

“Decolonizing Sexuality”

Ramblings of a Queer Settler on Writing a History
of Indigenous Sexuality

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In 2014, Robbie Watt met resistance after establishing an online support group for LGBT people in Nunavut as a platform to discuss homophobia and sexual orientation in Inuit communities.¹ My personal response was appalled at how the “traditional Inuk way” was being used to actively oppress community members. Diverse desires from heterosexuality are not a modern or western invention, but have always existed. In the West, where sexuality and gender have been policed and regulated extensively, is it too easy to try to imagine Indigenous history as being more accepting? To attempt to “decolonize sexuality” means trying to deconstruct the way colonialism conceives of Indigenous people and their sexuality, while recognizing that Indigenous people have to confront internalized colonial thinking. This loose thesis best encompasses the place of Two-Spirit in Indigenous histories, as well as contesting the naturalness of the Western reproductive heterosexual relationship. This means problematizing the notion that Indigenous people—like everyone else—are *naturally* heterosexual. I see this scholarship having to create links from the historic to the contemporary as colonization imposed frameworks for “appropriate” human relations drawn along lines of gender, sex and sexuality intersectionally. I am attempting to place Two-Spirit people back into a pan-Indigenous history and challenge how “tradition” functions as a tool for sexual and gender oppression. Highlighting alternative genders, is one way of challenging internalized colonization and heteronormativity propagated in contemporary Indigenous life. I will outline the many methodological problems, explore the field of Two-Spirit scholarship, and ask readers to challenge their own prejudices of sexuality regardless of how they identify, either as a settler or Indigenous to Turtle Island.

¹ Sarah Roger. “New Online Group Offers Hope, Support to Gay Inuit in the Arctic” NunatsiaqOnline. March 7 2014.

Terminology:

A few notes on the terminology used. “Queer” is a distinctly western conception of non-normative sexualities, genders and biologies. This includes, but is not limited to homosexuality, gender-queer, and trans* identities. The term Two-Spirit is a contemporary self-defined, Indigenous identity that refers to world views where both sexes/spirits operate within the body.² Two-Spirit historically refers to a diverse range of gender practices specific to Indigenous cultures, as well as biological sex variations that in western terminology could be understood as broadly “intersex”. Wherever possible, I aim to employ the specific cultural-linguistic names for these alternative genders. For example, four Navajo genders are female, males, Dilbaa (“women” function as “men”), and Nádleehi (“men” functioning as “women”).³ The outdated term of “berdache/ bardadj” is derogatory coming from bastardized Arabic, referring to male prostitution and sodomy.⁴ Historically, Two-Spirit would have specific gender conceptions and operate in what western terminology would be trans-gendered performance. The cross-gender performance is not common for all contemporary Two-Spirited people who in Western terms could be identified as cis-sexual, cis-gendered with a queer sexual orientation. In underscoring the terminology I am using, I have to recognize that the sexual labels I am using are western in their creation and recognize the problems of applying labels like “homosexual” or “heterosexual” in the Indigenous context. They are foreign and imposed, raising how we should potentially question the “normativity” of Indigenous heterosexuality as a result.

² Sam McKegney. *Masculindians: Conversations About Indigenous Manhood*. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press. 2014. Print. 27.

³ *Two Spirits*, directed by Lydia Nibley. New York: Cinema Guild, 2009.

⁴ Richard C. Trexler, *Sex and Conquest: Gendered Violence, Political Order, and the European Conquest of the Americas*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995. 40, 67.

Methodology:

