

Folks Like Us: Anishinaabe Two-Spirit Kinship and Memory Across Time and
Space

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Kai Pyle

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Dedication

For all my Two-Spirit kin, past, present, and future

Abstract

This dissertation addresses the relationship between kinship and memory through the question, “how have Indigenous LGBTQ Two-Spirit people from the Anishinaabe nations remembered their own history?” Through examination of Anishinaabe language(s), nineteenth century individuals who transgressed Euro-American norms of gender and sexuality, literature by contemporary Anishinaabe LGBTQ2 authors, and contributions to a zine by LGBTQ2 Anishinaabe artists, I argue that the primary method of memory-making for Anishinaabe Two-Spirit people has been through the maintenance of trans*temporal kinship—a form of queer Indigenous relationality that can extend over vast time and space. This project applies insights from the emerging field of tribally-specific Two-Spirit studies to Anishinaabe contexts, while also engaging with the fields of transgender and queer studies to provide an Indigenous lens to debates about the ethics of claiming historical figures as ancestors.

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Introduction | Nitami-waawiindamaageng

Boozhoo, Mekadebinesikwe indizhinikaaz. Migizi indoodem.

Wezhaawashkwiikwegamaag indoonjibaa, Gakaabikaang dash indaa noongom.

Baawiting miinawaa Miskwaagamiiwi-Ziibiing onjibaawag indaanikoobijiganag. Niizh ojichaag indayaawaag.

I greet you with a formal introduction of myself in my language, Anishinaabemowin. The usual form of introduction in Anishinaabemowin contains essential information about who I am and how we might relate to one another, especially if you are an Anishinaabe person yourself: my name, my clan, my birthplace and current home, my ancestral communities—and one more thing. Introductions typically end with a statement “Anishinaabe indaaw” or “Anishinaabekwe indaaw,” meaning “I am an Anishinaabe man” or “I am an Anishinaabe woman.” As a person who is neither a man nor a woman, for a very long time this part of the introduction was something I struggled with. Today I am able to conclude my greeting by saying “niizh ojichaag indayaawaag”: I am a Two-Spirit person.

Although from a non-Indigenous perspective it may seem like an individual assertion of identity, the statement of being an Anishinaabe man, woman, or Two-Spirit person is actually far more tied to deeply to questions of how other people will relate to me upon hearing my introductions. In some ways, the example of sharing your pronouns in an introduction in English offers a small analogy: although you are sharing information based on your identity, the reason we share pronouns is because we are asking that others relate to us in a certain way, by using those pronouns to refer to us. Compared to the speech-level action of pronoun usage, however, asserting oneself as an Anishinaabe man,

woman, or Two-Spirit person places one within a web of gendered relations of kinship, social practices, and spiritual roles. The final statement of the introduction is a way to link oneself to thousands of years of always shifting but still continuous relationships among variously gendered beings. While certainly as a Two-Spirit person I am ever-cognizant that roles are not necessarily determined by gender, calling oneself an Anishinaabe man, woman, or Two-Spirit person gives the listener a sense that this person is someone who I can or cannot call *nijii*, that person is someone who might lay the cedar trail or tend the grandfather/grandmother stones at a sweat, or such a person will gather wild rice with wooden knockers, will stand and pole the boat, or will be able to jig the rice to remove the hulls later.

For those of us who are Two-Spirit—Indigenous people who experience our gender, sexuality, and social/spiritual life outside the boundaries of colonially-defined cisgender heterosexuality—this gendered placing can be especially difficult. Although not all Two-Spirit people are like me in identifying as neither man nor woman, many of us feel drawn to practices and roles other than those typically associated with Anishinaabe manhood or womanhood. Historically, this would not likely have been a “problem” as such. In our oral stories of the past and even in the documentary record since the start of colonization in Anishinaabewaki,¹ it is clear that gender roles have tended to be somewhat fluid for Anishinaabe people. In the present day, however, Anishinaabe people and our ideas of gender have been impacted by centuries of colonization in various forms from various European, American, and Canadian powers.

¹ Anishinaabewaki means “Anishinaabe land.” European and Euro-American/Canadian colonization began in different forms at different periods of times depending on the region of Anishinaabewaki.

Even within our own communities, our notions of gender and sexuality have changed, often becoming more rigid, more heteropatriarchal due to this colonization. One result of this change has been an enormous amount of violence against Two-Spirit people and anyone deemed “nonnormative” in their gender and sexuality.² While Anishinaabe people of all genders have faced gendered violence from Euro-Western colonial powers, for Two-Spirit people this has often taken the form of the “loss,” “forgetting,” or more precisely forcible erasure of our sheer existence within Anishinaabewaki. Words that might name us in the fullness of who we are, practices that we might have enacted, roles we might have held—many of these things were actively punished by both colonial powers and our own relatives, some of whom took up colonial attitudes towards gender and sexual diversity. Those who remembered these things often kept quiet out of fear.

This forcible erasure of Two-Spiritness in Anishinaabe communities (and in Indigenous communities more broadly) was what led me to struggle for so many years with how to end my Anishinaabemowin introduction. I literally did not have the language to describe who I was. Even the English word “Two-Spirit” itself, which I will discuss below, was unknown to me until I was almost eighteen years old. So as I started to learn my language as a young adult, I began with a seemingly simple question: how do you say “Two-Spirit” in Anishinaabemowin? This question, which is explored in detail in the first chapter of this dissertation, led me to an archive of written material and oral tradition that surprised me in its richness. Anishinaabe people, it turned out, have a significant record

² Deborah A. Miranda, “Extermination of the Joyas: Gendercide in Spanish California,” *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 16, no. 1-2 (2010): 253-284.

of sexual and gender diversity in language, history, literature, and art. I had been led to believe, both by non-Native scholars and by many of my own community members, that either we no longer knew these things or perhaps they had never existed. This juxtaposition of a rich archive and a legacy of colonially-influenced denial brought me to a new question: given the centuries of colonization Anishinaabe Two-Spirit people have faced, how was it that we managed to hold onto *any* memory of our own history?

This dissertation addresses that question—how Two-Spirit Anishinaabeg³ have held onto memories of our Two-Spirit ancestors—from four different angles. To answer it I have examined the Anishinaabemowin language itself, the written archival records of historical Anishinaabe gender diversity from mostly Euro-American sources, and both the literature and artwork of Two-Spirit Anishinaabe people themselves. Soon after beginning this project of investigation, I came upon a book by an Anishinaabe lesbian author, Carole laFavor, who had written two detective novels in the 1990s that centered on a main character who was also a Two-Spirit Anishinaabe woman. In the first book, *Along the Journey River*, which I will discuss in detail in chapter three, laFavor has this main character say to another Anishinaabe lesbian, “At least we have traditions about folks like us.” In this statement, laFavor makes two key points that resonated deeply with the question I was asking. First, Two-Spirit people have a specific history which has been passed down to the present, and second, there is some kind of kinship that exists between present and past Two-Spirit people: folks like us.

³ Anishinaabeg is the plural of Anishinaabe and means “Anishinaabe people.”

The phrase “folks like us” stuck with me for several reasons. It came like an answer to an issue I had been having in describing my project, which was how to refer to the people I was writing about without being too presentist or prescriptive in calling them all Two-Spirit or LGBTQ when many of them either would not have known those words in English or translation. I stumbled through phrases like “remembering our own history” and “our Two-Spirit ancestors” without specifying *whose* history and ancestors I precisely meant. “Folks like us” felt like a natural solution. It connected *us*, the Two-Spirit, queer, trans, LGBTQ Indigenous people of today, with others who are *like us*. It is perhaps intentionally vague, wide enough to encompass a variety of experiences, while also remaining grounded in shared experiences across time and space. It also reminded me of a very similar term I have seen in the trans community, the hashtag #girlslikeus, used by many trans women and transfeminine people to refer to the spectrum of people who share certain gendered experiences while also recognizing that there are numerous identity terms that such individuals might prefer.

The term “folks like us” provided more than just a catchy title for my dissertation. It also helped me conceptualize the argument I propose as the answer to my question, now phrased as “How have Two-Spirit Anishinaabeg, despite centuries of colonization, remembered the history of folks like us?” The two points I drew out of the phrase “At least we have traditions about folks like us” are related to two categories of analysis: time and kinship. Furthermore, the quote connects the two; the kin known as “folks like us” exist in relation to “traditions” that have come down from the past and will continue into the future. This kinship existing across time and space is what I have come to call “trans*temporal kinship.”

Trans*temporal Kinship

As a concept, trans*temporal kinship actually did not originate for me in Carole laFavor's words, although I came to see them as exemplary of it. Instead, the term arose from an article I wrote for the journal *Transgender Studies Quarterly* to be published in a special issue on the topic of trans*historicitities. After receiving a summer research fellowship in 2017 to study gender diversity in the Anishinaabemowin and Plains Cree languages, I had collected a great deal of archival references and oral tradition that I was able to turn into an article. As I organized the material and considered it in relation to the issue of "trans*historicitities," I noticed that one word in particular was traceable from documents made in the early 1800s to oral tradition still being shared in the 2010s.⁴ In that article, I argued that the continued remembrance and usage of this term to refer to people of a certain type of gender and sexuality indicated that Anishinaabemowin speakers recognized a kinship between past and present Two-Spirit people, regardless of how gender roles may have changed in the interim. As I began working on my dissertation, trans*temporal kinship became an important part of my analysis.

I define trans*temporal kinship as the creative forms of relationality that Two-Spirit, queer, and trans Indigenous people establish and maintain with "folks like us" across space and time. In conceptualizing trans*temporal kinship, I especially draw on the Anishinaabemowin term *aanikoobijigan*. This word, which literally refers to something connected as links on a chain, can refer to both great-grandparents and great-

⁴ The story of this word, *eyekwe*, and its Cree cognate *ayahkwew*, is explored in depth in chapter one.

grandchildren, or more metaphorically, both ancestors and descendants. In other words, both a great-grandparent and a great-grandchild would refer to one another as “aanikoobijigan.” This word, which has also become widely known in its eastern form of *kobade* thanks to the work of Michi Saagiig Nishnaabe writer Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, holds within it Anishinaabe understandings of time as nonlinear and kinship as reciprocal.⁵ In the article I wrote for *TSQ*, I concluded with the following thoughts:

Within these kinship systems, we must think in both directions, to our ancestors and our descendants (literal or figurative). While “inheritance” is typically associated with ancestors and “responsibility” with descendants, the ideas of aanikoobijigan/âniskotâpân and trans*temporal kinship encourage us to think all of these things together. Not just what do we inherit from our ancestors, but also, what responsibilities to do we have to them? Not just what responsibilities do we have to future generations, but also, what new things will we inherit from them?⁶

These questions regarding responsibilities to ancestors and inheriting from descendants are central to what I think of as the work of trans*temporal kinship. Though colonization has disrupted transmission of cultural knowledge and practices for virtually all Indigenous people, Two-Spirit people in particular face a kind of pockmarked minefield through which we must maneuver to understand our histories, navigate our present, and forge our future. In order to accomplish these things, whether our goal is to just survive or something more, we create and sustain relationships with other Two-Spirit people not just in the present, but also among ancestors and descendants.

⁵ Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, *Dancing on Our Turtle's Back: Stories of Nishnaabeg Re-Creation, Resurgence and a New Emergence* (Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring, 2011), 43.

⁶ Kai Pyle, "Naming and claiming: Recovering Ojibwe and Plains Cree two-spirit language," *Transgender Studies Quarterly* 5, no. 4 (2018): 574-588.

What does this look like in practice? Many things, but some possibilities described in this dissertation include: elders continuing to use an Anishinaabemowin term for gender diverse people over centuries despite changing gender roles in Anishinaabe and Euro-American societies. Two-Spirit people using an old term in a new way to describe their identity in order to relate to their kin. An individual living during the height of forced assimilation choosing to dress as she prefers and being accepted by her community because they remember the history of people like her. Relying on our Indigenous grandmothers for knowledge about Two-Spirit traditions. Being queer cousins and parents to other Two-Spirit youth of our own generation because there is no one else there to do it for us. Two-Spirit artists connecting with other Two-Spirit artists through existing kinship networks to create something that can be passed down to the next generation. These are just a few examples of the kind of work that Two-Spirit people do in enacting trans*temporal kinship.

