# **UCLA**

# **American Indian Culture and Research Journal**

## **Title**

"Women and 2spirits": On the Marginalization of Transgender Indigenous People in Activist Rhetoric

# **Permalink**

https://escholarship.org/uc/item/9vn5664b

# **Journal**

American Indian Culture and Research Journal, 43(3)

# ISSN

0161-6463

## **Author**

Pyle, Kai

# **Publication Date**

2019-06-01

#### DOI

10.17953/aicrj.43.3.pyle

# **Copyright Information**

This work is made available under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial License, available at <a href="https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/">https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/</a>

Peer reviewed

# "Women and 2spirits": On the Marginalization of Transgender Indigenous People in Activist Rhetoric

Kai Pyle

The winter I was accepted into graduate school, I joined Twitter in order to follow some of the people who seemed to be having some of the most exciting conversations about indigeneity in the United States and Canada today. As I got accustomed to #NativeTwitter, I started to see which issues came up again and again, which ones blew up everybody's feed, and which elicited the most emotion. Over time, I became aware of a phrase that I was hearing more and more: "women and 2spirits." This paired term was frequently attached to sentences about gendered violence and heteropatriarchy in Indigenous communities and the hashtag for missing and murdered Indigenous women often expanded from #MMIW to #MMIWG2S: missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and Two-Spirits. It was also common to read about the "traditional sacredness" of women and 2spirits. While some of the people using "women and 2spirit" were themselves Two-Spirit people, it seemed to spread quickly, and in offline activist spaces I have increasingly heard it used by people of all genders and sexual orientations. Although for the most part this phrase does not seem to have entered academia, texts that tap into Indigenous grassroots movements, such as Leanne Simpson's As We Have Always Done, do use variations of it.1

I am interested in examining why this formulation has become so popular, and thinking through what it might obscure. While the recognition of Two-Spirit people's lives is significant, given the history of colonial heteropatriarchy in Indigenous communities, this well-meaning phrase nonetheless reveals broader trends within Indigenous

KAI PYLE is a Two-Spirit Métis and Sault Ste. Marie Nishnaabe writer and PhD candidate at the University of Minnesota—Twin Cities. Their work has been published in scholarly journals such as *Transgender Studies Quarterly* as well as literary venues such as *PRISM Magazine* and *This Magazine*. Their dissertation focuses on Anishinaabe Two-Spirit memory through the lenses of language, literature, and history.

activism in the current moment. Previously ignored or even scorned as "infected" or "colonized," now, as an entire identity category spanning a wide range of positionalities and experiences, Two-Spirit people are being placed alongside unspecified "women." Both are being positioned as heirs to a "traditional" or historical "respect" as well as being the primary targets of gendered violence.

I maintain that this vague juxtaposition is part of a larger problem within Indigenous communities and activism, that of failing to address the lived realities of Indigenous trans people, and specifically Indigenous trans women. I am not advocating for a wholesale abandonment of the phrase, nor am I suggesting that every usage of it indicates that the speaker is some kind of transphobe. Far from it—many Two-Spirit people, including trans people, have taken up the phrase "women and 2spirits" as a way to enter into conversations about gendered issues in Indigenous communities, which until now has overwhelmingly centered cisgender heterosexual women. As articulated by Two-Spirit people, "women and 2spirits" can be seen as an imperfect, yet creative intervention into often hostile discourses. Still, I contend that this phrase inadvertently reveals the marginalized position which transgender Indigenous people hold in our communities.

I will begin my analysis by teasing out the ways in which this particular phrase mystifies the numerous positionalities and experiences within the category of "Two-Spirit," and then consider some of the ways that current discourse in Two-Spirit activism marginalizes trans people. Finally, I examine some of the proposals that trans people have made as they are thinking through what the best course of action may be for our communities. First, however, I want to briefly discuss my positionality and citation practices. I am a Two-Spirit, transgender person with kinship ties to the Métis Nation and the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians. In this article, I am speaking both as a scholar and as a community member who has witnessed many of these dynamics play out. It is important to note, however, that although I am transgender, I am not someone directly targeted by the brunt of transmisogynistic violence (in other words, I am not a trans woman or trans feminine-aligned person).

