published in 1986. Both Williams and Allen focus on the existence of Queer Native people in their contemporary context, and the disconnect between Native cultures and the LGBT community. Since these two scholars wrote their books before 1990, Williams still heavily uses

[9] Walter Williams, *The Spirit and the Flesh: Sexual Diversity in American Indian Culture*, (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1992), 205.

the term "berdache" which is a term not preferred by Native people that had academics had frequently prior to the creation of the term Two-Spirit, and Allen uses "lesbian" because she focused her book on the female perspective of modern Native culture. Both books focus on modern Queer Indigenous people needing to fulfill their spiritual roles in order to combat systems of assimilation that have separated Native people from their cultural heritage.[10] Williams paints the picture that colonization has forced many Queer Indigenous people to move to urban spaces to pursue their "homosexual tendencies," but says they should be staying within their community to fulfil their spiritual role.[11] He sees that the concern with sexuality is what is causing issues between "berdache" men and their cultures.[12] Williams perspective on this topic is that contemporary LGBT culture is a system of colonization that takes over Queer Natives and removes them from their heritage and community, which is why there is an issue between the two groups. He sees Queer Native men in the balance between homosexuality and their Native culture, trying to be both but not fitting into either.

Allen on the other hand, sees the assimilation of Native cultures, as well as the heteronormativity of scholarship written about Indigenous culture, as having removed Lesbians from history, and destroyed cultural knowledges of lesbian roles in Native society. This cause the removal and stigmatization of same sex female relationships in the present day. She sees the

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[10] Walter Williams, *The Spirit and the Flesh: Sexual Diversity in American Indian Culture*, (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1992), 202, 210.
Paula Gunn Allen, *The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions,* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1992), 247.
Williams argues that American concepts of sexuality and gender "distorted the Native American emphasis on a berdashe's spirit as more important than his physical attributes." And Allen saying, "For American Indian people, the primary value was relationship to the Spirit world."
[11] Ibid., 210.
[12] Ibid., 217. He says specifically "gays are not condemned by the traditionalists [Natives] because of their sexual behavior, but because they are not fulfilling their spiritual role in life."

colonial systems of Christianity and heteropatriarchy as main driving force in assimilation that destroyed cultural knowledge of women's roles like Koskalaka in the Lakota tradition, which is why Native lesbians today feel so disconnected from society.[13] Allen, like Williams, sees that there is a disconnect between Queer Native women from Native culture. She also believes that systems of assimilation are what cause this, but her belief is that colonization destroyed previous tribal knowledges of historic gay and lesbian roles.

More recent perspectives on this topic come from Mark Rifkin's book When Did The Indians Become Straight? from 2011 and Scott Lauria Morgensen's article "Settler Homonationalism" written in 2010. Both approach the topic of modern Queer Native History from a gender and sexuality studies lens, and discuss colonial methods of oppression like Allen and Williams. A major difference between the older theory and the new is that Williams and Allen believe that gay people existed within Native culture, and Morgensen and Rifkin believe that all historical Native culture was queer. For Rifkin, in the contemporary setting, there is a "bribe of straightness" that continues to push Native nations, like that of the Navajo and Cherokee nations in the early 2000's, to enforce homophobic laws under the guise of "tradition."[14] This "bribe of straightness" is something that was written into the United States policy to assimilate Native people into a lifestyles and societal roles that are closer to dominant

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[13] Paula Gunn Allen, *The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1992.) 258, 259, 255. Koskalaka meaning "Young man" or "woman who does not want to marry" or as she puts it "dyke"
Her strongest belief is the Christianity/heteropatriarchy. "The modern lesbian sees herself as distinct from 'society.'" Allen 255 Allen also deeply believes that Queer Native women should not be compared to white lesbians. "The concepts of tribal cultures and of modern, western cultures are so dissimilar as to make ludicrous attempts to relate the long-ago women who dealt with exclusively with women on sexual-emotional and spiritual bases to modern women who have in common are erotic attraction for other women."

[14] Mark Rifkin, *When Did Indians Become Straight? Kinship, the History of Sexuality, and Native Sovereignty*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 276.

American culture. The "bribe of straightness" which has allowed Native people into places likened to that of white privilege, pushes Native people and intellectuals to portray Indigenous traditions to seem as "straight" or as normalized to dominant culture's social constructions as possible.[15] Rifkin sees assimilation and white privilege as having inserted their ways into Native tribal government and culture, and that Native traditionalists would deny their own histories to receive privilege in this modern settler state.

Rifkin argues that what makes tribal leadership homophobic are ideas that developed though Native assimilation to mainstream American culture. This is waht destroyed cultural sovereignty and are now causing Native people to internally destroy queer traditions to become "more successful" in the settler state. This allows them to reap the privileges of succumbing to white privilege in a world dictated by colonial racism.[16] Morgensen's piece differs in that he sees all dominant society's forms of sexuality, heterosexual or not, as systems meant to remove Native culture. Possibly the most important part of his argument is this:

> Scholars must recognize that modern sexuality is not a product of settler colonialism, as if it came into being in the United States after settlement transpired. Modern sexuality arose in the United States as a method to produce settler colonialism, and settler subjects, by facilitating ongoing conquest and naturalizing its effects.[17]

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[15] Mark Rifkin, *When Did Indians Become Straight? Kinship, the History of Sexuality, and Native Sovereignty*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 276.

[16] Ann Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule*, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2010), 24.
Stoler explores how European settlers maintained their false legitimacy to several colonies like Java, Samoa, and India. She argued that maintaining European culture in these outer lying colonies was key to developing colonial racism. Europeans needed to seem like their culture was superior and could function in any setting, even though there were many cases in which European culture specifically was not practical

[17] Scott L. Morgensen, "SETTLER HOMONATIONALISM: Theorizing Settler Colonialism within Queer Modernities," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 16 no. 1-2 (2010): 177, accessed October 25, 2018, doi:10.1215/10642684-2009-015.

Here, Morgensen is explaining that contemporary sexualities developed in conjunction with settler colonialism. They are a tool used to spread settler's culture and help maintain colonial hierarchies. Contemporary North American sexualities developed to dismantle Native culture. Dominant culture normalized European standards of sexualities and family units, and other non-white minorities have been able to develop alongside this normalization in order to benefit from hierarchical privileges achieved from succumbing to these systems of colonization.