I also have to identify some of the methodological problems for this research. Rifkin's work *When Did Indians Become Straight?: Kinship, the History of Sexuality, and Native Sovereignty* comes from a cultural studies background. I wish to acknowledge that "decolonizing" sexuality from an orthodox historical methodology is near impossible given its colonial taboo and erasure. Settler-colonists sought to eliminate "deviances from Judeo-Christian interpretations of sex and sexuality."⁵ Furthermore, processes of manifest destiny and westward expansion brought transportation networks that "allowed the arbiters of 'normal' sexuality" i.e. settlers, to propagate western heterosexuality and a gender-sex binary.⁶ Working from historic European sources laced with homophobia, transphobia and a perspective of a gender-sex binary is an obvious detriment. An infamous account by ethno-anthropologist Catlin, of the "Dance of the Berdache" among the Fox Nation for example, should be recontextualized from his bias. The central figure should be reconsidered as an elevated individual and their dancers by a process of association.⁷ In the Haudenosaunee context, the matriarchal societies were shoved into patriarchal—and I would add gender-binary—historic accounts, which created hierarchies out of gender, and disempowered women who found themselves navigating the porous roles of power.⁸ Early explorers, traders, and other colonists had to equate what they observed to European experiences and conceptions of the body.⁹

⁵ Stewart Van Cleave. *Land of 10,000 Loves a History of Queer Minnesota*. Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press. 2012. 14.

⁶ Van Cleave. *Land of 10,000 Loves*. 14.

⁷ Van Cleave. *Land of 10,000 Loves*. 15.

⁸ Sandra Slater and Fay A. Yarbrough. *Gender and sexuality in indigenous North America, 1400-1850*. Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press. 2011

⁹ Will Roscoe. 1998. *Changing Ones: Third and Fourth Genders in Native North America*. New York: St. Martin's Press. 120.

While we have historical accounts of Two-Spirit people, as well as some surviving scattered oral histories, the traditional scope of scholarly research here has to be stretched. Indigenous studies itself is broadening the definitions of research to include unorthodox methods like creation stories, land based education, and oral history. Importantly, we should not restrain Indigenous scholarship to the ethno-anthropological realms of scholarship but position it as “an intellectual project that can shape scholarly discourses as a whole.”¹⁰ Subsequently, all scholarship needs to be “decolonized/ indigenized”, including sexuality studies. Indigenous studies should “escape its position of ethnographic entrapment within the academy.”¹¹ I would further, we should allow Indigenous scholarship to let us reconsider how we relate to and conceive of our own, and other bodies.

Bodies in Indigenous epistemology are mutable, shapeshifting genders, sexes and species. I draw attention to world views and creation stories to problematize the naturalness of heterosexuality and gender-sex binaries. I have encountered a version of the Inuit creation story where the sea goddess Sedna/ Uinigumasuittuq (she who did not marry) was featured living on the ocean floor with a female partner.¹² Another Inuit story I have encountered features the original inhabitants, two male hunter Aakulujjuusi and Uumarnituq, who become lonely, make love and Uumarnituq becomes pregnant and changes sexes in order to birth the child.¹³ This story I found on a settler’s queer pagan podcast. We should wonder why these stories are not

¹⁰ Andrea Smith. “Queer Theory and Native Studies: The Heteronormativity of Settler Colonialism”. GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies, vol 16, no 1-2, 2010, 43.

¹¹ Smith. 44.

¹² Bernard Saladin d’Anglure and Jane Philibert. *The Shaman's Share, or Inuit Sexual Communism in the Canadian Central Arctic*, *Anthropologica*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (1993), pp. 59-103.

¹³ Mel Myster “Episode 8: It’s Magic”, *Discovering the Male Mysteries*. 5 June. 2013 <http://melmystery.podbean.com>

being told by Indigenous voices, why queer settlers—like myself—are interested in them, and who has access to these stories, and why they are, or are not being disseminated.

Another methodological issue is about accessibility. Much of the accessible scholarship on Two-Spirit comes from settler scholars, despite recognizing that prominent self-identified Two-Spirit scholars do exist. I also recognize that some knowledge is not mine to know within the scope of Indigenous spirituality and sexuality. I have tried to include Indigenous voices into this work wherever possible to make sure they are heard in this dialogue. I regret that they are not the prominent source of information. I would like to draw attention to settler scholar Scott Lauria Morgensen, who considers Two-Spirit as having a prominent place in “decolonizing” by rejecting colonial conditions where settler scholars can write at a distance of Native “queers”.¹⁴ The Two-Spirit identity allows “Native queers” to be unassimilated by conventional queer critics that “(naturalize) non-Natives in a settler society.”¹⁵

Two-Spirit and their place in oral history, is another place of methodological contention. Anthropologist Julie Cruikshank notes that oral traditions cannot be treated as “evidence to be used for facts,” but that they are “told from the perspectives of the people who views inevitably differ depending on the context” and that the history cannot be taken for homogenous to the community.¹⁶ I highlight that the internalized colonization of Indigenous storytellers might explain why sexuality and Two-Spirit are not more prominent in the stories available.