Because their voices are largely sidelined even in activist Indigenous discourse, in formulating my argument I have tried to incorporate the words of Indigenous trans women and other trans people as much as possible. I first turn to Two-Spirit scholar and activist Dana Wesley, whose 2015 master's thesis describes her experience observing Two-Spirit rhetoric during the Idle No More movement, beginning in 2011:

In my personal experiences during the beginning of the Idle No More movement, I noticed that it became a bit of a trend to include Two-Spirit when talking about women and children in relation to nationhood and sovereignty. At first glance it appeared to be a step in the right direction.... Unfortunately, the conversation often stopped short of any kind of real engagement with Two-Spirit people. In my experience I did not witness any Two-Spirit people take part in Idle No More as representatives of Two-Spirit leadership. In Indigenous social and activist spaces, I have witnessed a pattern wherein Two-Spirit people are invoked by gestures to inclusion in the absence of any meaningful Two-Spirit involvement. Essentially,

Two-Spirit has become a buzzword to include in speeches and presentations, but there is no follow-through on how to support Two-Spirit people within their own Indigenous communities.<sup>2</sup>

In my recent experience, this account is still accurate. While Two-Spirit people are doing many exciting things both in the United States and Canada to improve the lives of their kin, in general non-Two-Spirit Indigenous leaders have failed to do anything more than give lip service to Two-Spirit issues. For example, in both countries the dialogue surrounding high rates of Indigenous youth suicide has been almost entirely silent on the potential impacts of homophobia and transphobia on Indigenous youth.<sup>3</sup>

Even as recognition of the unique nature of gendered violence towards Indigenous women has grown in activist communities, such as those centered on #MMIW, non-Two-Spirit activists have mostly neglected the ways that cissexism and heterosexism intersect with colonialism. Writing in 2015, cisgender queer Kwakwaka'wakw scholar Sarah Hunt notes that,

While intersections of racism, sexism, poverty, and anti-sex work sentiments have been examined in relation to the prevalence of violence against Indigenous women in this community, little has been said by national Indigenous women's organizations, national Indigenous leadership, local community groups, or scholars and activists working to address violence against Indigenous girls and women about the particular factors impacting violence against trans people.<sup>4</sup>

These silences affect all Two-Spirit people, but they do not affect everyone equally. Especially affected are transgender people of all genders, and women both cis and trans, but with trans women, at the intersection of these two axes of oppression, being affected most of all.

## THE MEANING OF "TWO-SPIRIT"

Before looking more closely at the phrase "women and 2spirits," it is necessary to recall the origins and use of "Two-Spirit." In a conversation with Métis Two-Spirit scholar Chantal Fiola, two elders active in the local community at the end of the twentieth century, Myra Laramee and Albert McLeod, both reflected on its origins. During a spiritual and political action in solidarity with the Mohawk land defenders at Oka in 1990, Laramee was visited in a dream by several Two-Spirit beings. Later that year, at the third international gathering of LGBTQ Native people in Winnipeg, the term was shared and spread rapidly among LGBTQ Native people. Fiola notes that despite often being defined as "a person who has both male and female spirits," the term "did not mean that people have two spirits . . . but rather, the ability to 'see things in two ways." The specific definition will likely vary with every Two-Spirit person you ask, but in general, it was taken up as a way to recognize several interconnected issues:

(1) the unique historical roles that existed for people with varying gendered/sexual roles in Indigenous communities;

- (2) the unique experiences of LGBTQ Indigenous people in the present, which many Indigenous people felt were not sufficiently addressed within the category of LGBTQ;
- (3) the anthropological interest in and use of the term *berdache*, which was considered by many LGBTQ Indigenous people to be offensive and a term imposed upon us by outsiders; and
- (4) a need to find ways to talk about LGBTQ Indigenous life among Indigenous people in a way that makes cultural sense to other community members. In practice, it is often used as an umbrella term for any Indigenous person who expresses their gender and/or sexuality outside the boundaries of cisgender heterosexuality.

In addition, many LGBTQ Native people share a significant conceptualization that being Two-Spirit involves knowledge and practice of certain traditional roles within an individual tribal community.6 As Two-Spirit Cree scholar Alex Wilson puts it: "I personally think it refers to sexuality and sexual orientation connected with the land and all the other parts of our identity." Taking this broad definition into account, if we consider the phrase "women and 2spirits," we can see who is erased. The pairing first implies a separation between all women on one hand, and all Two-Spirits on the other, tacitly erasing those who are both women and Two-Spirit, including trans women and cis lesbian, bisexual, and queer women. In addition, because some Two-Spirit people are men, the phrase muddles together the experiences of women, non-binary people, and men. This is troubling because it fails to address the power dynamics that may exist within the umbrella of Two-Spirit people. We only have to look to queer studies and queer activism to see how many people have articulated the often-complex power differentials among, for example, cis gay men and cis straight women. Gwen Benaway, in particular, has written on such power differences between trans women and cis queer men in the context of relationships.8