All four of these scholars agree that the Queer Native role is beyond that of a sexuality, and that it both has spiritual implications and deals with concepts of gender. In contrast, Brian Joseph Gilley offers a critique of how academics write about and consider contemporary Native Two-Spirit roles. In his essay "Two-Spirit Men's Sexual Survivance against the Inequality of Desire" Gilley argues that while authors like Williams and Allen write heavily on the spiritual role of Two-Spirit people in Native society, they are severely downplaying the role of desire in Queer Native Americans lives. Though Two-spirit people did play an important spiritual role in historical Indigenous society, contemporary Native communities still understand them by their homosexual actions. To Gilley, academics cannot boil down the Two-Spirit role to something void of desire, it must include things like same-sex relations and desire to fit a contemporary lens.[18]

A major similarity these scholars have is that they discuss the destruction of knowledge via assimilation as what destroyed tribal sovereignty and halted the spread of tribally significant queer culture. I believe that this scholarship around the destruction of culture due to assimilation is necessary to discuss, but there is a larger thread of modern cultural revitalization that academia

[18] Brian Joseph Gilley, "Two-Spirit Men's Sexual Survivance against the Inequality of Desire," in *Queer Indigenous Studies*, (University of Arizona Press, 2011), 218.

has yet to describe in the historical discourse. The Queer Indigenous movement that has existed since the mid twentieth century drastically changed with the introduction of the Two-Spirit identity. The rhetoric, cultural connections, and identity of Queer Native people after 1990 became much more Native-centric, and is now developing an autonomously Indigenous space in the settler state. This was all spurred by the early work of groups like the GAI and AIGL that began organizing the Queer Native community in the 1970's and 1980's. This is such an important development in modern Native culture, because the creation of the Two-Spirit identity allowed for the bridging of traditional knowledge and sexuality that had never existed in the settler state.[19]

My research compares the two eras of activism by Queer Indigenous North Americans to identify the difference in how they identify themselves and connect to their culture. I begin with the work of Queer Native groups that developed starting in the Mid 1970's to the mid 1990's, right after the development of the mainstream gay and lesbian liberation groups, as well as the American Indian Movement. Not only were the groups like the GAI and AIGL beginning to create conversation around the unique discrimination that Queer Indigenous people experienced but they were also the first to develop a pan-Indian community. Writings from the leaders of these organizations as well as early posters, fliers, meeting minutes and event descriptions are evidence of how closely tied these early Queer Indigenous organizations were to mainstream gay and lesbian liberation identities, and what kind of presence individual cultures had in their

[19] Global Social Theory, "Settler Colonialism," Accessed December 11th, 2018. https://globalsocialtheory.org/concepts/settler-colonialism/ The settler state is defined as "Settler colonialism is a distinct type of colonialism that functions through the replacement of indigenous populations with an invasive settler society that, over time, develops a distinctive identity and sovereignty."

activism. These I will compare to first hand interviews and artwork by Two-Spirit people from 1990 to now in order to compare the differences between the two eras.

Queer Native groups did not begin organizing until 1975, following the examples of both the mainstream gay and lesbian liberation movement as well as AIM which began in 1968. Before this, Queer Native Americans did not openly express their sexuality while in their Native communities. Because of this, Many Queer Native moved or found their way to Urban settings away from communities and tribal governance.[20] In many ways, Queer Native people chose to identify with mainstream gay and lesbian communities because they did not have knowledge of their own spiritual and cultural roles. This is again because of the prevention of the passing of cultural knowledges due to boarding schools and the murder of many third and fourth gendered people during assimilation. This again impeded on tribal sovereign knowledge and kept many tribal cultures from continuing traditional practices. The loss of this knowledge often manifested in homophobia and abuse from families of Queer Indigenous people.

Author and poet M. Owlfeather (Shoshone-Metis Cree) writes a clear example of how separated LGBT Natives felt from their own community.

> It is unfortunate that among today's gay Indians the great traditions and visions of the old-time berdache has been suppressed and is nearly dead. Gay Indians today grow up knowing that they are different, act in a different way, and perceive things in a different light from other Indians. They know these things, but sometimes are afraid to act or acknowledge their gayness. If they do, they try to accept and emulate the only alternative lifestyle offered to them, that of the current gay society.[21]

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[20] Walter Williams, *The Spirit and the Flesh: Sexual Diversity in American Indian Culture*, (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1992), 207. Discusses the influence of AIM and mainstream GLBT liberation groups.
M Owlfeather, "Children of Grandmother Moon," in *Living the Spirit: A Gay American Indian Anthology*, ed. Will Roscoe, (New York, NY: St. Martins's Press, 1988.) 103. Discusses Native's reluctance to be out in Native communities.

[21] M Owlfeather, "Children of Grandmother Moon," in *Living the Spirit: A Gay American Indian Anthology*, ed. Will Roscoe, (New York, NY: St. Martins's Press, 1988.) 103.

Here, Owlfeather, a Queer Indigenous person who worked with the GAI, is reflecting on their first-hand accounts of gay and lesbian Indigenous people's need to reject their own culture and associate with that of the mainstream society. Owlfeather knows that this feeling of "difference" in the gay Native community comes from the fact that spiritual and cultural aspects of Queer Native traditions were not being taught or spoken about, because of the loss of cultural sovereignty. Therefore, elders were not passing down queer cultural knowledge and significance, and tribal communities were not only succumbing to assimilation's normalization to straightness, but were also rejecting Queer Natives from their communities. The only group Queer Indigenous people had during this time of the 1970's was mainstream gay culture, according to Owlfeather.

In some ways, the more a Queer Native person associated with the mainstream Gay and Lesbian liberation community the less that they connected to their own Indigenous culture. Amanda White (Haida Nation) a First-Nation Canadian woman who worked in the Canadian women's movement during the 1980's was interviewed for the documentary Forbidden Love: The Unashamed Stories of Lesbian Lives, felt that her queer identity was not associated in any way with her Native culture. In a later interview from 2009, the interviewer asked her to reflect on her past and growing up both as a lesbian and a first nation women, White mentions:

> How I see my identity as being a dyke? I think my identity more as a dyke has come out more within the women's movement. And stuff. Not out -like, within the native community.[22]

Amanda did not grow up in close connection to her cultural heritage because the government sent her to residential school as at such a young age. As an adult she discovered her lesbian identity, and associated her sexuality with the mainstream women's movement, since that is

[22] Nailisa, "Amanda White Transcript," *Archive of Lesbian Oral Testimonies*, accessed October 23rd, 2018, https://alotarchives.org/content/amanda-white

where she learned about same sex sexuality. Amanda uses terms like dyke and later lesbian which are identities that align with mainstream sexualities. Since the term lesbian associates with mainstream female roles, Amanda then is situating herself in the mainstream gender binary and succumbing herself to specific female gender expectations. This identity then replaces any traditional Queer roles that existed, either historically or presently, in her Haida culture. Amanda associates her identity as a First-Nations Haida woman as connecting her to her homelands, where her identity as a feminist in the mainstream women's movement in Canada is where she associates her sexuality.[23] For Amanda, in reflecting on her life in the 1970s and 1980s, she feels there exists a clear separation between her cultural identity and her sexuality.