¹⁴ Scott Lauria Morgensen, *Spaces Between Us: Queer Settler Colonialism and Indigenous Decolonization*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008. 85.

¹⁵ Morgensen. 86.

¹⁶ Jean C. Young. *Alternative genders in the Coast Salish World: Paradox and Pattern*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia. 1997. 7.

Lastly, to address methodology is to outline how intersecting gender, sex and sexuality are within the scope of this work. The three cultural constructions operate intimately in tandem with one another. Historically, sources had to label gender roles according to European familiarity. Scholar, Brian Joseph Gilley, who self-identifies as a “straight Cherokee-Chickasaw” man cautions considering Two-Spirit as a sexual orientation, but recognizes that the alienation Two-Spirit face is comparable to “homophobia” rooted in their sexuality.¹⁷ Roscoe considers that gender as opposed to sexuality is “a more appropriate rubric for social status” in the Indigenous context.¹⁸ However, I wish to challenge sexuality directly given its near universal permeation into culture. My specificity aims to critique heterosexuality’s natural, assumed, compulsory status. I recognize that I will have to collaborate with, and be in dialogue with avenues of gender in order to do this. As notions of sex and biology come into discussion as “naturalized” under Foucaultian discourse analysis as an “artificial unity” or “casual principle.”¹⁹ This problematic pairing links martial heteronormativity to bourgeois homemaking, private property, inheritance, legal determination, and gendered labour as socially foundational for the settler state.²⁰

Scholarship:

One effect of colonialism was the near complete overlay of western ideology over top of multiple, diverse Indigenous knowledge frameworks through processes of assimilation. I wish to mention that Two-Spirit—like all Indigenous people—are resisting these ongoing processes. It is

¹⁷ Brian Joseph Gilley. “Native Sexual Inequalities: American Indian Cultural Conservative Homophobia and the Problem of Tradition.” *Sexualities*, February, vol 13, 2010. 54.

¹⁸ Roscoe. 120.

¹⁹ Mark Rifkin. *When Did Indians Become Straight?: Kinship, the History of Sexuality, and Native Sovereignty*. New York: Oxford University Press. 2011. 14.

²⁰ Rifkin. 14.

suspected by some scholars that alternative gender practices, and subsequent sexualities were prolific throughout the Americas. Some scholars believe nations are actively suppressing their Two-Spirit histories inspired from internalized colonial imposition. Where can we even begin to draw the line on what conceptions of the self are Indigenous or Settler?

From the field of social work, settler Lester B. Brown is the most liberal scholar on the subject I have encountered. His view is pan-Indigenous, that alternative genders were a prolific phenomenon “from Alaska to Chile”.²¹ In contrast, most scholars recognize alternative genders as distinct cultural practices commonly cited among the Navajo, Lakota and Dakota.²² He withholds that Indigenous gender is “spiritually directed” and that “sexual play” was embraced along side pro-creation.²³ He sees historic Two-Spirit as an “institutionalized homosexuality” participating in cultural rites like marriages and occupying respected, elevated statuses in society from their spiritual/ gender power.²⁴ In his view, Christianization from missionaries tried to eradicate these sexualities and by the 1800’s Haudenosaunee and Iroquoian groups were “traumatized” away from alternative genders, which gave way to settler ideologies of heterosexual pro-creation.²⁵

Settler scholar Andrea Smith, sees Native people “entrapped in a logic of genocidal appropriation” in terms of settler colonialism’s heteronormativity.²⁶ I would first challenge Smith’s thesis and consider that we trust Indigenous people to best navigate the systems of colonial processes and second, recognize that culture is never static or “authentic”, to be

²¹ Lester B. Brown, *Two Spirit People: American Indian Lesbian Women and Gay Men*. New York: Hawthorne Press, 1997. 10.