An important aspect of trans*temporal kinship is that it exceeds both linear time as well as heteropatriarchal forms of kinship. Trans*temporal kinship does not always operate in the way that standard ideas of “traditionalism” expects it to. For example, although Anishinaabemowin has a fairly large documented archive of words relating to gender and sexual diversity, these words have not always been easily accessible to Two-Spirit people and their kin. For this reason, Two-Spirit people have had to use imaginative methods to connect to their relatives and *aanikoobijiganag*⁷ across time and space, in place of or alongside the more linear “passing down” of words from

⁷ Plural form of *aanikoobijigan*.

ancient tradition to the present. Cherokee scholar Daniel Heath Justice provides a demonstration of this “non-traditional traditionalism” in an essay called “Notes Towards a Theory of Anomaly,” in which he notes that because Cherokee people do not have an extremely clear trail of words for queer people, he prefers to use the ancient Mississippian concept of “anomaly” to conceptualize queer Indigenous life.⁸ Similarly, some Anishinaabe Two-Spirit people have chosen to describe themselves with words in Anishinaabemowin that may not have been used historically in the way they choose to use it today, yet their queer engagements with Anishinaabe history and culture continue to reflect a commitment to their communities and their kin.

Defining “Two-Spirit” and “Anishinaabe”

At a conference in Winnipeg in the year 1990, a group of LGBTQ Native people made a decision that would fundamentally alter the discourse around gender and sexuality in Native communities. The decision to adopt the term Two-Spirit as a way to refer to LGBTQ Native people would have reverberations for communities across North America. The term was first received by Cree/Saulteaux elder Myra Laramee in a dream while she was supporting a protest on the lawn in front of the Manitoba legislative building solidarity with ongoing Indigenous struggles in Mohawk country and elsewhere in Canada. Laramee offered the term for broader use later that summer at the conference.⁹

⁸ Daniel Heath Justice, “Notes toward a Theory of Anomaly,” *GLQ* 16, no. 1-2 (2010), 216. “Mississippian” refers to a cultural sphere that existed from roughly 800-1600 AD in the midwestern and southeastern regions of North America, which the Cherokee consider at least partially belonging to their ancestors.

⁹ Two-Spirited People of Manitoba Inc. “Welcome to Two-Spirited People of Manitoba Inc.” Two-Spirited People of Manitoba Inc. Accessed December 14, 2018. <https://twospiritmanitoba.ca/we-belong>.

It was suggested, first, as a replacement for the word “berdache,” deemed offensive and inaccurate by the conference participants, which was used at the time by anthropologists and historians writing about historical Native figures who were assigned male at birth and took on women’s roles.¹⁰ Though Scott Morgensen indicates that anthropological research on the berdache began in the early to mid-twentieth century, it became a more substantial focus in the 1970s and 1980s with the founding of the Anthropological Research Group on Homosexuality.¹¹ Walter Williams’ 1986 book *The Spirit and the Flesh*, which surveyed current and past Native gender and sexual variance, became an influential book both within academia and Indian Country. In the 1990s several major works by anthropologists were published including Will Roscoe’s books *The Zuni Man-Woman* and *Changing Ones*, and German scholar Sabine Lang’s *Men as Women, Women as Men*.¹² Like Williams’ *The Spirit and the Flesh*, the latter two books attempted to provide a broad overview of Native gender and sexuality history, while *The Zuni Man-Woman* focused more specifically on one individual, We’wha, from the Zuni people. The second goal for the adoption of the term “Two-Spirit” was for use as an umbrella term that could serve as an identity and point of solidarity for LGBTQ Native people

¹⁰ Clyde M. Hall, “You Anthropologists Make Sure You Get Your Words Right,” in *Two-Spirit People*, eds. Sue-Ellen Jacobs, Thomas Wesley, and Sabine Lang (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 272-275. The word “berdache” is a French word that ultimately derives from a Persian word meaning “slave” and as such has come to be deemed offensive by many LGBTQ2 Native people. This word will be discussed in more detail in chapter one.

¹¹ Scott Lauria Morgensen, *Spaces Between Us* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011): 91.

¹² Sabine Lang, *Men as Women, Women as Men* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998); Will Roscoe, *Changing Ones* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998); Will Roscoe, *The Zuni Man-Woman* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1991); Walter L. Williams, *The Spirit and the Flesh: Sexual Diversity in American Indian Culture* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992).

today. With its origins in a Native woman’s dreams, the creation story of the term “Two-Spirit” recalls the importance of dreams in Anishinaabe culture and other Native societies. Anishinaabe scholar Cary Miller has argued that dreams have historically formed a method of “routinized cultural evolution” among Anishinaabeg.¹³ I suggest that the creation of the term is entirely in keeping with culturally sanctioned forms of innovation in Native communities.

The coining of “Two-Spirit” marks a turning point, a moment at which LGBTQ—and now LGBTQ2—Native people asserted control over the way that they were being discussed by academics, by non-Native LGBTQ2 people, by their heterosexual cisgender Native kin, and by themselves. The impact of “Two-Spirit” can be largely traced in two directions. First, it nearly completely eradicated the use of the term “berdache” in academic sources and forced scholars to acknowledge the impact of their research on living queer and trans Native people. Secondly, it led to the widespread—though by no means uncontested—adoption of the term “Two-Spirit” as a personal and group identity among queer and trans Native people. Queer, trans, and Two-Spirit Native people had been attempting to alter the common opinion within Indian Country that “homosexuality” and “transsexuality” had been introduced by white colonizers since at least the 1970s (when Gay American Indians first organized in San Francisco, the earliest known organization for queer Natives).¹⁴ But it was the establishment of annual queer Native gatherings and the coining of a term that asserted a continuity with historical, spiritual

¹³ Cary Miller, “Every Dream is a Prophecy,” in *Centering Anishinaabeg Studies*, eds. Jill Doerfler, Heidi Kiiwetinepinesik Stark, Niigaanwewidam James Sinclair. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2013.

¹⁴ Randy Burns, “Preface,” in *Living the Spirit*, ed. Will Roscoe, (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1988), 3.

and cultural roles that allowed a new discourse to become mainstream. Instead of arguing that modern queer and trans Natives were infected by colonization, as many heterosexual cisgender Natives believed, or that they were a completely new “breed” of gender and sexuality created by modern disconnection from the tribal past, as some anthropologists claimed, in the 1990s and onwards Two-Spirit people managed to normalize the idea that “folks like us” had long been accepted within their tribal communities.

The issue of history is inseparable from the ideology behind the contemporary Two-Spirit movement. It is not just history, however, that is involved. The literal historical presence of Native people whose gender and sexuality did not fit within current hegemonic ideas of cisgender heterosexuality is no longer particularly controversial in most circles. What remains contested is the *memory* of this history within Native communities and among Native LGBTQ2 people specifically. How, in other words, do Two-Spirit people draw on their knowledge of histories of “folks like us” in the process of articulating their own lives? As has been documented in previous research on LGBTQ2 Native people, individual identification with “traditional” Two-Spirit roles varies greatly.¹⁵ In order to understand Two-Spirit people’s identities today, therefore, it is necessary to investigate their memory of their own history.

My exploration of Two-Spirit memory is based specifically in the lives of Anishinaabe people. Each tribal nation in North America has its own unique history of gender and sexual variance, and the living Two-Spirit citizens of those nations each draw on their individual histories as well as on international, transnational, intertribal and/or

¹⁵ Brian Joseph Gilley, *Becoming Two-Spirit* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006).

pan-Indian ideas of Two-Spiritness. It would be incredibly difficult to attempt to study the way that Two-Spirit people from all different nations engage with memory of “folks like us” within their specific context, to conduct the in-depth research necessary to examine Two-Spirit history on a long timescale. In addition, I focus on Anishinaabe people specifically to contest racialized logic that insists Native people in the Americas are a monolithic group. Just as a scholar of gender and sexuality in Europe might choose to study specifically British or German contexts rather than broader “European” gender, I focus on Anishinaabe people as a way to dig deeper into the specificities of gender and sexuality in a more bounded perspective.

This is not to say that Anishinaabe people are monolithic, either. “Anishinaabe” is in fact an umbrella term of sorts which includes hundreds of thousands of people who hold lands in areas ranging from what is currently Quebec in the east to Montana in the west, from northern Ontario to Oklahoma. In various forms such as Anishinaabe, Nishnaabe, Neshnabé, Anishinini, and others, as an autonym it includes people who may also call themselves Ojibwe, Odawa, and Potawatomi (the “Three Fires Confederacy”) as well as Mississauga, Nipissing, Saulteaux, and Algonquin. I use the term “Anishinaabe” to encompass this vast group not to make sweeping generalizations about gender and sexuality across all of Anishinaabewaki, but to acknowledge the kinship that exists across these nations. Both Winnipeg and Minneapolis, key locations in the rise of the contemporary Two-Spirit movement, have substantial populations of Anishinaabe people, and many were and still are deeply involved in the development of the movement. According to some sources, the term “Two-Spirit” may in fact derive from a phrase in

Anishinaabemowin.¹⁶ There is great value, therefore, in looking closely at how Anishinaabe Two-Spirit people think about themselves, even beyond the value of tribally-specific studies more generally.

Chapter overview

This dissertation is divided into four chapters, each of which examines Two-Spirit Anishinaabe memory and kinship from a different lens. Put broadly, these lenses can be described as language, history, literature, and art. I draw on analytic practices within American Studies, Indigenous Studies, and Queer and Trans Studies to bring together these various lenses through the category of trans*temporal kinship.

The first chapter, “How do you say “Two-Spirit” in Anishinaabemowin? Two-Spirit Anishinaabe linguistic trans*temporal kinship,” examines words in Anishinaabemowin (primarily western Ojibwe dialects) that refer to gender and sexual diversity. In particular, I follow the archival and oral traces of a single word, *eyekwe*, from the 1830s to the present day through fur trade journals, missionary dictionaries, bible translations, ethnographies, and oral tradition. This long history, I argue, provides an excellent demonstration of how Anishinaabemowin speakers have recognized kinship between past and present Two-Spirit people despite changing roles and social contexts. The chapter also examines the history of forced assimilation on the one hand and language revitalization on the other, and the influence these trends have had on both

¹⁶ Anguksuar, “A Postcolonial Colonial Perspective on Western [Mis]Conceptions of the Cosmos and the Restoration of Indigenous Taxonomies,” in *Two-Spirit People*, eds. Sue-Ellen Jacobs, Wesley Thomas, and Sabine Lang (University of Illinois Press, 1997), 221.

Anishinaabe language use and Two-Spirit people. I contend that these things are intimately intertwined, not merely correlated. Finally, I conclude the chapter by considering several examples of how Two-Spirit people are using language in creative ways that extend beyond a linear conception of passing on tradition.

The second chapter, “Intergenerational Joy: Two-Spirit Anishinaabe Survivance Under American Colonization,” follows the lives of three historical Anishinaabe figures whose gender and sexuality were deemed beyond normative white American categories in the nineteenth century. I use records including fur trade journals, Indian census records, recorded oral history, and newspaper articles to not just retell their stories but to look for the way kinship played out in their lives. Although all three of the individuals’ lives were impacted to varying degrees by colonial land theft by the United States government and white settlers, I emphasize the ways each of these three pursued euphoria or joy in their gender expression despite often living through circumstances not of their own choosing. I also use Anishinaabe writer Gerald Vizenor’s concept of “survivance” to explore how their stories expand beyond narratives of victimhood and “mere survival.”