Groups like the Gay American Indians started by Randy Burns (Northern Paiute) and Barbara May Cameron (Lakota) starting in San Francisco in 1975, as well as the American Indian Gays and Lesbians association started by Richard Lafortune (Yupik) in 1987 in Minneapolis began to emerge to specifically develop community support and serve the unique needs Queer Native people had. In the beginning, these organizations still functioned as gay and lesbian groups, meaning that they more associated with the mainstream sexuality. However, their development was the beginning of creating an autonomously Native space in which Queer Native culture would begin to resurrect historical knowledge. Pamphlets, posters, mailers and meeting minutes from these groups all evidence of what the groups were trying to accomplish.

A mailer from the AIGL sent out in 1988 gives the groups purpose and intentions right on the front page. In bold type, it tells readers:

> Too often American Indian Gays and Lesbians "tough it out" in isolation. American Indians Gay and Lesbians provides an opportunity to share our unique experiences, form a strong network, and just enjoy being together.[24]

[23] Ibid., 27.
[24] American Indian Gays & Lesbians Pamphlet, 1988, Two-Spirit Papers, Box 3 folder 16.

This paragraph is included alongside clear information on when and where the groups next meeting would be. At this point the organization was one year old and had a strong message of togetherness and support. The idea that Queer Natives have to "tough it out" is the group being very self-aware of the specific discriminations that Queer Native people feel, and that they have to support each other as a community in order to overcome this. Though this is building a network specifically for Queer Indigenous people, other than mentioning this is a group for Native people specifically, there is no indication of cultural ties or any connection to the spiritual aspect of Queer Native culture. There is still a separation between specific traditional Native practices and gay or lesbian sexuality.

Many of the events planned by the AIGL that they recorded in their flyers and posters in the first few years of operation reveal that the intentions of this group were to again create a safe and constructive network for the Queer Native community. Some of the early events that they planned were to conduct "[anti] homophobia trainings",[25] organize gay pride events, talking circles, and provide free self-defense classes.[26] They also held many picnics and events with food to bring their community together. One poster that advertised their office housewarming party, mentions a community potluck. This event was to have "light refreshments," be "chemically-free" and is "accessible for people in Wheelchairs."[27] It started with an office blessing, and the AIGL extended the invitation to the greater Native community.

[25] American Indian Gays & Lesbians Meeting Minuites, c. 1988, Two-Spirit Papers, box 3 folder 16.
[26] Ibid.
[27] American Indian Gays & Lesbians Housewarming Poster, c. 1988, Two-Spirit Papers, box 3 folder 16.

This is significant because the AIGL was a group focused on bringing people together to celebrate through food, while making sure that anyone could participate, which is why the event was both chemically free and handicap accessible. Again, this has a heavy focus on community building and inclusivity, and not specific Queer Indigenous practices. The only piece that indicates a Native cultural reference is the mention of an "office blessing" that would be taking place. The type of blessing is not specified but most likely involved a form of sage smudging which is a popular practice of both the Dakota and Ojibwe people from the Minnesota area. This is a major indication of the beginnings of the AIGL making cultural connections to specific sacred practices during their events. In other paperwork before this point in the archival records from this group there is no mention of something spiritually significant like this blessing. This may seem like a small gesture, but it is really the beginning of a step towards cultural revitalization.

Queer Indigenous people often felt multiple forms of discrimination for both being Native as well as being Queer. This often lead people to suffer from violence and homophobia from both non-Native people as well as their own Indigenous community. In her memoir, the Two-Spirit Elder Ma-Nee Chacaby (Ojibwa-Cree) wrote about the violence she dealt with while living in Thunder Bay, Ontario, after a television interview publically outed her as a lesbian in 1988. Not only did she deal with parts of her family shunning her, but she also received threatening voicemails from anonymous people. That, and members of her Alcoholics Anonymous group began to treat her very poorly as well. After her interview aired she says she

was publically attacked three times by strangers that recognized her in Thunder Bay, Canada, and she suffered many injuries from each attack.[28]

Throughout much of her adult life, Chacaby worked with women's groups and in mainstream LGBT movements. She grew up in her Cree community learning spiritual and cultural teachings from her grandmother, but separated herself from many of these knowledges once she moved from her rural community to Thunder Bay. The teachings from her grandmother were not present or applicable to her work in the mainstream women's and homelessness groups she worked in. The time she spent in her young adult years identifying as a lesbian was not a spiritual role that held significance in her community, rather her community used it as an excuse to reject her. The violence and homophobia that Chacaby was dealing with in her life and from her community became the reason she so heavily connected to the mainstream lesbian identity during her young adult life.

This fear of being open about one's sexuality was something common for those heavily involved in Native communities like the American Indian Movement. Activist Beverly Little Thunder (Lakota) who had an early involvement in AIM dealt with many fears from her individual family as well as in the AIM community when she first discovered her sexuality as a lesbian. Little Thunder grew up in California removed from her Lakota community in South Dakota, she did not learn about significant cultural practices like sweat lodges and Sundances until she was a young adult and started to work closer with AIM. She said that in the early 1980's, she discovered the term lesbian from a group of white activists called the Prairie Fire that were helping to militarize AIM.

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[28] Ma-Nee Chacaby, *A Two-Spirit Journey: The Autobiography of a Lesbian Ojibwa-Cree Elder*, ed. Mary Louisa Plummer (Winnipeg, Manitoba: UMP, University of Manitoba Press, 2016), 145.