²² Brown. 10.

²³ Brown. 5-7, 22.

²⁴ Brown. 8-14.

²⁵ Brown. 4-22.

²⁶ Smith. 52.

measured, or used as a tool of measure. John Tanner, a historic explorer of the Minnesota area encounter Two-Spirit along his journey. He recorded “there are several of this sort among most, if not all the Indian tribes.”²⁷ I reluctantly want to believe the work of a scholar like Brown, and his pan-Indigenous theory. However, I, as a settler on this land, have to recognize that perpetuating this narrative is a *heavy* romanticization of a history that is not my own. I wish to defend that alternative sexualities/genders are not an “appropriation” of western queer sexualities, but pre-exist queer theory, Stonewall and gay liberation indefinitely. At the same time, I am opposed to “tradition” functioning as oppressive. I am trying to make space within ideas of “tradition” that are open and inclusive.

Two-Spirit Histories:

What would pre-contact, Indigenous sexuality look like? Regardless, we should not hold notions of “authenticity” and “tradition” over Indigenous people as markers of their “Indian-ness”. How do we even begin to recover histories, and people who were targeted and erased from historical memory? As explained in the methodology section, historic accounts of Two-Spirit come at the expense of European authors and how they perceived the world. I hope to demonstrate the broad geographic ranges of these accounts as crucial to imaging a pan-Indigenous “decolonized” sexuality.

Coming from the discourse of anthropology a study of alternative genders in the Northwest Coast Salish Sto:to Nation, recognizes the permeable difference between gender and sexuality. Those who identified as a traditional alternative gender and contemporary gay, lesbian

²⁷ Van Cleve, *Land of 10,000 Loves*. 18.

identities both accept the term Two-Spirit.²⁸ The “fixed permanency” and “malleable performativity” of gender and sexuality are complicated in this Indigenous contemporary and traditional context.

Common Two-Spirit histories are from the Dakota and Navajo, sometimes Ojibwe.²⁹ In the geographic space of Minnesota, North West Company fur trader Alexander Henry between 1799 and 1814 accounts Two-Spirit Ozaawindib at the modern site of the Ojibwe Leech Lake Reservation.³⁰ Around 1674, Jesuit Jacques Marquette, while voyaging through the Illinois country accounts men who “assume the garb of women” and suspects a similar custom among the Sioux.³¹ His account is clouded with patriarchy from the transgendered pursuits of the Two-Spirit, exemplary is how he considers them “demeaning themselves to do everything the women do.”³² In the space termed the “Upper Missouri”, explorer Edwin Thompson Denig accounts a Two-Spirit individual along his journeys through Sioux, Arickaras, Assiniboine, Cree and Crow territory in the 17th century.³³ However, his negligence made me unable to pinpoint among which nation this observation was made.

In the north, an anthropological study examined non-conforming gender Shamans among the Inuit of Igluik near the Melville Peninsula of Baffin Island.³⁴ At a festival referred to as Tivajuut around 1922 or 23, the son of two shamans Ujaraq, remembers being dressed like a girl

²⁸ Young, *Alternative genders in the Coast Salish World*. 10

²⁹ Van Cleve, *Land of 10,000 Loves*. 15.

³⁰ Van Cleve, *Land of 10,000 Loves*. 17.

³¹ Jacques Marquette on his experiences with the Illinois, 1674, Allan Greer, *The Jesuit Relations: Natives and Missionaries in Seventeenth-Century North America*. Boston & New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2000, 201.

³² Marquette. 201.

³³ Edwin Thompson Denig, *Five Indian Tribes of the Upper Missouri: Sioux, Arickaras, Assiniboines, Crees, Crows*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1975. 196.

³⁴ Bernard Saladin d'Anglure, and Jane Philibert. *The Shaman's Share, or Inuit Sexual Communism in the Canadian Central Arctic*, *Anthropologica*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (1993), 64-71.

to participate. This process, termed an “anthroponymic identity”, came from receiving the names of female ancestors at his birth.³⁵ Among the Kodiak and Kaska of Alaska is an account of gender self-determination. A family in the Chukchi Nation was lead by “a husband who was a biological female and a wife who was a biological male.”³⁶ Even within the scope of alternative gender and sexuality practices, there is the ability for reproduction.