The first of the three, Ozaawindib, was born in the mid-1700s and lived largely before the arrival of American power in her homeland of northern Minnesota. I read between the lines of accounts of her life to show how her pursuit of marriage to various men reveals the connections between individual gender expression and community survivance. The second individual, Wzawshek, was a Potawatomi person who lived in the late 1800s and was notable for expressing her gender nonconformity openly in the reservation period. Her ties to her community allowed her to do so with minimal intervention, while at the same time her open and excited expression of her gender may have helped keep those

community ties strong. The final individual is Cora Anderson / Ralph Kerwineo, a person of mixed Black and Potawatomi ancestry who lived in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and became infamous in 1914 for “passing as a man.” I retell Kerwineo’s story with a greater focus than has typically been given to his Indigeneity and argue that despite the criminalization he faced as an Afro-Indigenous gender variant person, he nonetheless formed kinship relations that allowed him to pursue the kind of self-expression he wished. Together, the stories of these three people show both the varying forms of colonial violence that Two-Spirit people faced in the nineteenth century as well as the ways they enacted kinship in order to express themselves and their gender/sexuality in the way they desired.

The third chapter, “From Nookomis to Noozhishenh: Intergenerational Knowledge Transmission in Anishinaabe Two-Spirit Literature,” turns to the present-day words of Two-Spirit Anishinaabe people themselves. The chapter centers pieces by four different Anishinaabe Two-Spirit authors: Carole laFavor’s novel *Along the Journey River*, Ma-Nee Chacaby’s autobiography *A Two-Spirit Journey*, jaye simpson’s poem “this woman, nokum” and their short story “The Ark of the Turtle’s Back,” and Jas M. Morgan’s memoir *nîtisânak*. In each of their writings, I trace the differing ways that they depict grandmother figures as knowledge-keepers and links to the past with regards to gender and sexuality. In addition, I examine how these grandmother figures and representatives of *future* generations meet in these pieces to demonstrate the varying trajectories of intergenerational knowledge transmission for Two-Spirit people. The two elder writers of laFavor and Chacaby, born in the 1940s and 1950s, evince a more straightforward sense of connection to ancestral knowledge about gender and sexuality

through their grandmothers, while Morgan and Simpson, both young enough that laFavor and Chacaby could be their own grandmothers, emphasize ambivalence and the impacts of colonial violence on knowledge transmission. All four writers, however, recognize the importance of passing on Two-Spirit knowledge to future generations of Two-Spirit people. Though they may depict this passing on between generations in different ways, in each case the authors provide a view into how Anishinaabe Two-Spirit people conceive of trans*temporal kinship in the form of interpersonal relations across generations.

The final chapter of this dissertation is titled “Inseparable: Collaborative Two-Spirit Anishinaabe Creative Expression.” Like the third chapter, it focuses on creative work produced by Two-Spirit Anishinaabe people themselves. In this case, however, that creative work takes the form of visual and tactile art created for a zine of which I am the editor. Beginning with a narrative describing how I came to the idea of creating a zine of Anishinaabe Two-Spirit art, I make two overarching arguments in the chapter: first, I analyze artworks by five contributors (Ryan Young, Awanigiizhik Bruce, Shawna Redskye, Elijah Forbes, and Fritz Keahna Warrior) to show how each emphasizes a different aspect of trans*temporal kinship in their work, concluding that for Two-Spirit Anishinaabe artists, queer/trans/Two-Spirit kin across time and space are inseparable from us in the present. Second, I argue that the creation of the zine is itself an enactment of trans*temporal kinship due to the relationships I established, called upon, and cultivated in order to put together the zine, ultimately co-creating a document that shows how Two-Spirit Anishinaabeg are thinking about their experiences and identities that will be a record for future generations of Two-Spirit Anishinaabeg to come. I therefore conclude this dissertation by putting into practice what I am describing.

Significance and goals

In many ways, this dissertation is a culmination of my own years-long process of building a personal archive of Anishinaabe Two-Spirit history. Of the three historical figures that I study in chapter two, two of them first came to my attention in the footnotes of other studies of gender and sexuality. I found Wzawshek in Sabine Lang's *Men as Women, Women as Men*, a book that aims to survey Two-Spirit roles across the continent and to examine them according to elements such as how they became Two-Spirit, what sexual roles they took, and what kinds of labor they did. Ralph Kerwineo came to me through a one-off reference in Siobhan Somerville's *Queering the Color Line*, which focuses primarily on the Black/white racial boundary.¹⁷ Ozaawindib, on the other hand, had a slightly higher profile: I first learned of her back when I first began identifying as Two-Spirit from a list on the Wikipedia article about the term "Two-Spirit."

The literature by Anishinaabe Two-Spirit writers came to me in eclectic ways as well. Although I moved to Minneapolis half decade after Carole laFavor's death, I found her detective novels, out of print until their recent republishing by the University of Minnesota Press, in the Hennepin County Public Library; her presence continues to be felt in the Native HIV/AIDS activism within the Twin Cities. Through the community of #NativeTwitter and Two-Spirit literary circles in Canada, I have become friends with jaye simpson and Jas M. Morgan, sharing space with them in anthologies and on panels. And I had the opportunity to meet Ma-Nee Chacaby at the Ojibwe immersion camp

¹⁷ Siobhan B. Somerville, *Queering the Color Line* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 103.

Ojibwemotaadidaa Omaa Gidakiiminaang, where I had the incredible privilege to hear her tell part of her story in her first language—my ancestral language.

I recite these connections not as merely an object of interest for the reader, but because they too reveal how trans*temporal kinship is central to Anishinaabe Two-Spirit life and interactions with our surroundings and our past, present, and future. Just as webs of kinship connect all of Anishinaabewaki, so too do specifically Two-Spirit networks of kin connect Two-Spirit people to both other Two-Spirit people and to broader Anishinaabe communities and beyond. In order to understand Anishinaabe language, history, literature, and art, I contend in this dissertation that we must take those specifically Two-Spirit networks of kin seriously. I argue further that not only must we take them seriously, however, but that without these Two-Spirit stories, our understanding of these things is not complete. Two-Spirit people, our histories, and our relationships have significant truths to reveal about Anishinaabe and Native studies. Whether we are rethinking how gender is constructed as “traditional” in light of old words many have forgotten, accounting for how gender-variant people helped hold together their community in times of great violence, considering in a new light what it means to be a grandmother or grandchild from a Two-Spirit perspective, or revitalizing traditional crafts in a gender-affirming way with our relatives, Two-Spirit people’s stories can act like a prism through which we see Anishinaabe and Native studies. The same light comes through, refracted in rainbow colors we might not have seen otherwise.

Academically, this dissertation makes a variety of contributions to various fields. In the fields of queer and trans studies, the concept of trans*temporal kinship offers an Indigenous perspective on the longstanding debates about the benefits and dangers of

claiming figures as queer or trans ancestors. In Native studies, as I have just elaborated, this dissertation engages with ideas of relationality, a commonly discussed concept in present-day Indigenous studies, while asserting the centrality of Two-Spirit people.¹⁸ As a dissertation in American studies, this work's consideration of kinship, temporality, gender, sexuality, race, memory, and colonization offers a specifically Anishinaabe Two-Spirit angle on questions that are central to the field. I also hope that it shows the possibilities for how to write about issues that may be steeped in violence and pain while not becoming wrapped up in asking questions and finding answers that only reveal deficits. Although my research question acknowledges colonial history and present violence as conditions that shape Two-Spirit Anishinaabe worlds, my ultimate interest is not in delineating wounds but presenting strategies for survival, survivance, and flourishing.

In this regard, I also wish to acknowledge that I have much larger hopes for this dissertation beyond the world of academia. While recognizing that this is merely a dissertation, written in an academic style and to be published in a database inaccessible to most outside the academy, the work I have done here is not entirely contained within those bounds. The zine has already entangled me in the lives of numerous other Two-Spirit Anishinaabeg, and its impact will only grow upon its release. My work with language is ongoing and has spread through my continuous sharing of what I have learned through informal channels like Facebook messages between Two-Spirit

¹⁸ Billy-Ray Belcourt has challenged Indigenous studies on its current inability to take seriously queer Indigenous realities in Billy-Ray Belcourt, "Indigenous Studies Beside Itself," *Somatechnics* 7, no. 2 (2017): 182-184.

Anishinaabeg and advice given to parents of Two-Spirit children. All that I write here is for the sake of Anishinaabe people, for Two-Spirit people, for all those who want to know there exists a past and a future for *folks like us*. Regardless of what term we choose to put to it—aanikoobijigan or trans*temporal kinship or something else entirely—they are the ones who are doing the real work.

**How do you say “Two-Spirit” in Anishinaabemowin? Two-Spirit Anishinaabe
linguistic trans*temporal kinship**

I first heard the word *eyekwe* at the Ojibwemotaadidaa Omaa Gidakiiminaang immersion camp on the Fond du Lac reservation in the winter of 2017. The winter program brings together Anishinaabemowin language learners, teachers, and native speakers to create weekend-long immersion environments. One weekend in February, we welcomed a visiting elder from Canada, Ma-Nee Chacaby, who joined us to guide us in an art project. That Saturday night, she powerfully spoke to us in Anishinaabemowin and recounted her journey as a *niizhin ojijaak* (Two-Spirit) person—a journey which I will consider further in chapter three. What was almost as remarkable as her story, though, was the conversation we had the next morning. As we gathered for breakfast, poking at our customary porridge, two of the other elders began to talk about words they were familiar with that referred to LGBTQ/Two-Spirit people. Bizhikiins (Leona Wakonabo) and Ningaabii’anook (Gerri Howard), both from the Jaachaabaaning community of the Leech Lake reservation in Minnesota, mentioned a few words, one of which was *eyekwe*. As a learner, I struggled to keep up with the conversation, but a later discussion with Leech Lake Ojibwe linguist Brendan Fairbanks, who was also present at breakfast that day, confirmed what they had said.

The word *eyekwe* struck me more than any of the others. It was only when I began reviewing notes from my 2017 summer fellowship on the topic of terms in Anishinaabemowin and Plains Cree (two closely related languages) for gender and sexual diversity that I realized why. *Eyekwe* was remarkably close to the Plains Cree word *ayahkwêw*, a term I had documented back to the 1860s in a presentation the year before.

It also appeared potentially akin to the word used in John Tanner's 1832 autobiography *The Falcon* and re-popularized as the title of a play by Waawaate Fobister: *a-go-kwa/agokwe*. The possible persistence of a term from the early 1800s to the present provided a central path for this chapter, and indeed sparked the idea for this dissertation as a whole.

This chapter follows the terms *eyekwe*, *ayahkwêw*, and other words referring to LGBTQ/Two-Spirit people in Anishinaabemowin (and, at times, related languages) over a period of almost two hundred years to argue that despite incredible shifts in Anishinaabewaki during that time, speakers of Anishinaabemowin have continued to recognize a form of kinship between past and present Two-Spirit Anishinaabeg. In other words, although colonization has vastly altered the gendered and sexual landscape of Anishinaabewaki, the fact that speakers of Anishinaabemowin continue to use the same words to refer to those outside the colonial gender binary reflects their recognition of the kinship between Two-Spirit Anishinaabeg now and then. Much as the word *ikwe* continues to be used to refer to women today just as it was used two hundred years ago despite the fact that Anishinaabe women's roles have changed dramatically, the use of the words *eyekwe* and *ayahkwêw* for individuals in 1832 just as in 2017 indexes the recognized kinship between those individuals, even though their roles, appearances, and identities may be very different. Looking more specifically at language use by Two-Spirit Anishinaabeg themselves, I also examine how present-day Two-Spirit people draw on both memories of their Two-Spirit tribal histories as well as a desire to create space for themselves and their descendants (whether blood or not) in the present and future. This language use, I argue, constitutes a trans*temporal kinship through which Anishinaabe

Two-Spirit people maintain memories of “folks like us.” This chapter will demonstrate how this trans*temporal kinship framework can be used to read linguistic sources in service of establishing relationships among Indigenous kin across time.