Lastly, by separating women from Two-Spirits, this phrase also "others" the gender of all Two-Spirit people, placing them in a category that is neither male nor female. Dana Wesley notes that this is a popular misunderstanding of the term *Two-Spirit*. Describing a survey that included the options "male," "female," and "Two-Spirit" for gender and sex, she explains that

This language fails to comprehend that the Two-Spirit concept was not meant necessarily to refer exclusively to sex, but rather to many different aspects of a person's social identity. By appearing to have assumed that Two-Spirit people do not identify as either the male or female sex, the survey reveals another place of tension between the original conceptions of the term Two-Spirit and popular understanding of it today.<sup>9</sup>

The third-gendering of Two-Spirit people, alongside the popular notion of Two-Spirit as meaning "having a masculine and a feminine spirit," also risks entrenching the gender binary and heterosexuality. Even Two-Spirit people themselves often espouse this definition when communicating with non-Two-Spirit audiences; in *Indian Country Today*, Two-Spirit musician Tony Enos states, "Two Spirit people have both a male and female spirit within them." Alex Wilson expresses concerns about this concept,

noting that by that definition, Two-Spirit women are "part male," and their relationship framed within "a heterosexual design." <sup>11</sup>

The description of all Two-Spirit people as falling into the category of a "third gender" can be particularly harmful for transgender people, not only for the obvious reason that some transgender people are men or women, but also because it lumps cis and trans people into a single category, with the result that cis people dominate the conversation. Gwen Benaway, for example, has written extensively about the overwhelming cisness of Two-Spirit media:

There are almost no visible Indigenous trans women in the wider public. . . . The phrase 2 Spirit is almost always applied to gay or lesbian Indigenous writers. They are well represented in our literature and art. Recently, there was a special Indigenous centered issue of a major Canadian literary magazine and none of the published writers were transgender. Indigenous and transgender are not allowed to be connected in our communities or in mainstream Canadian society. 12

While cis Two-Spirit people certainly still struggle with issues of representation in their communities, their activism, and the media, thus far they have been the ones defining what it means to be Two-Spirit in the public eye and on the ground.

With the assistance of white LGBTQ scholars, for example, cisgender Two-Spirit people have frequently laid claim to ancestral Two-Spirit figures with little consideration for their relationship to modern trans people, as Benaway asserts. Until recently, cis Two-Spirit people and allies often would use pronouns for ancestral figures that align with what they perceive to be a person's "biology" rather than their role in society, and sometimes claim that cis queerness is the descendant of such roles.<sup>13</sup> The late transgender Mohawk artist Aiyyana Maracle also wrote about the ways Two-Spirit ancestors are claimed for cis queer purposes; as one article succinctly states, "trans people are not considered; we are not part of their equation."14 Importantly, this need not be a zero-sum equation. As Benaway explains, "I am enriched by the work of many gay and lesbian Indigenous writers and thinkers. I am not arguing for their exclusion from the label of 2 Spirit nor am I disputing the space they've built through their activism. The work of 2 Spirit writers and artists is central to our regeneration as Indigenous peoples, but so is the recognition of Indigenous trans women."15 The cis/trans equation is still so uneven within the Two-Spirit community that major corrections must occur, as well as in Indigenous communities and activist and artist spaces more largely.

#### IMPACTS OF EXCLUSION

Although few people would explicitly define Two-Spirit as a cisgender category only—indeed, I have encountered cisgender Indigenous young people who think Two-Spirit is only for trans people—but many other factors also affect who comes to identify as Two-Spirit. Discourses of health and tradition, in particular, have powerful effects within Two-Spirit communities and organizations that often result in trans and other multiply-marginalized people being excluded from the category. Brian Joseph Gilley's book *Becoming Two-Spirit* examines the relationship between Two-Spirit communities

and HIV/AIDS organizing and services and finds that his Two-Spirit interlocutors put great emphasis on being "healthy." Dana Wesley's analysis corroborates the effects of this discourse, writing that "associations of the language of risk and health with Two-Spirit identity can be used to exclude people, perhaps even the people most at risk," because "this language becomes conflated with what the groups then define Two-Spirit identity to mean." 16