> It was through Prairie Fire that I first heard the word lesbian. For some reason I stayed in the apartment of a woman who had some books on lesbians. I remember devouring them thinking, wow, this is what I am; this is who I am. Of course, in the Native community, that wasn't something you talked about. I didn't know any Native Lesbians. The only Lesbians I knew were white women. They were somewhat of a curiosity and not anything like me, so I knew I couldn't be a lesbian because that's not the way I behaved or dressed or acted. [As a Lakota women][29]

This is evidence of a Native woman who feels a disconnect between the mainstream gay and lesbian culture and her Lakota identity. Little Thunder had such trouble accepting a lesbian identity because she felt it did not represent her identity as a Lakota woman. This was the very beginning of her learning about same sex sexuality, and throughout her memoire she talks about how fearful she was of this new information.[30]

In the 1980s her fourth and at the time current husband discovered her lesbian literature, and threatened to out her to the rest of the AIM community they worked with. This was a terrifying though to her because it would demolish her place as a leader in Sundances and AIM. Little Thunder did not come out publically with her identity for a long time because of a fear of violence and rejection from AIM leaders like Dennis Banks. This fear came from the fact that many Native women who tried to take any leadership position in AIM had their lives threatened from other male members.[31] She watched the activist community slander and reject other LGBT Natives and she feared that for herself. In her memoir, she wrote "Each year I felt more and more guilty because I sat there and said nothing. I realize now that it was internalized homophobia. I was afraid someone would know who I was."[32]

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[29] Beverly Little Thunder, *One Bead at A Time*, ed. Sharron Proulx-Turner, (Toronto: Inanna Publications, 2016), 73

[30] Little Thunder did come to acceptance of her lesbian identity later in her life and also became a very prominent member of the AIGL as a Two-Spirit woman.

[31] Beverly Little Thunder, *One Bead at A Time*, ed. Sharron Proulx-Turner, (Toronto: Inanna Publications, 2016), 83

[32] Ibid., 91.

For many years, Little Thunder stayed in silence to maintain her position as a leader as well as to protect herself. Later she did publically come out, but this was after the help of other women's groups and support from other Queer Native women in her community. This stark rejection from Native communities was something that groups like the AIGL were trying to change. Native cultures before assimilation would not have had this violence and homophobia towards individuals that fulfilled a spiritual role as a third and fourth gendered person.

As the AIGL began to develop, there is a shift in the group's focus towards including more Indigenous practices in their meetings and events. Their meetings start to include practices like pipe ceremonies, pow-wows and camping trips to sacred areas, which are meant to bring the members closer to their community culture. This was a way for these Queer Native communities to begin reclaiming parts of their heritage as way to heal themselves and create closer bonds as a community.

The GAI after 13 years of community work began doing specific research into the legitimization of Queer Native or "berdache" roles. Building this knowledge base and allowing Native communities to develop their own histories about their specific cultural roles came about in two forms. One was developing a database with the very early and prominent scholar in the history of Native sexuality Will Roscoe. Roscoe compiled a bibliography of 135 "alternative roles" from tribes across the United States from anthropological and historical primary sources.[33] The goal was to name as many specific "male" and "female" queer roles as possible. Roscoe's bibliography is about decolonizing academic scholarship and legitimizing the existence of these

[33] Will Roscoe, "Bibliography of berdache and alternative gender roles among North American Indians," *Journal of Homosexuality.* 81-171 (1987)

queer roles in history so that any Native person could do research and have access to information on Queer Indigenous history.

In working alongside Roscoe, the GAI also compiled Living the Spirit: A Gay American Indian Anthology that brought together several works written by Queer Indigenous people to help teach Native communities about historically significant Queer Native people. The introduction written by Randy Burns states that

> Gay American Indians was founded in 1975 by Randy Burns (Northern Paiute) and Barbara Cameron (Lakota Sioux) to serve the needs and interests of the gay American Indian community. We came together then to share a common identity, to give and receive emotional support, and to share our rich heritage as American Indians. [34]

Inside this book, members either used history or poetry to tell about historical and contemporary experiences of the Queer Indigenous people of North America. Maurice Kenny (Mohawk) worked with historical knowledge to tell the story of "the cult of the berdache"[35] mainly from the "Sioux," Chyenne and other plains tribes west of the Mississippi. Through this piece, Kenny uses anthropological sources like that of the trapper and trader Alexander Henry the Younger from 1801 to talk about the "transvestitism" in many Northern tribes where Queer Natives who were born male took on female roles. This is to help understand the spiritual importance of the "berdache" or specific roles like the Sauk and Fox's i-coo-coo-a, the Anishinaabe's agokwa, the Chyenne's hee-man-eh, and the Dakota's winkte.[36] Kenny even described more specific tasks that third and fourth gendered people would take on, saying:

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[34] Randy Burns, Introduction to In *Living the Spirit: A Gay American Indian Anthology*, edited by Will Roscoe, (New York, NY: St. Martins's Press, 1988), 3.
This was both published in the Journal of Homosexuality and is available for researchers to use in the GLBT Historical Societies archives in San Francisco.
[35] Maurice Kenny, "Tinselled Bucks: A historical study in Indian Sexuality," In *Living the Spirit: A Gay American Indian Anthology*, edited by Will Roscoe, (New York, NY: St. Martins's Press, 1988), 17.
[36] Ibid.,19.

> The berdache was often the tribe or band's medicine man, doctor, story teller, match maker, or leading scalp dancer. He functioned within the tribe. He was *sometimes* educated as a medicine man (holy man) as certain taboos in particular tribes forbade their high priest to marry women or father children.[37]

Kenny even went beyond this to talk about how regularly same sex intercourse happened between biological males, and how open and regular many tribes engaged in open sexual practices.[38] Kenny, along with other historians in this book, like Paula Gunn Allen, Midnight Sun (Anisnawbe) [sic] and Will Roscoe wrote these histories to give tangible examples of how Queer Indigenous people had a historical role in Native tradition, as well as to legitimize same sex copulation within tribal beliefs. These then could be examples to other gay and lesbian Natives to show that their sexuality had a legitimate role in pre-assimilated Native society.

Even though this organization held onto mainstream assimilated titles like "gay" or "berdache" their work was the beginning of an effort to start educating about specific spiritual queer roles. The GAI was choosing to re-write the cultural history that white anthropologists or ethnographers chose to not record in the nineteenth and twentieth century, and contextualize the often-negative perspective that many early scholars had of these early queer "dandies." The Historian Midnight Sun explains the importance of Indigenous people re-writing and re-contextualizing these histories by saying:

> The four-hundred-year history of ethnographic documentation on Native American people has been selective. This selectivity is most pronounced in the literature dealing with sex and gender relations, especially where those deviated from the bipolar European norms of the heterosexual "man" and "woman" and contradicted the European patriarchal

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[37] Maurice Kenny, "Tinselled Bucks: A historical study in Indian Sexuality," In *Living the Spirit: A Gay American Indian Anthology*, edited by Will Roscoe. (New York, NY: St. Martins's Press, 1988), 20.