In addition to tracing the term *eyekwe*, this chapter also discusses the relationship between language shift, language revitalization, and the recognition of Two-Spirit people in Anishinaabe communities. Here I argue that assimilationist colonial violence impacted both Anishinaabemowin usage and Two-Spirit people’s status in interconnected ways, and that we must examine both together in order to fully understand these phenomena—and to understand them through more than just a narrative of “decline” that disavows colonial violence and effaces the complexities of Indigenous agency. The story of cultural revitalization and Two-Spirit organizing in the late twentieth century likewise are intimately interconnected, as I will show. The final part of the chapter focuses on the ways that Two-Spirit people in recent years have engaged with Anishinaabe language and history in creative ways to inform their identities and social roles within their communities. I argue that these linguistic acts are an enactment of trans*temporal kinship, drawing on ancestral understandings of language, gender, sexuality, and culture to (re)establish a place for Two-Spirit people in contemporary Anishinaabe society, and beyond to imagine futures where we are once again recognized as central to our people’s existence.

In this analysis, I take as guidelines the questions that Chickasaw linguistic anthropologist Jenny L. Davis offers in place of mainstream questions about language “endangerment.” Davis suggests that instead of asking “why are some languages dying?” we instead focus on the following questions:

How is it even possible that Indigenous and endangered languages have been maintained for as long as they have been? What socio-cultural, historical, and political factors have facilitated language maintenance and use? What do examples of language maintenance under such extreme conditions teach us about potential strategies for continued language reclamation in our communities? What incredible levels of dedication and persistence are demonstrated by individuals, families, and communities engaging in language reclamation?¹

In the case of this chapter, I am adjusting these questions to ask, how is it that these words for Two-Spirit people have survived in the face of incredible pressure and outright violence? What socio-cultural, historical, and political factors have contributed to the various shifts in language surrounding Two-Spirit people? How have Two-Spirit people used language creatively to connect with their *aanikoobijiganag*?

Anishinaabe Two-Spirit people's nonlinear journeys through past, present, and future Anishinaabemowin language usage form a complex map of what Métis scholar Brenda MacDougall calls *kinscapes*—landscapes of Indigenous kin relations.² I also draw on Mvskoke scholar Laura Harjo's notion of "kin-space-time envelopes" and "constellations" to articulate the way that these kinship relations exist across time as well as space:

Kin-space-time envelopes provide advisement for how to be in the world. An Indigenous kin-space-time envelope considers ancestral practices that we draw upon to renovate, reinvigorate, and sustain our bodies, psyches, livelihoods, and communities. A kin-space-time constellation is a network of kin-space-time envelopes. A constellation then operationalizes multiple dimensions—for

¹ Jenny L. Davis, "Resisting rhetorics of language endangerment: Reclamation through Indigenous language survivance," *Language Documentation and Description* 14 (2017), 54.

² Brenda MacDougall, "How we know who we are: Historical literacy, *kinscapes*, and defining a people," *Daniels v. Canada: In and Beyond the Courts*, edited by Chris Andersen and Nathalie Kermaal, (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2021), 233-268.

instance, the spirit world, the practices of ancestors, cosmology, ceremony, and the everyday social reproduction of the community.³

Harjo gives the example of visiting or imagining her community's stomp grounds and re-experiencing the memory of her mother being there. This then serves as a guide for how Harjo conducts herself, thus connecting the past memory to Harjo's present and future actions in relation to her kin. In this chapter, I position words in Anishinaabemowin as kinds of kin-space-time envelopes through which Anishinaabe Two-Spirit people make connections to kin past, present, and future.

Following *eyekwe*, *ayahkwêw*

The heart of this chapter is the story of the word *eyekwe*. To tell this story, however, requires us to travel into the nearby territories inhabited by related words. In particular, I rely on the historical and oral documentation of the *nêhiyawêwin* (Plains Cree) term *ayahkwêw* because of its apparent cognate status with the word *eyekwe*. Although Cree is considered a distinct language from Anishinaabemowin, there are compelling reasons to examine both in relation to one another. Besides simply being closely related languages, Anishinaabe and Cree communities have a deep history of interaction with one another. In places such as northern Ontario and the prairies of Manitoba and Saskatchewan, there has been such extensive interweaving of kinship between Cree and Anishinaabe people that there are numerous bands recognized as being

³ Laura Harjo, *Spiral to the Stars: Mvskoke Tools of Futurity*, (University of Arizona Press, 2019), 43.

composed of Cree, Anishinaabe, and Métis ancestry.⁴ In some areas, a distinct Oji-Cree identity exists, and in northern Ontario there is an Anishinaabemowin dialect known as Oji-Cree or Severn Ojibwe, which has been influenced by the use of Cree as a liturgical language.

Before beginning, I want to note a few of the strengths and challenges in the various types of sources that will be used below. In this section I examine archival written records as well as oral traditions (including those that have been received and recorded by other Indigenous people as well as oral tradition I have myself received). Archival sources are incredibly important to Indigenous people searching for words for people like them, owing to their recording of the distant past. However, such sources must be considered in light of the motives and context surrounding those who created them—primarily non-Indigenous, white men. Missionary dictionaries were created with the intent of facilitating the conversion of Indigenous people to Christianity and to white “civilized” ways of life more broadly. Captivity narratives were often used to demonstrate the savagery of Indigenous people to justify conquest. Ethnographies of the twentieth century were frequently intended as “salvage anthropology,” hoping to record dying ways of life that were doomed to disappear. Few of these writers hoped to provide affirmation of Indigenous gender and sexual variance. Indigenous people attempting to extract knowledge from such sources face a fraught journey of interpretation. Alongside archival sources, the other main place where records of Two-Spirit people can be found is in Indigenous oral traditions. Oral traditions come with their own set of

⁴ See Rob Innes, *Elder Brother and the Law of the People* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2013) for an extended discussion of intertribal communities of Cree, Anishinaabe, and Métis people.

strengths and difficulties for people trying to understand Two-Spirit history. While oral tradition comes directly from Indigenous people without a non-Indigenous mediator, the fact that Indigenous people have for at least a century, longer in many cases, been impacted by assimilation policies must be taken into account for its potential impact on what has been passed down. This is particularly important in the case of words for Two-Spirit people because of settler colonial attempts to stamp out Indigenous gender and sexual variance.

In Plains Cree, there is a relatively rich documentary record for the term *ayahkwêw*. It appears in missionary dictionaries in the 1860s and 1870s, in an anthropological account from the 1940s, and in oral traditions shared with youth in the 2010s. While different definitions appear in each of these sources, it seems to have several interrelated meanings: 1) a castrated individual, whether human or animal; 2) an intersex individual, whether human or animal; 3) a person designated male at birth who takes on mixed or feminine gender roles. Because of the closely related nature of the Anishinaabemowin and Cree languages, I will take a moment to examine more closely the sources associated with the word *ayahkwêw*.

In 1865, Edwin Arthur Watkins published *A Dictionary of the Cree Language*, in which he recorded the word *Ayākwāo* as a noun meaning “a castrated animal, a hermaphrodite.”⁵ Nine years later, Francophone missionary Albert Lacombe published his *Dictionnaire de la langue des Cris*, in which he recorded what appears to be the same word as *Ayekkwe, wok* (*wok* being the plural ending), meaning “a cut or castrated male:

⁵ Edwin Arthur Watkins, *A Dictionary of the Cree Language* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1865), 195.

e.g. ayekkwé-watim, a castrated horse or dog; ayekkwé-mustus, castrated bull. In addition, it refers to those who are neither male nor female, or rather: those who are of both sexes, hermaphrodite.”⁶ Both entries record a dual meaning for this word: first, it refers to a castrated animal, and, second, to someone (not specified as to whether human or animal) who is a “hermaphrodite.” Their inclusion in the dictionaries by missionaries suggests that the compilers found them to be necessary words to know for anyone interacting with Cree people. Both definitions privilege meanings that refer to physical characteristics of the body—but as later sources suggest, these may not be the only definitions of the word. As we will see below, these words, at least at one point in time, also could refer to people with seemingly unambiguously “male” physical characteristics who took on a womanly or womanlike role in their society. By the 1700s, French and later British, American, and Canadian travelers through Indian Country were referring to these individuals as “berdaches.” With distant origins in the Muslim world as a word for “slave,” this word had previously been used in French to refer to effeminate men and so-called “passive homosexuals.”⁷ By the nineteenth century, it had come to be used in English almost exclusively to refer to Indigenous people designated male at birth who lived as women or in mixed-gender roles.

⁶ “mâle coupé, eviratus; v. g., ayekkwé-watim, cheval, ou chien coupé; ayekkwé-mustus, taureau coupé. Aussi, on appelle ainsi celui qui n’est ni mâle ni femelle, ou plutôt: qui utrumque sexum habent, Hermaphrodite.” Albert Lacombe, *Dictionnaire de la langue des Cris* (Montreal: C.O. Beauchemin and Valois), 326.

⁷ Trésor de la langue française informatisé, s.v. “Bardache, subst. masc.,” accessed May 30, 2021, 11:54, <https://www.cnrtl.fr/definition/bardache>.

Despite the later use of this word to refer to such people, these two dictionaries do not record “berdache” as one of the potential meanings for *ayākwāo/ayekkwē*. There are several possible reasons for this absence that we can speculate on, each of which has its own interesting implications. Perhaps the word *ayākwāo/ayekkwē* only referred to those with ambiguous sexual characteristics in the 1800s and came to refer to people with mixed gender roles later. This would be an astonishingly unique situation, as most records of individuals living in such roles show up early in the record and later disappear, while this would be the opposite phenomenon. For a gender variant role to be named for the first time during the period when settler colonial forces were working very hard to enforce white gender roles on indigenous people would be an astounding development, to say the least.

Another possibility is that missionaries simply did not see people with mixed gender roles among Cree people and only heard these words used to refer to those with ambiguous sexual characteristics. This seems unlikely, given other records of the commonness of gender variant figures among Indigenous people, especially plains groups—even John Tanner, who would have interacted with Plains Cree groups in his travels in the Red River region, notes that “most” Indigenous groups included at least one such person. Still, in the 1930s Cree elder Fine-Day stated that such people were uncommon, so it is possible the missionaries did not encounter any. On the other hand, perhaps they misunderstood the *ayākwāo/ayekkwē* they saw to all be hermaphrodites, as they would not have been privy to the precise details of the bodies of every *ayākwāo/ayekkwē*. Alternatively, perhaps the missionaries fully understood the presence of people with mixed gender roles but chose not to include them in their definitions. Why

might they do this? In Lacombe's definition in particular, there is a certain amount of discomfort evident in the way that he switches from French to Latin to state that the *ayekkwé* might be an individual "who has both sexes." It is as though such a detail were so scandalous that it must be concealed from the average French-speaking audience. The presence of a gender role so far outside what was deemed acceptable by Christians would likely have been distressing to the missionaries. Despite these attempts to erase them, however, Two-Spirit people clearly existed in their communities and continued to do so despite pressure from missionaries to take up more "acceptable" gender roles.

The same word also appears decades later in David Mandelbaum's ethnographic account, *The Plains Cree*, published in 1979. Based on the author's research among the Cree in 1934 and 1935, it attempts to reconstruct the life of Cree people during the 1800s at the height of the buffalo-hunting culture. In one section, Mandelbaum includes a recollection at length of a Cree man, Fine-Day, about a relative of his. Fine-Day states, "They were called *a-yahkwew*. It happened very seldom. But one of them was my own relative. He was a very great doctor. When he talked his voice was like a man's and he looked like a man. But he always stayed among the women and dressed like them." The preferred name of this person was *pîyêsiwiskwêw*, meaning "thunder woman" because "Thunder was a name for a man, and *iskwew* is a woman's name; half and half just like he was."⁸

⁸ David Mandelbaum, *The Plains Cree* (Regina, SK: Canadian Plains Research Center, 1979), 167. Spelled *piecuwiskwew* in the original; I have transliterated the name into contemporary standard romanization for Plains Cree. Note that Plains Cree does not use capital letters for political reasons, including for proper names.