In southern spaces, Spanish conquistadors in Florida account a “male-berdache” doing what is arguably a sacred and specialized task of preparing the dead for burial, highlighting their spiritual significance.³⁷ Further south in modern Mexico, Chicimeca circa 1530, colonizers encountered what they perceived as a woman on the battle field. Coquistador Nuno de Guzman accounts “everyone was amazed to see such heart and force in a woman.”³⁸ After being taken prisoner, after undressing her, they learned she was not “biologically female” and executed her.³⁹

These historic accounts of Two-Spirit individuals throughout the Americas scores the geographic range of non-binary genders and the subsequent sexualities. Although coloured with European bias they are useful for scholars in that they memorialize these individuals as to not erase their identities and significances in history.

Problematizing the Norm:

Here I hope to further challenge tradition as a tool for sexual oppression and consider heteronormativity as a learned colonial behaviour. Navajo scholar Jenifer Nez Denetdale, has

³⁵ d'Anglure. 61.

³⁶ Richard C. Trexler, *Sex and Conquest: Gendered Violence, Political Order, and the European Conquest of the Americas*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995. 86.

³⁷ Trexler. 67.

³⁸ Trexler. 68.

³⁹ Trexler. 68.

commented on the way Navajo leaders—primarily men—“reproduce Navajo ideology in ways that re-inscribe gender roles based on Western concepts even as they claim to operate under traditional Navajo philosophy.”⁴⁰ This internalization of learned colonial behaviours is operating under the guise of “tradition”. Rifkin considers how Sioux writer, Zitkala-Ša redefines Dakota masculinity in his writings to play into white/settler assumptions of sex and gender. An analyses of the “regulation of homoeroticism” in the writing *American Indian Stories* first published in 1921, erases the Winkte gender category, same-sex eroticism and cultural recognition in marriage by catering to settler readers.⁴¹ However, “(Indigenous people) rebuke colonialism and the political-economic situation cause by European intervention in the same breath (they)... apply Western value judgements on their sexuality.”⁴² This paradox of interal-colonization and oppressive “tradition” are fundamentally at odds.

As previously mentioned, I am contesting the normative status of heterosexuality as not natural, but learned. Rifkin considers educational policies like Boarding School (or the Canadian equivalent of the Residential School system) as the main avenues for institutionalizing colonial social relations like the gendered labour division of the husband and wife as the “paradigmatic model for appropriate social order...and the construction of (the) bourgeois home.”⁴³ He furthers this critique by outlining the further impact of the reproductive heterosexual relationship as “splintering tribal territory into single family households...(and) the abandonment of Indigenous kinship networks.”⁴⁴ In a chapter provocatively titled “Killing the Indian, Saving the

⁴⁰ Rifkin. 21.

⁴¹ Rifkin. 174-175.

⁴² Rifkin. 22.

⁴³ Rifkin. 146.

⁴⁴ Rifkin. 147.

Heterosexual Homesteader”, he links these theories to the implementation of two 1870 education programs at the Hampton Institute and Carlisle Institution under Colonel Richard Henry Pratt. This education based on an “outing system”, placed students placed white-settler families to “receive an adequate idea of civilized home-life.”⁴⁵ This learned “civilized” life is patriarchial, gender-binary, and heterosexual.

A recorded oral histories by Cree orator Louis Bird, details the traditional marriage practice of the Omushkego Cree of the Lower James Bay. He explains his story is about pre-Christian, nomadic Cree lifestyle.⁴⁶ His discussion of pre-contact marriages is automatically heterosexual, marriages are arranged, usually held according to the seasons and sanctified by a Shaman or dignitary.⁴⁷ He speaks little of the details of the Shaman figures and focuses his story along a “fairy tale” type narrative resulting in children. He does not define his genders, or who is allowed to be conceived of as a “man” or “woman”, but premises marriage exclusively around the heterosexual.