[38] Ibid., 18. Since Kenny is writing about several plains tribes at once, he often blankets these ideas over all nations and does not always offer specific tribal instances in these broader claims. This is once instance where the idea of open homosexuality is being understood throughout multiple tribal nations and Kenny does not offer a specific piece of evidence.

> world view. As a result, the existence of different gender systems among native people have often been presented from a narrow perspective.[39]

Midnight Sun then later goes on to explain these "narrow perspective" through anthropologists Evelyn Blackwood's work on cross dressing individuals in Native groups, pointing out that she misunderstands the context of kinship and social organizations in Native nations that deviate from western understandings of the nuclear family. This, Midnight Sun explains, is an decontextualization of cultural understanding that removes surface action like "cross dressing" from the social structures in which they were built. Outsiders cannot understand these actions outside of the social construction that created them because gender is inherently dependent on the society it exists in, even though many European and American settlers try to normalize their notions of gender as a tool of colonial racism. Throughout this piece, Midnight Sun argues that one must understand Queer Native roles in the context of their society, and that early anthropologists and ethnographers did not do this. Therefore, groups like the GAI found it necessary to re write these histories, in order to inform other Indigenous groups of these histories within the context of their own society and cultural knowledge. This was to help rebuild the spiritual importance of Queer Native Roles. This was part of the GAI's intention to "share our rich heritage as American Indians" which reveals that they had the specific intention to build a community that understood the unique complications that both Queer and Native people had, which was the first steps towards reclaiming tribal knowledge about Queer Native tradition before 1990.

This activism and organizing period of Queer Native activism is important to understand because it was the first steps that Queer Natives took towards becoming a group that used

[39] Midnight Sun, "Sex/Gender Systems in Native North America," In *Living the Spirit: A Gay American Indian Anthology*, ed. Will Roscoe, (New York, NY: St. Martins's Press, 1988), 32.

cultural histories and sacred knowledges to cater to the specific needs of their marginalized community. In the very beginning, the groups operated simply to build community to offer support against violence and homophobia, but then began to fight back against this colonized mindset that dominant culture's gay and lesbian roles were the only form of same sex sexuality. The mindset and the way these groups began to identify took a dramatic turn after the 1990 coining of the term Two-Spirit. This identity worked to finally build a cross roads for Native people between their sexuality, and spirituality to fit in Native communities, and revitalize historically significant cultural roles. It did not resolve homophobia in any way, but it was the beginning to a new way to identify.

After 1990, Queer Indigenous people began to take hold of the Two-Spirit identity, and change their connection to their individual cultures. In this, there is evidence of many Queer Native people breaking the heteronormative binary of dominant culture such as artists identifying as non-binary or Lenny Hayes who prefers to not use pronouns, and associating their whole identity and gender with their individual Native culture. How the Two-Spirit identity works as a form of decolonization, is that it not only serves as a specific cultural connection to a spiritual role, but also removes Gay, Lesbian, and often male and female notions from Queer Indigenous people's lives. It instead directly replaces these social constructions built by the settler state with historical tribal knowledge that removes Queer Native people from the constrictions of gender assumptions and allows them to fulfill roles in their specific culture.

Two-Spirit became a term that functions as a beginning for Queer Native revitalization. This is not a permanent fixture in Native culture, and will eventually develop into something different, as all societal concepts do eventually. It is still functioning as an identity in our contemporary context, and has functioned as an identity that has helped many people find their

connection between their spiritual gender identity and their indigenous heritage. It again replaces the need for Indigenous people to take on assimilated roles like Gay and Lesbian in order to live a life informed by their traditional culture.

The contemporary Two-Spirit artist Ryan Young (Ojibwe) had many struggles coming out in their teenage years. Other older queer members from their reservation even advised them to choose between being Native or being gay, to make their life easier.[40] Interactions like this are evidence of colonial racism present in this community. However, since the Two-Spirit identity is something that was born out of Indigenous cultural beliefs, it keeps Queer Native people from having to accept an idea of assimilation in order to maintain their cultural heritage.

For Young, discovering the Two-Spirit identity helped create an internal balance, especially since it is a concept derived from an Ojibwe word. Now they believe they can combine all aspects of their identity "on the same level." Ryan mentions that with being Two-Spirit, "I am never more Indigenous than I am queer," and that learning to accept this Two-Spirit role directly related to learning and integrating their own Ojibwe culture into their life.[41] While in the English language Ryan is non-binary and uses they/them pronouns, in many ways they have removed themselves from dominant settler constructions of gender and sexuality, and truly has become indigenous in the role they play in contemporary society as an artist.

The making of physical objects, something that we often refer to as "art" in the modern context, has historically been a way for Indigenous people to spread ancestral knowledge and maintain specific cultural practices.[42] Contemporary Native artists can use artwork as a way to

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[40] Ryan Young, telephone interview by author, July 15, 2018.
[41] Ryan Young, telephone interview by author, July 15, 2018.
[42] Colette Hyman, *Dakota Women's Work: Creativity, Culture and Exile*, (Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2012), 11. Dr. Colette Hyman speaks to the importance of artwork in connection to Indigenous culture in her book about Dakota Women's work.

help reclaim traditional symbols or ideas, like using a formline style of the Northwest coast in a contemporary painting, to help continue traditional practices and beliefs. Even if contemporary Indigenous artists chose to not include traditional or cultural imagery in their work, the act of object making is still maintaining an important cultural process that connects Indigenous artists to their past. Two-Spirit artists are then using artwork to create a continuation of cultural beliefs and understandings about third and fourth gendered roles from their specific cultures. Therefore, art is an important source to consider when looking at the present-day state of Two-Spirit identity. It is a physical manifestation of not only Two-Spirit identity but the physical art object is a part of reclaiming historical culture.

"My Gender is Indigenous" is something now proudly displayed in many works of art Young makes, which implies the dismantling of the Americanized gender binary and break expectations of normalized gender and sexuality roles. Their artwork features many sayings like "kill the man, save the Indian," [Figure 1] and "niizh manitoag" [Figure 2] in order to convey how intertwined their spiritual Ojibwe role now is within Young's personality and identity. As someone who originally felt the tensions of colonial racism that forced a separation between their Native culture and their Queer identity, Young is now able to process these two sides of their life and live closer to fulfilling the spiritual role significant to their Ojibwe culture.