The Plains Cree was published in its entirety in 1979; however, it is based on a shorter original publication from 1940. By the time Mandelbaum conducted his research in the 1930s, there was already an interest among anthropologists in the gender systems of Indigenous people and the variance among those systems. Mandelbaum refers to the “berdache” as a concept of which he assumes his readership will have prior knowledge. By 1979, interest in this topic was once again becoming strong as lesbian and gay anthropologists and other scholars were organizing to widen the extent of scholarship on gender and sexual variance.⁹ On the one hand, this information was intended to further *global* understandings of gender and sexuality. Anthropological studies of Indigenous people at large were meant to show the great variety of potential social structures around the world at large. Mandelbaum, in his preface to the 1979 edition, recognizes both this global significance as well as the importance of this record to Plains Cree people in particular. When asked by a Cree man, “What good . . . have all your efforts among us and your writings about us done for my children and my people?” he responded that his work gave them “some record of their forefathers and of a way of life that many of them would increasingly want to know about. Together with their own oral traditions it could provide that sense of personal and social roots that most people want to have.”¹⁰ At the same time, he notes that “for an understanding of mankind generally, the studies of the Plains Cree and of other Plains Indians tell us about one general set of answers that these people developed to meet the life questions that all men and women must confront.”¹¹

⁹ Morgensen, *Spaces Between Us*, 60.

¹⁰ Mandelbaum, *The Plains Cree*, xv–xvi.

¹¹ Mandelbaum, *The Plains Cree*, xvi.

Mandelbaum desired to record the ways of life that the Plains Cree people held in the time before white Canadians and Americans forced them onto reserves and reservations, and he attempted to do this by interviewing the oldest people in the community. Almost all of those he interviewed were men, perhaps due to social norms around interactions among different genders in Canadian society, Plains Cree society, or both, or perhaps due to Mandelbaum's own assumptions about who would be the most reliable source for what he desired to learn. He states that at the time of his research, Cree was the primary language of the community, and the quotes in his book were recorded with the help of several interpreters.¹² The effects of settler colonialism and life on the reserves between the late 1800s and the 1930s, however, should not be ignored. During this time, Canadian and American officials attempted to enforce white practices of "civilization" in Indigenous communities, suppressing, among other things, Indigenous language, religion, and gender and sexual practices. While in this period older individuals would not have been forced to attend residential schools, younger people, who would have been more likely to have the ability to translate, may have gone through the schools. The impact of this on both Indigenous languages and gender systems will be explored in detail below, but for now I will note that white figures of authority in these schools enforced both the eradication of Indigenous languages in favor of English as well as the eradication of Indigenous expressions of gender in favor of Euro-Canadian norms for "boys" and "girls."

¹² Mandelbaum, *The Plains Cree*, 4.

Particularly for those who had learned English, regardless of how they learned it, we must consider what kind of lens through which the knowledge they passed on to a white researcher was filtered. For example, the Cree language does not use gendered pronouns; the third person is nonspecific as to gender. However, Mandelbaum's record of *pîyêsiwiskwêw* uses the pronoun *he*—likely based on the usage of the interpreters (all of whom were Cree themselves). We cannot assume based on this usage that historically, Plains Cree people viewed *a-yahkwew* individuals as male, without considering the ways that white Canadian and American concepts of gender would have been transmitted to Plains Cree people by the 1930s along with the English language.

The word *ayākwāo/ayekkwē/a-yahkwew*, which from here I will spell in the standard modern Plains Cree orthography as *ayahkwêw*, has also survived in oral tradition to the modern day. Chelsea Vowel, a Métis author from the Plains Cree-speaking community of Lac Ste. Anne, conducted an informal research project among Plains Cree speakers and found a number of words for people who do not easily fit within modern Western standards of gender and sexuality. Among those was the word *ayahkwêw*, which speakers suggested meant “a man dressed/living/accepted as a woman,” or possibly “a ‘third’ gender of sorts, applied to women and men.¹³” Also suggesting its survival among Cree-speaking people is the frequency with which this word appears, in various folk spellings, on the public Plains Cree–language Facebook page “Nêhiyawêwin (Cree) Word/Phrase of the Day,” whenever someone asks about words for Two-Spirit people. One person responded to a request for such words with a

¹³ Chelsea Vowel, “Language, culture, and Two-Spirit identity,” *âpihtawikosisân* (blog), March 29, 2012, <https://apihtawikosisan.com/2012/03/language-culture-and-two-spirit-identity/>

memory that in the 1960s, a person in his community, whom he described as “a man . . . dressed like a woman,” was referred to as an *ayahkwêw*.¹⁴ A few years later, this term came up again, spelled as *hy kwew*. This time, however, another commenter expressed outrage that this word was being shared, as they felt it was “offensive” and “from a different time.”¹⁵ In response to the word *ayahkwêw* being shared, another person cited the phrase *ayahkwêwatim* as meaning a castrated dog, indicating that the meaning of castration that missionaries recorded in the 1800s has also survived.¹⁶ However, several users chastised that individual, noting that *ayahkwêwatim* was an insult that should not be passed on.¹⁷ The implications of claiming that these words are insults will be examined in more detail in the next section. For now I will simply note that all of these interactions demonstrate both the survival of words for Plains Cree gender variance, as well as the complex feelings that such words evoke for modern speakers of the language who have various experiences of acculturation to white Canadian and American societies and varying levels of knowledge of traditional ways and language.

To return to Anishinaabemowin, this evidence of the history of the word *ayahkwêw* in Cree led me to wonder if any similar documents had recorded *eyekwe* in the past. I finally did locate it, in a perhaps unusual spot to find a word referring to gender diversity: Anishinaabemowin translations of the New Testament. In the Gospel of

¹⁴ Lin J. Oak, comment on Chelsea Vowel, ““I have a question about terminology for two-spirited people, particularly those who are transgendered.” Nêhiyawêwin (Cree) Word/Phrase of the Day. Facebook, March 10, 2012. www.facebook.com/groups/18414147673/permalink/10150729217552674/

¹⁵ Gerald M. Auger, comment on Ernest Hester. “How do you say ‘homosexual’ in your dialect?” Nêhiyawêwin (Cree) Word/Phrase of the Day. Facebook, November 3, 2016. www.facebook.com/groups/18414147673/permalink/10154563170807674/

¹⁶ Mel Calaheson, comment on Hester 2016.

¹⁷ Gerald M. Auger, comment on Hester 2016.

Matthew 19:12 (English Standard Edition), the refers to “eunuchs”: “For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Let the one who is able to receive this receive it.” In the 1844 Hall and Blatchford translation of the Gospel of Matthew, they translate this passage thus: “Aiauvg ma uin anint igiu eiekue-uininiuvg gaizhini-/giigojig iniu ogiuan: anint dvsh gaie igiu eiekue-uininiuvg / gaishiigojig iniu ininiuvn: aiauvg dvsh gaie igiu eiekue- /uininiuvg iu gaizhiitizojig onji iu ishpiimi tuzhiogimauiuin. / Aueguen av gegvshkitoguen jiotapinv, mano sv au ogvotapi-/nan.”¹⁸ Here “eunuch” is translated as “eiekue-uininiuvg,” or in double vowel spelling, *eyekwewininiwag*. Likewise, in the 1854 translation by Frederick O’Meara, the spelling “ayaqua-wininewug” is used.¹⁹ This same spelling and translation as eunuch is also included in a 1903 dictionary, “A Concise Dictionary of the Ojibway Indian Language,” by the International Colportage Mission.²⁰ All of the authors of these translations and dictionaries were white missionaries. Intriguingly, Peter Jones, an Anishinaabe missionary and native speaker of Anishinaabemowin, also translated the Gospel of Matthew into his language in 1839, but did not use this word. Instead he simply transliterated “eunuch” into an approximated

¹⁸ Sherman Hall and Henry Blatchford, *Iu Otoshki-Kikindiuin Au Tebeniminung Gaie Bemajinung Jesus Christ* (American Bible Society, 1844), 55.

¹⁹ Frederick O’Meara, *Ewh Oomenwahjemoowin Owh Tababenemung Jesus Christ* (Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1854), 61.

²⁰ International Colportage Mission, “A Concise Dictionary of the Ojibway Indian Language,” 28.

Anishinaabe version, *iunikvg*.²¹ Another translation from 1833 by white missionary Edwin James also uses a transliteration when confronted with the term eunuch.²²

The use of this term as a translation of eunuch raises many questions. To begin with, the passage in Matthew is highly debated itself. While “eunuch” typically refers to an individual designated male at birth who has been castrated, the notion of a eunuch who has been born that way seems more ambiguous. Some have speculated this may refer to people who do not marry, to intersex people, or to people we might today call LGBTQ. In Anishinaabemowin, the word *eyekwe* is not used in isolation here like it was by the elders I first heard it from or like the typical use of the Plains Cree *ayahkwêw*. Instead, it is attached to the word *ininiwag*, meaning “men.” As we have seen above, in Cree, *ayahkwêw* was understood, at least by the missionaries creating dictionaries in the mid to late 1800s, as potentially referring to castrated individuals. However, it also seems to have included (and continues to include today) other meanings referring to intersexuality and mixed gender presentation. Is it possible that *eyekwe* also carried/carries these other meanings? Interestingly, the most famous historical dictionary of Anishinaabemowin, the Baraga dictionary originally published in 1853 lists a completely different word for “I am castrated,” *nin kishkijigas*, which refers literally to the act of being cut.²³ All of these sources must be considered, of course, in light of the fact that they were produced by second language speakers of Anishinaabemowin with varying levels of proficiency. It is

²¹ Peter Jones, *Mesah oowh menwahjemoowin, kahenahjemood owh St. Matthew*, (Toronto: York Auxiliary Bible Society, 1831), 41.

²² Edwin James, *Kekitchemanitomenahn Gahbemahjeinnunk Jesus Christ, Otoashke Waweendummahgawin* (Packard and Van Benthuyzen, 1833), 38.

²³ Frederic Baraga, *A Dictionary of the Otchipwe Language* (Montreal: Beauchemin and Valois, 1853), 44.

likely, however, that they were assisted by native speakers of Anishinaabemowin in the process, and even if not directly assisted, they regardless picked up on this word as being useful to communicate to Anishinaabe people what sort of a being a eunuch was.

The main point that I wish to make by following this set of words through history is that despite the difficulties in determining exactly how it was defined 200 years ago, we can see that even as understandings and definitions shifted depending on time, place, and general context, these words nonetheless persisted in use. The continual usage of the term *eyekwe* and its Cree cognate *ayahkwêw* suggests that even as both Indigenous and white hegemonic understandings of gender and sexuality shifted dramatically from the early 1800s to the present day, speakers of Anishinaabemowin and Cree recognized a continuity in the sort of people who they referred to as *eyekwe/ayahkwêw*. In other words, they recognize—and continue to recognize—kinship between past and present LGBTQ and Two-Spirit people.

On animals and insults

One notable aspect of several of the definitions of the words *eyekwe* and *ayahkwêw* is that they seem to be able to refer to both humans and animals who exhibit gender ambiguity. Examples given in the dictionaries reference both humans who are castrated or intersex, as well as animals like horses, dogs, and buffalo who have been castrated or are intersex. In the present day, Cree speakers on Facebook also recall the use of *ayahkwêw* as an adjective applied to dogs (*ayahkwêwatim*, castrated/intersex dog), primarily used as an insult. It is not clear if the insulting aspect of this derives from the fact that the dog is *ayahkwêw*, that it is a dog, or both. Dogs frequently feature in Cree

and Ojibwe insults, which are often creatively made by attaching the word *dog* to a body part or bodily function (one popular Cree insult being *atimocisk*, dog's ass). It may be that *ayahkwêw* has taken on a derogatory meaning as a result of being used in this way and as a result of the shift towards homophobia and transphobia in Native communities due to colonization.