The prerequisite of "healthiness"—generally loosely defined, but including sobriety and HIV-negative status—is closely tied to another exclusionary rhetoric, that of traditionalism. Both in published media and in grassroots Two-Spirit communities, perhaps the majority of self-identified Two-Spirit people articulate some form of spirituality as being central to their identity and even their definition of Two-Spirit. The term Two-Spirit was specifically chosen to draw on the history of "traditional roles" that such people had in Indigenous communities, and to reflect the continuity, however slight, between those roles and modern Two-Spirits. While I want to be careful not to dismiss the spiritual aspect of being Two-Spirit, which is very strong for many people, I would like us to think critically about how traditionalism can be deployed in an exclusionary manner. In both Gilley's book and my own experience, some Two-Spirit-identified people make a division between "traditional," spiritually oriented Two-Spirit people, and those who are simply "gay Indians." <sup>17</sup> In "8 Things You Should Know about Two-Spirit People," Tony Enos explicitly states, "A Two Spirit person may be gay, but a gay person is not necessarily Two Spirit. Claiming the role of Two Spirit is to take up the spiritual responsibility that the role traditionally had. Walking the red road, being for the people and our children/youth, and being a guiding force in a good way with a good mind are just some of those responsibilities." He then adds, "Living as a Two Spirit is not all pride parades and hot pants."18 Here the logic loops back around to "health," as the supposedly non-traditional gay Indians are often described as people who party, go clubbing, or are substance users. Transgender Indigenous people are statistically more likely to be HIV-positive and substance users, and also to lack access to ceremonial knowledge due to prejudice and gender binaries in Indigenous spiritual communities. This is why the discourse of health and tradition is most likely to exclude them from the category of Two-Spirit. 19 When nonprofit organizations providing services to LGBTQ Indigenous people begin to use the term Two-Spirit in similar ways, the consequences may be more than simply excluding people from a personal identity: people can be shut out from critical services and communities from which they would otherwise benefit.

Two-Spirit people are as a whole severely undercounted and insufficiently considered in discussions of gendered violence against Indigenous people, but because transgender Indigenous women are uniquely situated at several junctures of erasure, conversations around missing and murdered Indigenous women rarely highlight them as particular targets of violence. Even a longtime advocate on this issue, Sarah Hunt, was surprised that she had "missed an important fact about one of the missing and murdered women in Vancouver's Downtown East Side: at least one of the missing women, Kellie Little, was a trans woman." Indigenous trans women remain hidden in data and in discourse about missing and murdered Indigenous women, and the conversation continues to ignore critical issues that impact them.

#### TOWARDS A TRANS-INCLUSIVE DECOLONIAL LOVE

Having examined some of the ways that transgender Indigenous people are excluded and marginalized through popular rhetoric, I now turn to proposals from Indigenous trans women and other Two-Spirit people on how we might move beyond these silences and violences. Dana Wesley suggests that the most urgent need is to build relationships within Indigenous communities. She reasons, "If our leaders, academics, teachers, clan mothers, elders and medicine people are serious about the idea that we are all related, and that nation-building is how we are going to decolonize our minds and communities, then there has to be more than just lip-service recognition of Two-Spirit existence. Creating real connections with Two-Spirit people means asking them what matters to them in relation to nation building." Wesley also points to the experiences of transgender Stó:lō scholar Saylesh Wesley as demonstrating the potential of relationship building within Indigenous communities.

Saylesh Wesley's 2014 essay reports that although she did not find any evidence in her nation for pre-contact Two-Spirit people, she nonetheless "endeavors to re-member the past differently, marshal new traditions and language together in ways that create a new vision of the future." She also recounts her changing relationship with her grandmother, who initially strongly disapproved of her transition. In reestablishing her kinship responsibilities, such as learning to weave baskets with her grandmother, Wesley and her grandmother came to a deeper understanding such that her grandmother then coined a new Stó:lō term for her granddaughter's identity. Wesley then offers this term to other Two-Spirit Stó:lō people to use or not as they feel comfortable, thoughtfully wondering if cisgender Two-Spirits would want to use the same term as transgender Two-Spirits.