For Ryan, the term Two-Spirit is encompassing of their cultural beliefs and reclaims their own cultural history. For others, the Two-Spirit identity creates a neutral Indigenous term where their own cultural history did not fit. Minnesota Two-Spirit Society Leader Jase Roe explained that, in his Northern Cheyenne culture, the word that described third or fourth gendered people translated to "man who wears women's clothes." He mentioned this was a bit disheartening

because he does identify as a queer male, but does not dress in women's clothes.[43] So, for him, though Two-Spirit did not come from his traditional language and culture, it still fits with how he identifies and allows him to equally hold up his queerness and his being Native. This is important because Two-Spirit is then functioning as an identity that any Native person can connect to. The fact that the Two-Spirit identity is a development by Indigenous people for Indigenous people, it begins to rebuild Indigenous communities right to sovereign knowledge, it in no way separates one Queer Native person from the other, allowing for a collective community.

However, not everyone likes the pan-Indian aspect of the Two-Spirit term. Daniel Health Justice (Cherokee) explained to researcher Qwo-Li Driskill (Cherokee), in one of Driskill's many interviews of Queer or Asegi Cherokee people, that

> I actually don't use Two-Spirit very often. Queer works really well for me. I like its ambiguity, and I like that it kind of shakes things up a bit. For myself, I think Two-Spirit is a bit… I understand the reasons for connecting it to a spiritual tradition, and I think that's important, but I think in some ways it normalizes in ways that I don't know if necessarily we need to be normalized.[44]

For some, the idea of having "two spirits" inside their body does not fit in their cultural belief systems, or they prefer to identify as something more tribally specific. What Justice is telling us though is that they believe the Two-Spirit identity is too limiting. Though the Two-Spirit term is something simple to understand for many people, and can bring together a larger community, it can still ignore the specific cultural roles and ideas that individual tribes had. The term also exists in a way that non-native people may begin to appropriate these spiritual ideas, which again

[43] Jase Roe, interview by author, June 25, 2018.
[44] Qwo-Li Driskill, "Asegi Ayetl," in *Queer Indigenous Studies*, Ed Qwo-Li Driskill, Chris Finley, Brian Joseph Gilley, and Scott Lauria Morgensen, (University of Arizona Press, 2011), 99.

takes away from sovereign knowledge. Two-Spirit is the beginning of removing assimilated ideas in the Queer Native community, and replacing it with reclaimed Indigenous knowledge, so that individual Queer Native people can feel a much closer connection to their culture through their gender and sexuality, and work to eventually eliminate settler notions of gender within their own society, eventually decolonizing Indigenous mindsets of gender and sexuality.

Making artwork is not only a way for Indigenous people to pass down cultural believes, but to also try and understand and develop their own identity. Artist Chandra Melting Tallow (Blackfoot) created the piece "IIYAKI'KIMAAT," [Figure 3] which holds close to a hundred Blackfoot prayer ties that Melting Tallow says function "for my family, the people I care for, protecting children and everyone suffering/struggling against forces of heteronormativity and white supremacy."[45] In their artist statement, Melting Tallow says that their process of creation "possesses an unending awareness of ancestral influence as an intrinsic part of the creative process."[46]

This piece which was created to both understand the artist's own traumas, alongside family traumas dealt with through acts of colonization and severe mistreatment from the Canadian government boarding schools, uses traditional cultural symbols and ancestral understandings in order to allow Melting Tallow to manifest these ideas to the viewer. This is an example of how non-binary Native artist revitalizes historical and spiritual methods to connect to their culture as well as work to heal in a contemporary setting. Melting Tallow is using their artwork in a way that revitalizes their cultural forms of healing through the prayer ties and recreation of images they had received in dreams to not only heal against systems of colonization

[45] Chandra Melting Tallow, Instagram Post, June, 21, 2018. https://www.instagram.com/p/BkTL96RlQvr/
[46] Chandra Melting Tallow, *IIYAKI'KIMAAT,*. 2018

that have hurt them and their family, but also break from "a society that thrives on binaries to sustain its influence and power."[47] To Melting Tallow, art is a way to try and decolonize from the pains of heteronormativity in an ancestrally informed way that in in turn begins to show the removal of settler influence from their lives and decolonize themselves through the understanding of their trauma in a visual way.

For others art is a way to explore literal symbols of what the Two-Spirit spiritual role means. Contemporary artists Raven John (Salish/Stolo) uses painting and image making to recreate her spirit in a physical form. The painting *Two-Spirit Transformation Blessing* [Figure 4] functions as a literal symbol of her own spirit as she sees it. In the painting, John illustrates a male and female half, underneath a rainbow, with an image of their own face in the center. Both male and female body parts are present, and he heavily stylizes the imagery to match the form lines style of her northwest coastal heritage.[48] In their description of the painting, John writes

> It breaks the colonial narrative of duality and the black and white lines that define gender. The spiritual and physical are both present, not as separate entities but as a whole. My Two-Spirit identity does not exist because of my queerness, be it gender or sexual in nature, it exists because my identity co-habits my spirituality. My spirit does not have a fixed gender. My spirit does not have a fixed sexuality.[49]

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[47] Chandra Melting Tallow, *IIYAKI'KIMAAT,* 2018.

[48] "The "formline" is the primary design element on which Northwest Coast art depends, and by the turn of the 20th century, its use spread to the southern regions as well. It is the positive delineating force of the painting, relief and engraving. Formlines are continuous, flowing, curvilinear lines that turn, swell and diminish in a prescribed manner. They are used for figure outlines, internal design elements and in abstract compositions."
Marjorie M. Halpin, "Northwest Coast Indigenous Art." The Canadian Encyclopedia. February 7, 2006. Accessed December 05, 2018. https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/northwest-coast-aboriginal-art.

[49] Raven John, *Two Spirit Transformation Blessing*, 2017. Raven identifies as gender queer and is comfortable using all pronouns, which is something I tried to emulate in my writing. Therefore She, him, and they are all used in describing John.

John is using the imagery in this painting to actively remove assimilated notions of gender and sexuality from their life. Here, she explores his role as a trickster and artists, while also using culturally specific imagery to bring themselves closer to their own culture, and begin to eliminate the dominant settler cultures expectations from their lives. John is able to connect to their Northwest coastal tribal knowledges and symbols while developing an identity that is a modern as well as historical perception of a third or fourth gendered role.