Still, we should also note that there is evidence of a history of emasculating insults being used towards men in both Anishinaabe and Plains Cree communities. This opens up a complex discussion as to whether such usage makes the term itself inherently derogatory. When Anishinaabe warriors decried being called “women” by the British and retaliated by insulting them likewise, was this an example of “Indigenous misogyny” among Anishinaabe men? In the early 1800s, according to historian William Whipple Warren, a British officer insulted Anishinaabe leaders and warriors, who were unwilling to go to war for the British, by telling them, “I see that you are but women.” A leader from Leech Lake, Wiishkobak, stood and responded thus: “Englishmen! have you already forgotten that once we made you cry like children? yonder! who was the woman then?” Wiishkobak went on to reassert the manliness of his warriors, visible in the scars of warfare on their bodies.²⁴

Was it a case of Anishinaabe men using white men's misogyny against them? Inspired by a framework used by Laguna Pueblo feminist scholar Paula Gunn Allen that compares non-Native feminist readings with “traditionalist” and Native feminist approaches, I have tried to work through this difficult example using a variety of lenses.²⁵

²⁴ William Warren, *History of the Ojibway Nation* (Minneapolis: Minnesota Historical Society, 1885), 377.

²⁵ Paula Gunn Allen, *The Sacred Hoop* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992), 222-244.

In her essay, “Kochinnenako in Academe: Three Approaches to Interpreting a Keres Tale,” Allen argues that neither a non-Native feminist lens nor a “traditionalist” Keres lens is sufficient to grasp the nuances of the story of Yellow Woman. After providing her versions of what those interpretations might look like, she goes on to analyze the story again through a third lens: a Native feminist lens. This last form of analysis roots itself in Keres worldviews, like the traditionalist reading, but also pays close attention to power differentials and the impact of gender on understanding the story.

I draw on Allen’s methodology here to consider a variety of possible meanings for the story of Wiishkobak and the British. A non-Native feminist analysis might posit that the use of womanhood or effeminacy as an insult inherently demeans women and feminine men or LGBTQ2 people themselves. A Native analysis might suggest that the reason womanhood was used as an insult was not because the Anishinaabe men viewed being a woman as demeaning, but because they were men and it suggested they were not fulfilling their proper duties, which may very well have been viewed on an equal level of importance as women’s roles. By this logic, it would be just as insulting to suggest that an Anishinaabe woman was a man and therefore not fulfilling her proper roles.

Even as I tried out these arguments, however, I was left unsatisfied. The non-Native feminist view is reminiscent of early white women’s interpretations of Anishinaabe society, such as that in anthropologist Ruth Landes’s book, *The Ojibwa Woman*, which portrays Anishinaabe society as inherently misogynist and disempowering towards women.²⁶ At the same time, I do not feel comfortable with the idea that the “real

²⁶ Ruth Landes, *The Ojibwa Woman* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1938).

insult” here is about not fulfilling proper roles—if that is the case, where does it leave those of us who move across gendered roles or attempt to exist outside of them? Even Landes records the stories of women who took on apparently “male” roles like hunting and warfare, and while they were sometimes viewed as exceptions, they were generally thought of highly, not demeaned. Stories from my own family and my community further affirm that gendered roles were rarely as firm as they are portrayed by both anthropologists as well as Native community members who wish to assert the existence of a gender binary or duality as a positive thing. From my elders I have learned that when you needed meat, someone had to hunt; when you needed dinner, someone had to cook—and no one was going to say someone shouldn’t do that because they were a man or woman when bellies were empty.

Yet there are still those Anishinaabe men there, insulting British soldiers as “women.” There are still those aunties yelling at their cousins on Facebook for “passing on bad language” to the youth who are looking for affirmation of their identities as Two-Spirit people. As difficult as it may be in the current discourse among feminist and LGBTQ2 activist Native people, who often assert an almost utopic image of matriarchy and Two-Spirit acceptance, we may have to grapple with the idea that our historical communities were not perfect. Whether the womanhood and *ayahkwêw* insults come out of colonization or something older and more Indigenous to Anishinaabe and Cree societies, we cannot ignore those complexities. I want to stress, however, that there are also many indications that women and Two-Spirit people did have significant status within Anishinaabe communities, which will be explored in chapter two. It is entirely

possible that both respect and prejudice existed in some fluctuating variations depending on context.

To conclude this section, I want to note that whether or not the terms *eyekwe* and *ayahkwêw* were always positive or neutral, the continuous recognition of kinship between past and present Two-Spirit people remains clear. This same word may have referred to a biblical eunuch, an early 19th century woman who had been designated male at birth, a castrated or intersex animal, a person who lived in mixed gender roles in the late 1800s, a mid-20th century individual described in English as a “man dressed as a woman,” and a present-day Two-Spirit youth who uses they/them pronouns. From an Anglophone perspective, these are highly divergent forms of gender variation expressed across a huge span of time and space. From an Anishinaabe and Cree perspective, however, these are all beings they would call *eyekwe* and *ayahkwew*. Despite the incredible shifts that occurred in Anishinaabe and Cree communities over the past 200 years, speakers of these languages continue to place these various individuals in the same category: *eyekwe/ayahkwêw*.

“Aaniin iidog apii gaa-wanitooyang i'iw...inweyang?”²⁷

The survival of any words for Two-Spirit people is particularly incredible in light of the intense campaign to assimilate Anishinaabe and other Indigenous people in the United States and Canada since the late nineteenth century. Although there were certain times and places when white missionaries in particular advocated for the use of

²⁷ “When did we lose our language?”—a quote from Anishinaabe elder Hartley White in *Living Our Language*, edited by Anton Treuer (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2010).

Anishinaabemowin and other Indigenous languages, as the existence of translated bibles shows, by 1880s English-only assimilation had become the primary policy of both colonizing governments. The Carlisle Indian Industrial School opened in 1879, setting a new standard for aggressive assimilation in schooling for Indigenous people in the United States, and in 1884 Canada too made Indigenous attendance at day school, industrial school, or residential school mandatory.²⁸ English-only was the official policy at these schools, and students often faced severe punishment for using their Indigenous languages. Boarding schools continued to push assimilation until the 1930s in the United States. After the 1928 Meriam Report revealed the detrimental effects and general failure of boarding schools to assimilate Indigenous students, conditions in the schools began to improve and the boarding school system largely faded by the 1970s. In Canada, brutally assimilationist residential schooling continued as official policy through the 1970s, and the last school only closed in 1996.²⁹

The English-only policies and practices of boarding and residential schools has had an immensely negative effect on Indigenous language usage, and Anishinaabe communities are no exception. Leech Lake Anishinaabe elder Hartley White recalls that it was around the time of World War II, near the end of the assimilationist boarding school era in the United States, when English became the dominant language in his community.³⁰ An informal 2009 assessment of Anishinaabe tribes in Minnesota and

²⁸ Fear-Segal, Jacqueline and Susan D. Rose, *Carlisle Indian Industrial School: Indigenous Histories, Memories, and Reclamations*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2013), 1.

²⁹ Miller, J. R., "Residential Schools in Canada," *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, Published October 10, 2012. <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/residential-schools>.

³⁰ Anton Treuer, *Living Our Language*, 316

Wisconsin found that only four of the thirteen reservations surveyed had more than 20 speakers left, and fully half of the communities had only three speakers or less.³¹ In Canada, the shift from Anishinaabemowin to English seems to have happened later in some places than in the United States, and a few northern communities like Pikangikum First Nation still are predominately Anishinaabemowin-speaking, even among children.³²

The loss of language in Indigenous communities also coincided with what early scholars of Indigenous gender and sexual variance have called “the decline of the berdache.”³³ In fact, I argue that this phenomenon is closely tied to language shift from Anishinaabemowin to English in the late nineteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Boarding schools which punished Indigenous language use likewise had a mission of teaching students “proper” white gender roles.³⁴ Students who “violated” those gender norms were often punished extremely harshly, like an Apsáalooke youth who eventually ran away from school to live as a baté (an Apsáalooke nonbinary gender role).³⁵ A particularly upsetting example was recalled by a Diné woman who attended Carlisle along with her cousin, who was a nádleeh (a Diné nonbinary gender role). Dressed in girl’s clothing, the woman’s cousin was placed with the girls and protected by them, but was ultimately discovered. The child was never seen again, and the woman and her family never found out what happened to their cousin.³⁶

³¹ Lawrence Leonard Moose et al, *Ojibwe Vocabulary Project* (Minnesota Humanities Center, 2009), 4.

³² Willow Fiddler, “Language key to holding community of Pikangikum together,” *APTN News*, published July 11, 2018. <https://www.aptnnews.ca/national-news/language-key-to-holding-community-of-pikangikum-together/>

³³ Walter L. Williams, *The Spirit and the Flesh* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986), 178.

³⁴K. Tsianina Lomawaima, “Domesticity in the federal Indian schools: The power of authority over mind and body,” *American ethnologist* 20, no. 2 (1993).

³⁵ Williams, *The Spirit and the Flesh*, 178.

³⁶ Williams, *The Spirit and the Flesh*, 180

Although boarding and residential schools are perhaps the most direct example of the forced shift to English and to binary white gender roles, they are not the only assimilative force to affect Indigenous people. The same time period that saw the height of boarding schools was also a time of intense government and missionary surveillance for Native communities. In addition, it marked a turning point in some areas when interacting with English-speaking non-Native people became significantly more likely and even necessary than it had been prior to the reservation period. By the 1930s, radio had become widespread through the United States and Canada, and although such technologies were slower to reach Indian Country, Anglophone mass media eventually began to impact Indigenous communities as well. Twentieth century urbanization also increased Native people's contact with English-speaking non-Native people as well. In the United States, government officials developed the 1950s policy of relocation to intentionally try to break down Indigenous social structures by providing incentives for Indigenous people to move to large cities. All of these influences contributed to language shift towards English in Native communities across the U.S. and Canada, including in Anishinaabe communities. This was by no means a smooth or unemotional process. People who had gone through assimilationist schooling often faced intense trauma around speaking the language due to that experience, and even those who did not attend often faced persecution for using the language.³⁷ Many elders and younger speakers of Anishinaabemowin have expressed that they did not want their children to suffer the way they did for speaking their language.

³⁷ Shaawano Chad Uran, "From Internalized Oppression to Internalized Sovereignty: Ojibwemowin Performance and Political Consciousness." *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 17, no. 1 (2005): 42-61.

Although there is a clear correlation between the “decline of Anishinaabemowin” and the “decline of the berdache,” I want to make several moves reframing this idea and taking it further. First, I suggest that we should not only think of these trends in terms of decline. Either could easily be flipped to be referred to as “the rise of English” and “the rise of white binary gender roles, homophobia, and transphobia” among Anishinaabeg. Furthermore, to narrate this story only as a “decline” reinforces the trope of the Vanishing Indian and the disappearing language.³⁸ Reducing these trends to grand statements of decline effaces not only the violent causes behind them, but also the complexity of Indigenous actions in the face of that violence. Neither the Anishinaabemowin language nor Two-Spirit roles disappeared naturally in some kind of steady decline. Both were highly contested by individuals and by communities, and their “decline” involved both violence towards Anishinaabemowin speakers and Two-Spirit people, as well as difficult decisions made by those speakers and Two-Spirit people. Faced with a dangerous combination of social pressure, legal punishment, and naked violence, there were high stakes for both Anishinaabemowin-speakers and Two-Spirit people (who, to be clear, were often the same people) as they navigated how they wanted to express themselves in various contexts.