In "Ahkii: A Woman is a Sovereign Land," Gwen Benaway offers a proposal very similar to the ideas of these two scholars that she describes simply as "decolonial love." Writing that "wholeness is shared and created in relationships between bodies," she draws on the work of Leanne Simpson and imagines what decolonial love might look like for a transgender Anishinaabe woman.<sup>23</sup> Land is key: she declares, "I see decolonial love as an answer to the separation of Indigenous trans women from our communities and land."<sup>24</sup> The goal of her own writing is to

author us as Indigenous trans women as powerful and connected to creation. Write over the slurs and shame surrounding our bodies. Transmit what I know of my culture and our value into words to carry across the land. Reconnect us back to where we came from. Imagine our lives as filled with love and trust. Challenge and question masculinity, threaten Western conceptions of sexuality and gender, and demand our communities stand with us.<sup>25</sup>

In short, she says, this work is prayer and prophecy all in one.

As Saylesh Wesley's reflections demonstrate, much of the most critical activist work by transgender Indigenous people happens at an interpersonal level, at the level of an individual family, community, or nation. As a result, it can easily be overlooked or discounted as not being "real activism." This is not to discount those organizations and

movements of Two-Spirit people accomplishing amazing work that actively embraces all of Indigenous gender and sexual diversity. The Native Youth Sexual Health Network, for instance, has often been praised for their work bringing queer and trans-inclusive sex education to Indigenous youth. Located in and around Washington, DC, the Angel Rose Collective (formerly Nelwat Ishkamewe) has been a hub for Two-Spirit artists since 2015. This collective primarily centers transgender, intersex, and gender non-conforming people, as indicated by their 2019 bilingual anthology Two-Spirits Belong Here/Lxs Dos-Espíritus Merecen Estar Aquí, edited by Petrona Xemi Tapepechul. In 2016, led by Candi Brings Plenty and with the blessings of the elder advisors of the entire Oceti Sakowin camp, a specific place in the Standing Rock encampment was designated for Two-Spirit people.

Often, however, transgender Indigenous activism does not fit easily into the image of Indigenous activism as defined and shaped by large land defense actions, for example. Cree-Métis-Saulteaux writer Lindsay Nixon notes that such exclusive definitions of Indigenous activism "fails Indigenous peoples from the Canadian Prairies, and queer and trans Indigenous peoples, who experience an especially insidious web of institutional, racial and spatial marginalization that they cannot simply 'rise above." In the midst of this "insidious web," Nixon says, "My queer Indigenous kin raised me. In many instances, we didn't have queer and trans mentors, or the support of our cisgender and straight Elders. We had to teach one another what it meant to occupy gender-diverse and sexually diverse roles within community." Calling this "care-work," "love-work," and "lateral love" (the final term originating with Oneida artist Aura Last), Nixon argues for viewing Two-Spirit people's seemingly small actions of care for one another as an equally valid form of Indigenous activism as large anti-state agitation. For transgender Indigenous people and other Two-Spirits, these acts enable us to survive in a world intent on violating us and erasing us at the same time.

I have largely been discussing issues of rhetoric, inclusion, and representation in this article, issues that may appear trivial when we begin to grasp the stark realities facing Indigenous trans people. I will not list traumas and violences here. Instead, I suggest that the discourse and the tangible events that affect transgender Indigenous people reflect each other, forming a complex relationship. This is why, for example, the phrase "women and 2spirits" became popular: it not only reflects aspects of how people view Two-Spirit people, but also trans Indigenous people specifically; over time, its continual use simultaneously shapes those views as well. My aim here is not to say that the people using the phrase "women and 2spirits" are bad—or even that they should throw out the phrase entirely. As this article has emphasized, many Two-Spirit people, including trans people, have managed to use this phrase as a way to enter the conversation on issues of gender in Indigenous communities, and I honor that as well.

I hope that this article can serve as an opening to a larger conversation about the ways trans people are being included—or not—in Indigenous activist work. Indigenous trans people cannot and should not simply be grafted into existing frameworks as an afterthought, and I worry this is what is happening with the current proliferation of the phrase "women and 2spirits." The truth is that amongst ourselves, in direct messages on Twitter and on street corners in urban Indigenous cityscapes,

and everywhere we dare to steal a little bit of space for ourselves, Indigenous trans people whisper about what our communities could look like if they actually took our experiences and dreams into account. The exclusion and tokenization in current dialogues surrounding Two-Spirit people will not bring decolonization, abolition, or liberation. It is only by facing head-on the realities of trans Indigenous people's lives and by working to build decolonial loving relationships that we will begin to find a way to create a world that embraces all of us.