The Two-Spirit identity is largely significant because it connected modern queer sexuality with historic Indigenous traditions in a way that Queer Native people could reclaim cultural knowledges and sovereignty, while in the process decolonize their identity. While the AIGL disbanded in 1992, it has since been replaced by several modern Two-spirit groups across the country. The Minnesota Two-Spirit Society is one of these many organizations and seeks to not only help all Indigenous people in the Minnesota community, but also put on culturally specific workshops to discuss cultural knowledges, and support one another. "Homophobia is not traditional" is a phrase that the Minnesota Two-Spirit Society uses frequently in their activism, in a reminder that many Native people are still affected by these colonized beliefs and still reject these ideas of a queered Native society. But the changes that this identity is making, no matter how different it is to each person, is helping to change these beliefs and create a more autonomously Native society. The present day generation that is becoming much more involved with both their cultural traditions and stems from the activism that was happening the 1970s and 1980s is working to bring back these culturally significant roles, and place them in Modern Native society so that they may function alongside modern life. There is evidence that early Queer Indigenous activists understood this cultural resurrection and how important the next generation was in its creation. A woman named Brown Bear, in the first ever Two Eagles

publication, which was an international news letter sent out to Indigenous gay and lesbian subscribers all over the country made by the AIGL, wrote a poem defining the transformations and rebuilding of a new Queer Indigenous culture:

> Separate and unique individuals
> Together in pain and laughter
> As one
> Oncore [sic][50]

Together these individual Queer activists, Native communities, and non-Native scholars are coming together to create a collective knowledge and healing of the Queer Indigenous community. Though this is not the first existence of these third and fourth gender role. Today it is an encore, that can reverberate into the future of Indigenous North American society

[50] Brown Bear, "The Gathering," *Two Eagles: An International Native American Gay and Lesbian Quarterl,.* 1 (June 1990): 3.