Beyond being simply correlated, however, I am arguing that that these shifts in Anishinaabe communities were actually closely intertwined. Although there have been debates as to how much language directly affects the way that people think, Anishinaabe

³⁸ Daryl Baldwin, Margaret Noodin, and Bernard C. Perley, “Surviving the Sixth Extinction: American Indian Strategies for Life in the New World,” in *After Extinction*, ed. Richard Grusin (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2018), 202.

people have often asserted that Anishinaabemowin contains understandings of the world that are not perceived by speakers unfamiliar with the language.³⁹ As fewer and fewer people spoke Anishinaabemowin, English connotations and word associations became more influential. Although it is difficult to directly measure this impact, one example that I have often heard and discussed with other Two-Spirit speakers and learners of Anishinaabemowin is the difference in gendered pronouns. English third person pronouns require the speaker to state the person's gender—he, she, it. In Anishinaabemowin, the third person does not distinguish gender. On a group trip I took to the language nest on the Red Lake reservation, an Anishinaabemowin-speaking elder made the point to us that in Anishinaabemowin, everyone would be referred to as *a'awe* (“that one”). When a transgender member of our group asked how people who were neither men nor women would be referred to, the elder very strongly asserted that they too would just be called “a'awe.” This is not to say that Anishinaabe people do not perceive gender; there are certainly words for man (*inini*), woman (*ikwe*), and as I have shown, for other genders and sexualities. However, the shift to English does require that Anishinaabe people begin to automatically gender individuals in nearly every sentence when before they might only use a gendered noun for that person occasionally.

In addition, another fact of language shift is that as more people become English-only speakers and fewer people speak Anishinaabemowin, certain vocabulary of the language is used less often. Anishinaabemowin teacher Pat Ningewance notes in a recent

³⁹ Margaret A. Noodin, “Ezhi-Gikendamang Aanikanootamang Anishinaabemowin: Anishinaabe Translation Studies,” in *At Translation's Edge*, ed. Nataša Durovicova, Patrice Petro, Lorena Terando (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2019), 172.

book that there are many words that were once relevant to Anishinaabe life and were spoken frequently that are now nearly forgotten.⁴⁰ As Two-Spirit people became less visible and accepted in Anishinaabe social life, then, words referring to them were likely casualties of this process. This is supported by the conversation with Bizhikiins and Ningaabii’anook at the beginning of this chapter—both remarked that these were words that they had not heard in a long time. Researchers in the early to mid-twentieth century also noticed that Indigenous people were often reticent when asked about words for Two-Spirit people, suggesting that homophobia and transphobia from both outsider and community members may have accelerated this process.⁴¹

All of these trends worked together to result in a kind of dormancy of Two-Spirit words and roles in Anishinaabe communities. I use the term “dormancy” in reference to the framework used by speakers of Indigenous languages that had previously been declared “extinct,” such as Myaamia and Wampanoag. Many language activists from such communities have reframed the status of their languages as not being “extinct,” but instead “dormant,” or “sleeping.” The key difference, of course, is that while extinction means being gone forever, using the term “sleeping” suggests that the language can be woken up again.⁴²

For both the Anishinaabemowin language and for Two-Spirit people, the awakening process became especially acute in the late twentieth century. The Red Power

⁴⁰ Pat Ningewance, *Gii-Nitaa-Aadisooke: Ojibwe Legends from Lac Seul* (Mazinaate Inc., 2018), 11.

⁴¹ Walter Williams, *The Spirit and the Flesh*, 7.

⁴² Wesley Y. Leonard, “When Is an “Extinct Language” Not Extinct? Myaamia, a Formerly Sleeping Language,” in *Sustaining Linguistic Diversity: Endangered and Minority Languages and Language Varieties*, eds. Kendall A. King et al (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2008), 23.

movement, largely born out of Indigenous youth activism in the 1960s, swept Indigenous communities (especially, though not exclusively urban ones) across the U.S. and Canada, and one of its messages was that Indigenous people should have pride in being Native. For some Native people this translated into advocating racial pride and political sovereignty, but it also fueled desires for cultural revitalization—including language revitalization. For example, since the creation of the first Native American Studies department in 1969 at the University of Minnesota, there have been Anishinaabemowin (Ojibwe) language classes taught at the university level. Another Twin Cities-based education effort from this era, the Red School House, also taught children and adults to speak, read, and write Anishinaabemowin.⁴³

It is not a coincidence that this same period, which was also a moment when gay liberation reached the national stage, saw the creation of the first formal organization for gay Indigenous people. Gay American Indians (GAI) formed in 1975 San Francisco, led by Randy Burns (Paiute) and Barbara Cameron (Lakota). San Francisco, though more well-known in American mainstream culture for its lively queer scene, was also the urban home of a large Native population due to the relocation programs of the 1950s that offered incentives to Indigenous people to move to large urban areas. The most famous event rooted in the Bay Area Indigenous community was the 1969-1971 takeover of Alcatraz Island following a fire that burned down the American Indian community

⁴³ Julie L. Davis, *Survival Schools: The American Indian Movement and Community Education in the Twin Cities* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 130.

center. GAI was formed only four years later as a response to both racism in the gay community and homophobia and transphobia in the Native community.⁴⁴

Randy Burns noted in an interview forty years after the founding of the organization that one of the main components of the group was sharing knowledge about queer Indigenous history and culture, stating, “We did our own tribal research...A lot of the stories were shared by gay elders. And they would whisper.”⁴⁵ Burns points out that in the 1970s, many of the parents of queer Indigenous youth—and indeed, queer Indigenous elders in the community—had themselves attended boarding schools and experienced that form of forced assimilation. Despite this very recent and palpable history, GAI put together their historical research alongside oral histories conducted within the contemporary community and published it in the 1987 collection *Living the Spirit*. In addition to contemporary experiences and accounts of historical roles, the book contained a list of words in 135 Indigenous nations that referred to “third and fourth gender” people.⁴⁶ Such lists would prove incredibly popular among queer Indigenous people, spread throughout newsletters and later internet sites as well as academic publications.

The 1990s saw another wave of both queer Indigenous activism and language revitalization, this time based in urban communities in the midwestern United States and western Canada—places like Winnipeg and Minneapolis that had large populations of

⁴⁴ Yael Chanoff, “Gay American Indians celebrate 40 years,” *Bay Area Reporter*, published June 24, 2015. <https://www.ebar.com/news///245430>

⁴⁵ Chanof, “Gay American Indians.”

⁴⁶ Will Roscoe, *Living the Spirit: A Gay American Indian Anthology* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1988), 217.

Anishinaabeg. The adoption of the term “Two-Spirit” at the 1990 LGBTQ Indigenous conference in Winnipeg marked a turning point, with queer (and to a lesser extent trans) Indigenous gatherings, activism, and cultural production becoming ever more prominent. While less work has been done tracing the history of language revitalization movements since 1990, it is notable that in the United States, the Native American Languages Act of 1990 provided a repudiation of past assimilationist and present-day English-only policies and generally affirmed the importance of Indigenous languages. The first meeting of Anishinaabemowin Teg, a cross-border conference dedicated exclusively to the Anishinaabemowin language, was held in 1994, and the renowned Wisconsin-based Anishinaabemowin immersion school Waadookodaading opened its doors in 2000.

As with the shift to English and the gender binary, I am not merely proposing that language revitalization movements and Two-Spirit activism are correlated with one another. Instead I am arguing that they are tied up in one another. One cannot understand the Two-Spirit movement today without attending to the influence of cultural and language revitalization in Indigenous communities, including queer and trans Indigenous communities. Among Anishinaabe people, this is especially notable because of the centrality of Minneapolis (the location of the first LGBTQ Native gathering) and Winnipeg (the location of the gathering where the term Two-Spirit was adopted). Although it is sometimes difficult to prove that Two-Spirit people have been involved in language revitalization movements in large numbers due to the fact that many such individuals do not necessarily talk publicly about their sexuality, there are some examples that make this involvement clear. Obizaan, also known as Lee Staples, was a key organizer in the Minneapolis conference in 1988, and since then he has become a widely

respected figure among Minnesota and Wisconsin Anishinaabeg for his cultural knowledge and language fluency.⁴⁷

Considered all together, there is strong evidence linking the seeming “fall and rise” of Anishinaabemowin language use and Two-Spirit people’s presence in the twentieth century. This provides all the more compelling reason to use language as a method of demonstrating Two-Spirit kinship across time and space. The next section of this chapter will turn more directly to Two-Spirit people’s use of Anishinaabemowin as a method of expressing trans*temporal kinship.

Old words, new words

As I have shown, since the Native LGBTQ and Two-Spirit movement began to gain steam in the 1970s, the issue of language has been nearly ever-present and constantly of interest to Two-Spirit people. Publications produced on the subject by both Two-Spirit people and non-Two-Spirit people in the 1990s and 2000s almost always contain a list of words referring to gender diverse individuals in a variety of Native languages.⁴⁸ There is more to this practice than an academic interest in history and even the desire to validate Two-Spirit historical existence: there is also a desire of present-day Two-Spirit people to find words that will connect us with our pasts and enable our participation in our communities, especially in light of cultural and linguistic

⁴⁷ Megan L. MacDonald, “Two-Spirit Organizing: Two-Spirit Identity in the Twin Cities Region,” in *Queer Twin Cities*, eds. Kevin Murphy, Jennifer Pierce, and Leslie Knopp (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 162.

⁴⁸ Will Roscoe, *Changing Ones: Third and Fourth Genders in Native North America* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), 213.

revitalization movements that have brought our languages and cultures back to the forefront.⁴⁹

Two-Spirit Anishinaabe people have engaged with language and gender in a number of different ways. Some assert that “queerness” was not necessarily differentiated in a way that required a specific term in Anishinaabemowin; Leanne Simpson draws on this perspective in stating, “my sense is that my Ancestors lived in a society where what I know as ‘queer,’ particularly in terms of social organization, was so normal it didn’t have a name.”⁵⁰ In this view, we do not necessarily need to be looking for words that “translate” to queer, trans, LGBTQ, or Two-Spirit, but should instead focus our efforts on reclaiming places within the circles of our communities and (re-)normalizing gender and sexual diversity without needing to name it in our languages. I have even heard some Two-Spirit people argue that the attempt to translate these words into our languages may actually be a form of colonization, since our cultures had/have such radically different understandings of gender and sexuality. There is certainly truth to this perspective—trying to literally translate *two-spirit*, for instance, can have extremely negative results in some communities, because the idea of “having two spirits” may mean other things in those languages and cultures.⁵¹ Undoubtedly as well, most Two-Spirit people would probably agree that the goal of reintegrating gender and sexually diverse people into Indigenous communities is central to our survival and decolonization.

⁴⁹ Saylesh Wesley, “Twin-Spirited Woman: Sts’ iyóye smestiyexw slhá: li,” *Transgender Studies Quarterly* 1, no. 3 (2014): 338-351.

⁵⁰ Leanne Simpson, *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom Through Radical Resistance* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), 136.

⁵¹ Jenny Ung, “Two spirits attempt to reclaim and embrace their identity,” *Cronkite News*, May 5, 2017, <https://cronkitenews.azpbs.org/2017/05/05/two-spirits-attempt-to-reclaim-and-embrace-their-identity/>

Some Two-Spirit Anishinaabeg, however, have still worked hard to search for words in our languages that might be able to serve as descriptors or identities for themselves. For Anishinaabemowin, this approach makes particular sense because we do have a notable documented record of words in Anishinaabemowin that refer to gender diverse people. For Two-Spirit Anishinaabeg involved in this process, finding words that we can use to describe ourselves fulfills a number of desires and needs. Perhaps most obviously to non-Native LGBTQ audiences, it provides a tangible identity that we can use to understand ourselves internally and with which we can signal our identity to others. If the word is one that has been used historically, it also can provide a link between us and our unique Two-Spirit Anishinaabe histories. Even more critically, finding words in Anishinaabemowin to describe Two-Spirit people also allows us to articulate who we are in a way that is legible to our communities. Particularly as language revitalization becomes ever more influential in Anishinaabewaki, having a way to talk about ourselves in Anishinaabemowin can be essential for Two-Spirit people to participate in these movements.⁵²

One of the first instances I saw of an Anishinaabe Two-Spirit person asserting a word for themselves in the language was in Jas M. Morgan's article for *Red Rising Magazine*, "My Pronouns are Kiy / Kin." In that essay, Morgan writes, "I use the term aabitagiiizhig to signify a gender fluidity that exists outside the bounds of the colonial gender binary; a self-determined, resurgent gender, based in my own ways of being and

⁵² Jenny L. Davis, "More than Just 'Gay Indians,'" in *Queer Excursions: Rethorizing Binaries in Language, Gender, and Sexuality*, eds. Lal Zimman, Jenny L. Davis, and Joshua Raclaw, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 62-80.

knowing my gender.”⁵³ *Aabitagiizhig* literally means “half sky.” It also happens to be the name of an Anishinaabe woman mentioned by Ruth Landes in her early 20th century study of Anishinaabe women. The historical figure of Aabitagiizhig was noted by Landes as having been someone who took on certain masculine roles in her community.⁵⁴ By using *aabitagiizhig* as a self-identifier, Morgan not only asserts themselves as existing within Anishinaabe epistemologies and ontologies, beyond the colonial gender binary, but also makes connections between Anishinaabe Two-Spirit pasts, presents, and futures. They draw on the Two-Spirit Anishinaabe history of the woman Aabitagiizhig (regardless of whether or not she would be considered “LGBTQ” in present-day terms) while also making the case for a “resurgent” gender identity that can be used by Anishinaabe Two-Spirit people today and in the future. This is memory-making, using the history of “folks like us” in creative ways to bear weight on more than just the past. Morgan does not make a claim that this is the exact word that would have been used for someone like them in the precolonial past but instead emphasizes the trans*temporal kinship between themselves, the ancestor Aabitagiizhig, and present and future Two-Spirit Anishinaabeg.