Prominent post-structuralist gender scholar Judith Butler problematizes the heterosexual, reproduction of western “kinship.” She sees kinship as institutional, creating fundamental forms of human dependancy and links it to modern political struggles for marriage equality and attempts to redefine marriage beyond pro-creation.⁴⁸ Kinship, as a process, not a thing, allows room for active agency through creation, and “reorients it away from reproductive notions of

⁴⁵ Rifkin. 147.

⁴⁶ Louis Bird, *Our Voices- traditional Marriage Practices*, <http://www.ourvoices.ca/index/ourvoices-story-action/id.0005>, 1993, Mp3. (last accessed 15 October 2014)

⁴⁷ Bird, *Our Voices- traditional Marriage Practices*.

⁴⁸ Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender*. New York: Routledge, 2004. 102-105.

⁴⁹ Rifkin. 9.

transmitted biological substance or privatized homemaking.”⁴⁹ Similarly, Rifkin posits heterosexual kinship as forming a self-perpetuating dynamic.

Heteronormativity legitimizes the liberal settler state by presenting the political economy of privatization as simply an expression of the natural conditions for human intimacy, reproduction, and resource distribution; thus the critique of heteronormativity offers a potent means for challenging the ideological process by which settler governance comes to appear as self evident.⁵⁰

This analysis is inviting for anti/(de)colonizing politics, and its disempowerment of the settler state’s uninterrupted process of creating legitimacy. Similarly, sovereignty is another dimension of colonial imposition. Rifkin defines sovereignty as “the settler states exertion of meta political authority” with reference to the state’s ability to define land tenure, political identity, and meaningful consent which is prominent in contested resource extraction negotiations.⁵¹

Sovereignty’s intersection to sexuality is positioned where Indigenous people are “legitimized” by demonstrating their “self-evident superiority of bourgeois homemaking...through investments in Native *straightness*.” (emphasis his)⁵² Sovereignty functions as a way for the settler state to empower itself by “recognizing” or “disavowing” Indigenous title and notions of peoplehood.⁵³

Contemporary Two-Spirit:

In linking this work to the experience of contemporary Two-Spirit, I hope to exemplify how heteronormativity has subsequently been naturalized by Indigenous people. The way Two-Spirit today are ostracized in Indian Country means that previous acceptances have been replaced with—I would argue, western, colonial—negligence and intolerance. In the

⁵⁰ Rifkin. 25.

⁵¹ Rifkin. 17.

⁵² Rifkin. 17.

⁵³ Rifkin. 17.

documentary film *Two-Spirit* by Lydia Nibley, she follows the life of Navajo Nádleeh Fred Martinez, and his life tragically culminating in a hate crime by a settler.⁵⁴ For Two-Spirit their existence is challenged by intolerance, threats, and violence, not just from within the community, but outside as well. Straight Cherokee-Chickasaw scholar Brian Joseph Gilley, works extensively with contemporary Two-Spirit and queer Natives about how AIDS and sexuality affect their community life. Through conducting interviews he found that the Two-Spirit men he works with uphold that “family values” and that their sexuality are in opposition to their perceived “traditional Indian values.”⁵⁵ Some of their fears stems from western stereotypes and associations. “Most people don’t want to think of Indian men as queens or stereotyped about unhealthy gay people and most people do not want to recognize a historical place for Two-Spirit men based on their sexual orientation.”⁵⁶ For his subjects, it seems that their sexuality is at odds with their Indigeneity, Despite their self importance for their traditions, they felt as if they were “conflicted participating in ceremonies of powwows.”⁵⁷ Whereas the sacred and traditional roles of Two-Spirit beading, singing, jingle dancing, were revered. It should be telling that modern Two-Spirit feel their sexuality is in opposition to their “Indianness” and to what extent they feel they can participate in their communities.⁵⁸

However, advocates within Indigenous communities recognize this homophobic, oppressive thinking and are combating it by disseminating toolkits such as “TRIBAL Resolutions and Codes To Support Two Spirit & LBGT Justice in Indian Country” which

⁵⁴ *Two Spirits*, directed by Lydia Nibley. New York: Cinema Guild, 2009.

⁵⁵ Brian Joseph Gilley. *Becoming Two-Spirit Gay Identity and Social Acceptance in Indian Country*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press. 2006. 60.