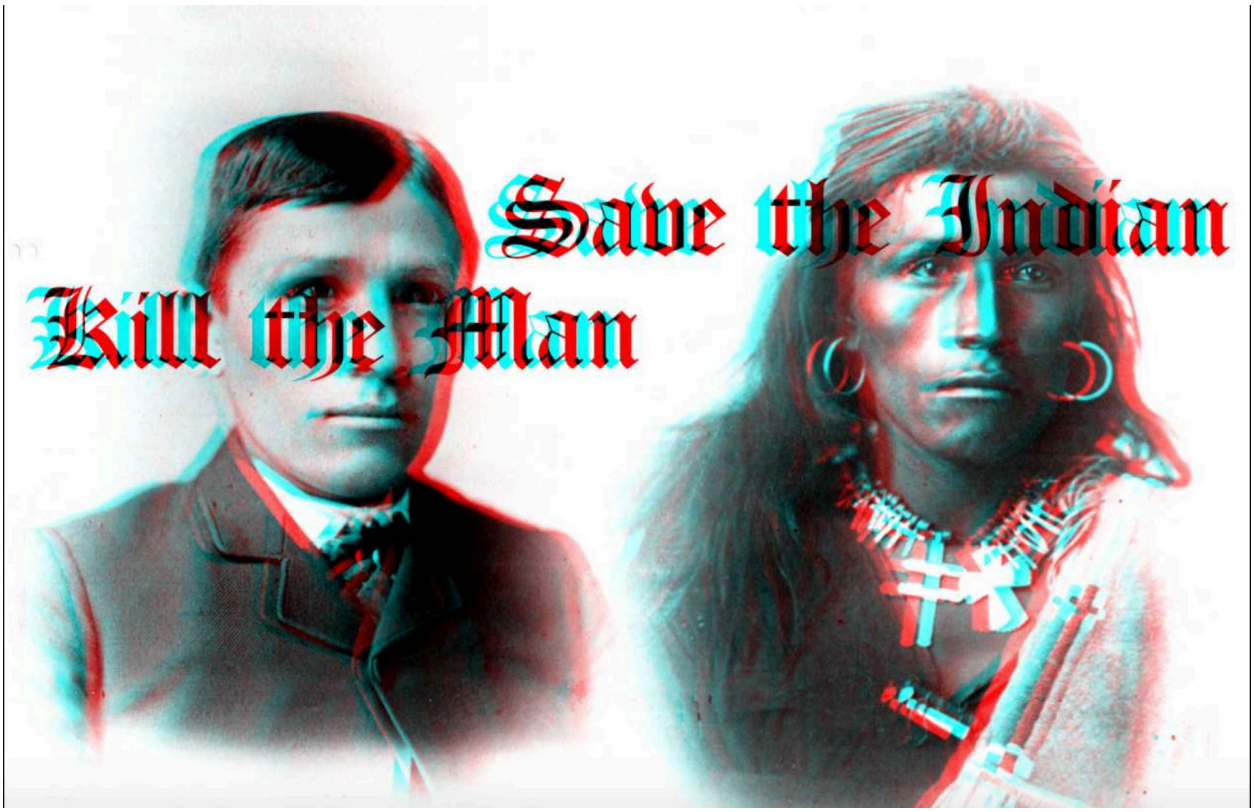

Figure 1

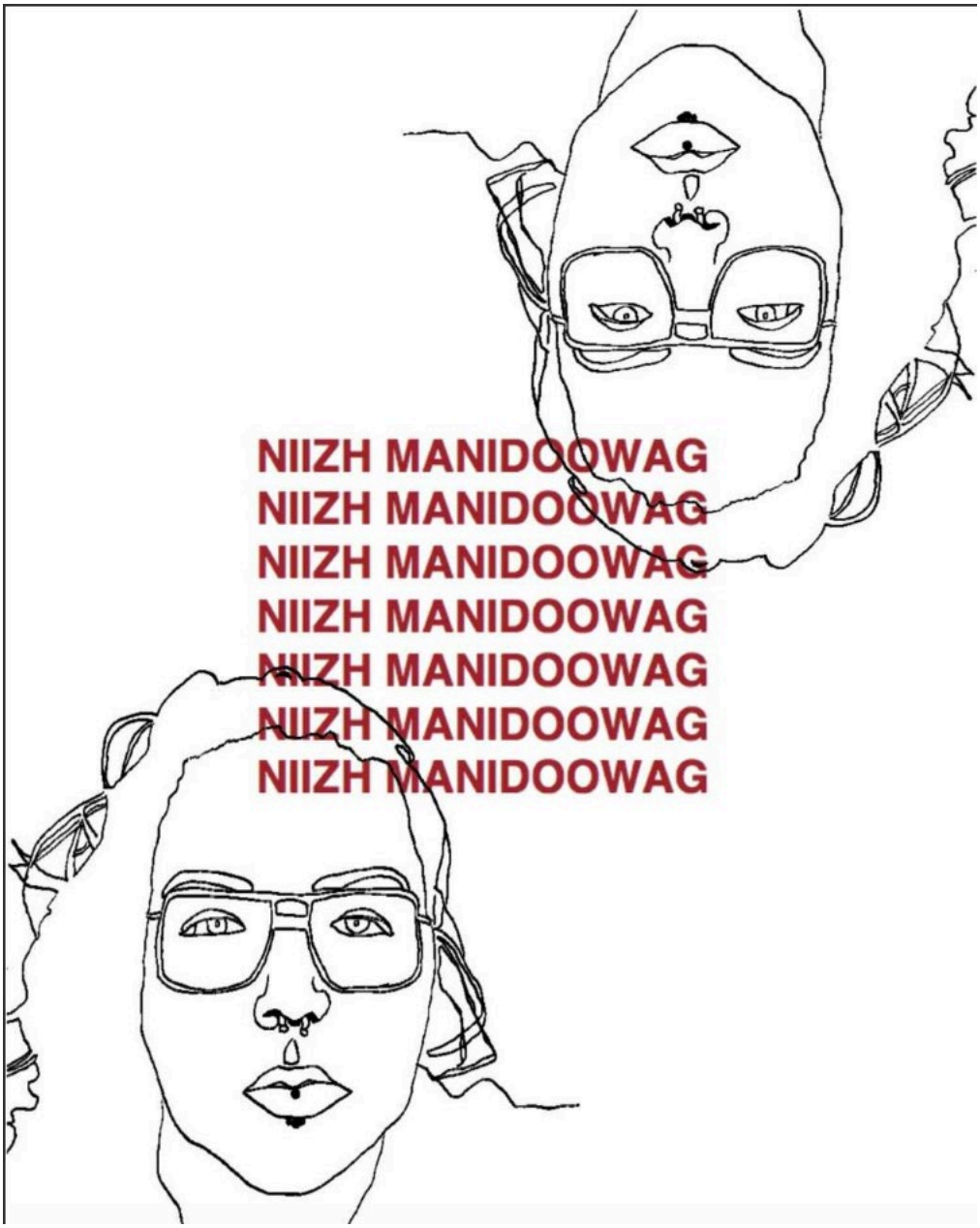
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Figure 2

Figure 3

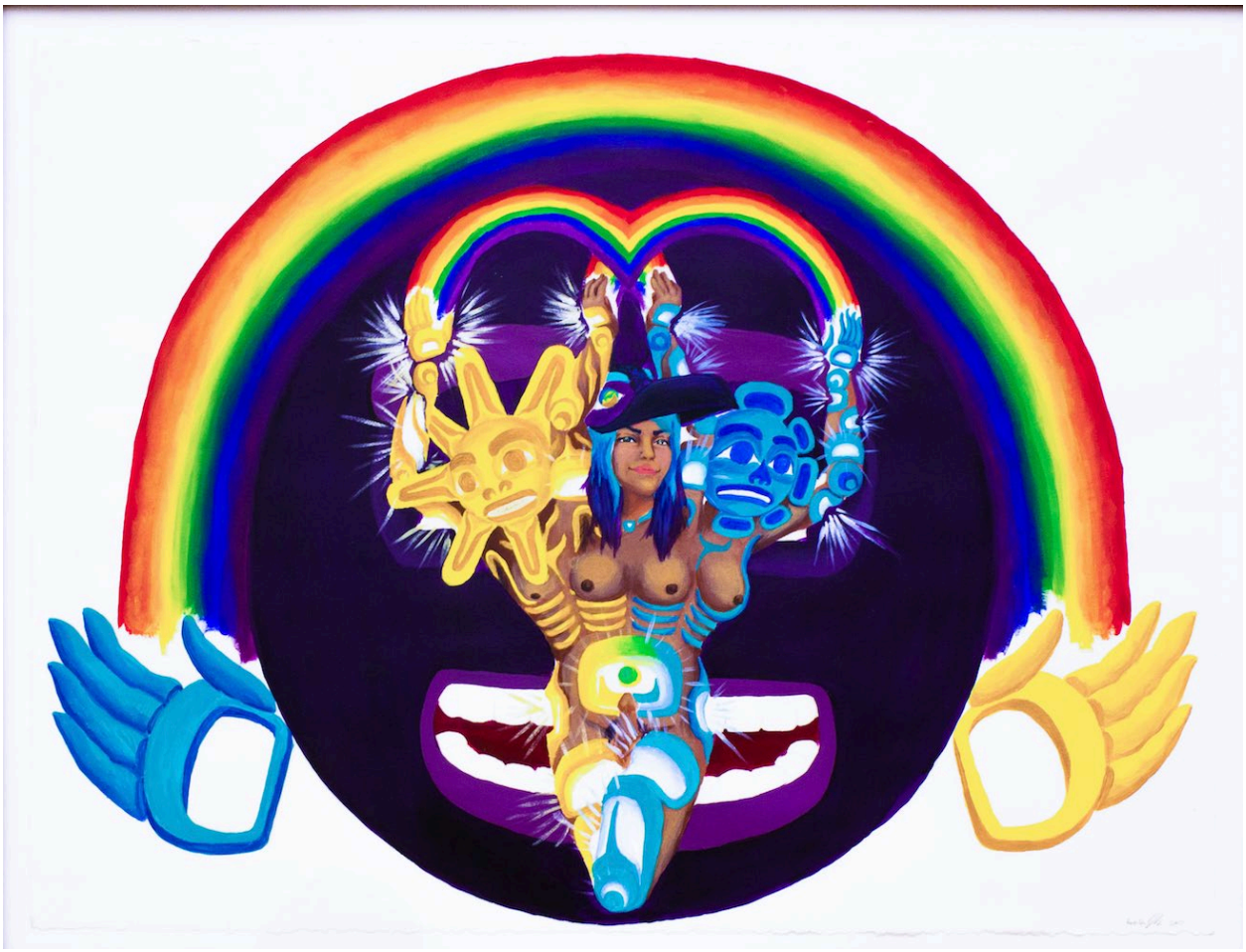

Figure 4

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