### **NOTES**

- 1. Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom through Radical Resistance (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017).
- 2. Dana L. Wesley, "Reimagining Two-Spirit Community: Critically Centering Narratives of Urban Two-Spirit Youth," MA thesis, Queens University, Kingston, Ontario, Canada, 2015, 101–2.
- 3. As far as I am aware, there is only one publication on this subject, the 2012 report "Suicide Prevention and Two-Spirited People," created by the now-defunct National Aboriginal Health Organization. Notably, Two-Spirit elder Albert McLeod is thanked as a contributor in the acknowledgements.
- 4. Sarah Hunt, "Embodying Self-Determination: Beyond the Gender Binary," in *Determinants of Indigenous Peoples' Health: Beyond the Social*, ed. Nicole M. Lindsay, Margo Greenwood, and Sarah de Leeuw (Toronto: Canadian Scholars, 2018), 104.
- 5. Chantal Fiola, "Naawenangweyaabeg Coming In: Intersections of Indigenous Sexuality and Spirituality," in *In Good Relation: History, Kinship, and Gender in Indigenous Feminisms*, ed. Sarah Nickel and Amanda Fehr (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2020), 209.
- 6. For more background on the term *Two-Spirit* and its uses, see Kai Pyle, "Naming and Claiming: Recovering Ojibwe and Plains Cree Two-Spirit Language," *Transgender Studies Quarterly* 5, no. 4 (2018): 574–88; Jenny L. Davis, "More than Just 'Gay Indians," in *Queer Excursions: Retheorizing Binaries in Language, Gender, and Sexuality*, ed. Lal Zimman, Jenny Davis, and Joshua Raclaw (Oxford University Press, 2014), 62–80; Fiola, "Naawenangweyaabeg Coming In."
  - 7. Alex Wilson, quoted in Fiola, "Naawenangweyaabeg Coming In," 142.
- 8. Gwen Benaway, "Holy Wild," Room Magazine, https://roommagazine.com/writing/holy-wild. During the time this article has been in press, questions have been raised over the validity of Benaway's claim to indigeneity. I am unable to comment on this here, but note that going forward, this should be taken into consideration when engaging with Benaway's work.
  - 9. Wesley, "Reimagining Two-Spirit Community," 49-50.
- 10. Tony Enos, "8 Things You Should Know about Two-Spirit People," *Indian Country Today*, https://indiancountrytoday.com/archive/8-things-you-should-know-about-two-spirit-people-294cNoIj-EGwJFOWEnbbZw.
  - 11. Fiola, "Naawenangweyaabeg Coming In," 213.
- 12. Gwen Benaway, "Ahkii: A Woman is a Sovereign Land," Transmotion 3, no. 1 (2017): 126, https://doi.org/10.22024/UniKent/03/tm.374.
- 13. An example is Maurice Kenny's use of male pronouns for 19th-century Ojibwe agokwa Yellow Head in a collection of gay American Indian writing; see Maurice Kenny, "Tinselled Bucks: A Historical Study in Indian Homosexuality" *Living the Spirit: A Gay American Indian Anthology*, ed. Will Roscoe (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988), 15–31.
- 14. Aiyyana Maracle, "A Journey in Gender," Torquere: Journal of the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Studies Association 2 (2000): 52, https://doi.org/10.25071/1488-5182.36587.

- 15. Benaway, "Ahkii," 126.
- 16. Wesley, "Reimagining Two-Spirit Community," 91.
- 17. This notion is explored at length in Davis, "More than Just Gay Indians," 62-80.
- 18. Enos, "8 Things You Should Know About Two-Spirit People."
- 19. For statistics on transgender Indigenous people in the United States, see National Center for Transgender Equality, 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey: Report on the Experiences of American Indian & Alaska Native Respondents (2015), https://transequality.org/sites/default/files/USTS%20 AIAN%20Report.pdf.
  - 20. Hunt, "Embodying Self-Determination," 104.
  - 21. Wesley, "Reimagining Two-Spirit Community," 102.
- 22. Saylesh Wesley, "Twin-Spirited Woman: Sts' iyóye smestíyexw slhá: li," Transgender Studies Quarterly 1, no. 3 (2014): 339, https://doi.org/10.1215/23289252-2685624.
  - 23. Benaway, "Ahkii," 115.
  - 24. Ibid, 130.
  - 25. Ibid, 131.
- 26. Billy-Ray Belcourt and Lindsay Nixon, "What Do We Mean by Queer Indigenous Ethics?" Canadian Art, May 23, 2018, https://canadianart.ca/features/what-do-we-mean-by-queerindigenousethics/.