⁵⁶ Gilley. 60.

⁵⁷ Gilley, 50.

⁵⁸ Gilley. 56.

addresses the ways Two-Spirit are disadvantaged and disenfranchised.⁵⁹ Contemporary scholars have even taken to engaging with Indigenous Two-Spirit scholarship that seems to follow in the trend of “queering” (verb) certain discourses. Gabriel Estrada identifies as a “queer feminist of Chiricahua Apache, Rarámuri, Caxcan Nahuatl, and Chicana matrilineages who participates in two-spirit social networks.”⁶⁰ Inspired from Apache scholar Edison Cassadorre who provided a “critical Western Apache two-spirit” critique rethinking Laura Mulvey’s patriarchal and heterosexual gaze in cinema, he arrives at an analysis of the Nádleeh gaze in cinema.⁶¹ The motive for works of this nature are a “resistance to imperial whiteness in film.”⁶² In this line of scholarship, “whiteness” is reasoned as heterosexual, and something that should be resisted.

In an interview with Two-Spirit Bo Young, and his Shoshone mentor Clyde Hall, Young confides how from a queer settler perspective it is “distressing” how most Two-Spirit spiritualists “would deny would deny gay brothers and sisters access to a history, to a tradition that would empower us all.”⁶³ However, I need to mention that Young’s ambiguous background means he might fall into this “non-Indigenous” category despite being incorporated into Two-Spirit communities, having participated in Sweat Lodge, Vision Quests, and Feasts of the Dead.⁶⁴ We should obviously be critical of Young’s potential appropriation of Indigenous spirituality and ceremonies. However, comment about sharing a non-normative history for Indigenous Two-

⁵⁹ Tribal Equity Toolkit 2.0: TRIBAL Resolutions and Codes To Support Two Spirit & LBGT Justice in Indian Country. https://graduate.lclark.edu/programs/indigenous_ways_of_knowing/tribal_equity_toolkit/

⁶⁰ Gabriel S. Estrada. “*Two Spirits, Nádleeh, and the LGBTQ1 Navajo Gaze*” Native Out. <http://nativeout.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Two-Spirits-Nadleeh-and-Navajo-LGBTQ2-Gaze.pdf>

⁶¹ Estrada.

⁶² Estrada.

⁶³ John Dooley, “Two-Spirit Rising” *The Portland Mercury*, June 14, 2001. <http://web.archive.org/web/20020105084120/http://www.portlandmercury.com/2001-06-14/ex.html> (last accessed 15 October 2014)

⁶⁴ Dooley.

Spirit and Settler queers raises issues previously acknowledged about what knowledge is meant to remain sacred and settler's romanticization of Indigenous "queer" histories.

In an attempt to "decolonize" sexuality, I have tried to broadly explore the intersections of gender, sex, and sexuality, and how they function in tandem for Two-Spirit and Native "queer" people. I have tried to challenge "tradition" as a tool for oppression and perpetuating heteronormativity by demonstrating that Two-Spirit histories and mutable conceptions of the body are common across pan-Indigenous world views. I think this is important for addressing how colonial teachings of the gender-binary and heterosexual bourgeois relationship are learned, not natural. However, by trying to conceive of a place for Two-Spirit in a pan-Indigenous history, this work hopes to create a space for tolerance within contemporary Indigenous societies where hostility is perceived. The thread between the historic and the contemporary experiences are crucial not just for considering Indigenous sexuality and gender, but Indigenous issues broadly. After experiences of colonialism, I am contesting what becomes naturalized (heterosexuality) and what becomes "other" (queer, Two-Spirit). I also hope I have thoughtfully recognized that trying to "make space" in Indigenous sexuality to be inclusive, is a romanticization and disruption of a history and experience that is not my own. As a result of this settler's intervention into sexuality, I think works of this nature are important to consider how Indigenous studies can influence entire scholarly discourses, "Indigenizing the academy" and leaving the ethnographic realm of theory. After all, Indigenous experiences are not simply racialized and colonial experiences, but also lived sexual experiences that henceforth need to be "decolonized" off the pages of academia.

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