As an Anishinaabe person who identifies outside the colonial gender binary, I have also personally been involved in efforts to find words to describe myself even though they may not be “traditional.” In 2017, I proposed online that non-binary

⁵³ Jas M. Morgan, “My Pronouns are Kiy / Kin,” *Red Rising Magazine*, accessed October 19, 2019, <https://aabitagiizhig.com/2016/05/13/red-rising-my-pronouns-are-kiy-kin/>

⁵⁴ Landes, *The Ojibwa Woman*, 153.

Anishinaabeg might choose to call ourselves *nisawayaa'aa*.⁵⁵ This is essentially a pun in Anishinaabemowin: the word *nisawayi'ii* is used as a preposition to refer to the state of being in between things. It is composed of two parts, “nisaw” which means “between” and “ayi'ii” which means “things.” In Anishinaabemowin there is a kind of duality that pairs the inanimate word *ayi'ii* with the animate word *ayaa'aa*, which means “person, being.” Grammatically, the distinction between animate and inanimate is very significant to how Anishinaabemowin is structured, and speakers of Anishinaabemowin would likely recognize immediately the connection between the two words. Essentially, *nisawayaa'aa* means “in between being/person.” I have not confirmed that this is fully grammatically something that a native speaker would create, but it is nonetheless recognizable. After I shared this, several non-binary Anishinaabeg responded positively to the idea of using this as an identifier, and a few adopted it for themselves (most notably Haudenosaunee/Anishinaabe poet Laura Kooji).⁵⁶

It may not at first be clear the connection between my creation of *nisawayaa'aa* and Jas M. Morgan's use of *aabitagiizhig*. While they are using words that directly refer to historical figures, albeit with new words, I have come up with a term that has no direct referent in Anishinaabe history. However, I juxtapose these two usages together because they share a trans*temporal attitude towards the past, present, and future. In creating or repurposing these words, we are making a conscious decision to reference the history of Anishinaabe recognition of Two-Spirit people through use of our languages but also

⁵⁵ Kai Pyle, Twitter post, December 28, 2017, 10:36 P.M., <https://twitter.com/mekadebinesikwe/status/946600684828463104>

⁵⁶ Laura Kooji, Twitter profile, accessed October 19, 2019, <https://twitter.com/lauraksplain>

recognizing the critical need to develop words that can be used by Two-Spirit Anishinaabeg *right now*. As Morgan describes *aabitagiiizhig*, this also extends into the future through the idea of expressing a “resurgent” gender with the possibility to circumvent the colonial gender binary. Likewise, my creation of *nisawayaa’aa* was shared with the intention that it could be used by others who identified with the term, thus moving it from individual identity to an anticipated expression of kinship.

Conclusion: Translating “Two-Spirit”

Perhaps alone among Native communities in North America, Anishinaabe people may be the one group who can lay claim to the literal term *Two-Spirit* as a concept originally deriving from our language. Anguksuar, a Yup’ik Two-Spirit person who was involved in the LGBTQ Native movement of the early 1990s which served as the context for the emergence of *Two-Spirit* as a shared identity, has asserted that the term originated in the Anishinaabemowin phrase *niizh manitoag*.⁵⁷ Since then, this has often been restated by Two-Spirit people who were not present at the originating 1990 meeting that saw the birth of the term *Two-Spirit*. In later assertions, the Anishinaabemowin term has often been spelled as *niizh manidoowag*. It appears that this may have been an attempt by individuals not familiar with Anishinaabemowin to transliterate *niizh manitoag* into the modern double vowel spelling, because in fact there is no such word as *manidoowag*; the correct plural of *manidoo* is *manidoog*. By the late 2010s, most Anishinaabe people using this term had shifted to saying *niizh manidoog*, possibly reflecting an increased

⁵⁷ Anguksuar, “A Postcolonial Colonial Perspective,” 221.

knowledge of Anishinaabemowin as a second language resulting from language revitalization movements throughout Anishinaabewaki.

Another closely related phrase in Anishinaabemowin is *niizhin ojjaak*, as it is written in Ma-Nee Chacaby's book *A Two-Spirit Journey*.⁵⁸ This appears to be an alternate translation of *Two-Spirit*. Generally, *manidoog* refers to external spirits, powerful beings in nature, while *ojjaak* (*ojichaag* in Minnesota dialects) refers to the interior spirit or soul of a person.⁵⁹ When I listened to Ma-Nee Chacaby speak that night at the Anishinaabemowin immersion weekend, *niizhin ojjaak* is the phrase she used when speaking of Two-Spirit people in Anishinaabemowin. To date, I have not found any archival evidence of this term being used either in Anishinaabemowin or in translation before 1990. However, both Anguksuar (although a non-Anishinaabe person) and Chacaby consider it to be an Indigenous Anishinaabe phrase. Chacaby in particular describes a memory from her childhood where her Cree and Anishinaabemowin speaking grandmother told her, "you have *niizhin ojjaak* inside of you," referring to her gender and sexuality.⁶⁰ Intriguingly, at least one person on the Cree Facebook page also insisted that her grandmother, born in 1870, used the term *kâ-nîsâcahkôwêcik*, meaning "one who has two spirits" (using a Cree cognate to *niizhin ojjaak*).⁶¹ I am not especially interested in whether or not *niizh manidoog* or *niizhin ojjaak* are "truly" ancient, Indigenous, or

⁵⁸ Ma-Nee Chacaby and Mary Louisa Plummer, *A Two-Spirit Journey* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2016), 238.

⁵⁹ The Ojibwe People's Dictionary, s.v. "ojichaag," accessed October 19, 2019.

⁶⁰ Chacaby and Plummer, *A Two-Spirit Journey*, 64.

⁶¹ Anne Crane, comment on Wayne T. Jackson "kâ-nîsâcahkôwêcik?? Those who are two-spirited?" Nêhiyawêwin (Cree) Word/Phrase of the Day. Facebook, August 20.

www.facebook.com/groups/18414147673/permalink/10152620864617674

original terms used in Anishinaabemowin. What I care about is how these words are used by Anishinaabe Two-Spirit people as a way to assert trans*temporal kinship with their *aanikoobijiganag*—ancestors and descendants.

Today, both translations of *Two-Spirit* are used by Anishinaabe Two-Spirit people throughout Anishinaabewaki. A Two-Spirit group based in London, Ontario has taken the name *Deshkan Ziibiing Niizh Manidoog* (*Deshkan Ziibiing* referring to the Anishinaabemowin name for the Thames River).⁶² Another recently convened Two-Spirit group in Petoskey, Michigan is called *Niizhoo Jijaakook Ee-Maawizhijik*, *niizhoo jijaakook* being an eastern version of *niizhin ojjaak*. According to one of the originating members of the group, they adopted this name after asking a native speaker from Manitoulin Island who works as a local language instructor how they could translate the concept of a “Two-Spirit group” into Anishinaabemowin.⁶³ Although the historical authenticity of these terms may be contested, their use by Anishinaabe Two-Spirit youth and elders alike makes it unlikely that they will disappear soon.

Like the use of *aabitagizhig* and *nisawayaa’aa*, the (re)translations of Two-Spirit in Anishinaabemowin reflect the vibrant forms of kinship and memory that Two-Spirit communities are engaging with in the twenty-first century. All of these words draw upon the memory of Two-Spirit people’s historical presence in Anishinaabe communities, the present-day unique experiences of LGBTQ/Two-Spirit Native people, and the desire to create space for future Two-Spirit people as cultural revitalization movements continue to

⁶² “Two-Spirit,” *Queer Events*, <https://www.queerevents.ca/community-resources/demographic/two-spirit>

⁶³ “Niizhoo Jijaakook Ee-Maawizhijik,” Facebook, accessed October 19, 2019, <https://www.facebook.com/twospiritgroup/>

grow. This is not, however, a linear progression; none of the examples I have given provide a perfect story of unbroken passing-down of Anishinaabemowin words for Two-Spirit people from time immemorial to present and future. Instead, Two-Spirit Anishinaabeg and their non-Two-Spirit relations creatively engage with memory and history to maintain kinship ties among Two-Spirit people over time. This is linguistic trans*temporal kinship, defined by values of care and towards aanikoobijiganag, relatives past and future. Far from instinctive or inborn, it is a hard-won thing that must be deliberately maintained, thanks to the effects of centuries of colonization. These colonial impacts form the primary theme which will be explored in the next chapter.

Intergenerational Joy: Two-Spirit Anishinaabe Survivance Under American Colonization

This chapter centers on the lives of three individuals, Ozaawindib (Ojibwe), Wzawshek (Potawatomi) and Cora Anderson/Ralph Kerwineo (Potawatomi and African American), whose gender and sexuality were deemed transgressive by white Americans in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Proceeding in chronological order from the 1830s to the 1910s, their stories reveal the links between dispossession of Native land and the changing status, roles, and self-expression of Two-Spirit people. Yet in the face of violent American attempts to seize the land and disrupt Indigenous gender roles, especially those of Two-Spirit people, these three figures also consistently found ways to express their gender and sexuality beyond the Eurocentric binary of heterosexual cisgender male and female. I argue that these forms of expression were constituted and defined primarily through the kinship relations they maintained. Whether they were affirmed and accepted by their community as a Two-Spirit person, were viewed as something unnatural and deviant, or fell somewhere in between these poles was in large part determined by the context of land dispossession they lived in and the relationships they held with their kin. These two things—land dispossession and kinship—are in turn closely related: dispossession of land often caused harm to Two-Spirit people’s ability to maintain kinship ties, and Indigenous kinship often shaped the way land dispossession occurred or did not occur (for example, the allotment process involved dividing Indigenous communities into nuclear families).

Throughout this chapter, I make use of two critical concepts from Indigenous studies and transgender studies: from Indigenous studies, survivance and from

transgender studies, gender euphoria. The first, survivance, is a well-known term coined by White Earth Anishinaabe writer Gerald Vizenor, which he first defined as “an active sense of presence, the continuance of native stories, not a mere reaction, or a survivable name. Native survivance stories are renunciations of dominance, tragedy and victimry.”¹ Because it emphasizes Indigenous stories as being about something more than just survival, “mere reaction,” and victim status, survivance is often used in Indigenous studies in place of more common words like survival or resilience, though it contains hints of both. In this chapter, I propose a particularly *trans* form of survivance which focuses on how gender-diverse Anishinaabe people asserted presence and continuance while facing the increasingly dominant force American colonization. Though I intentionally avoid describing any of these individuals as “transgender,” I use the short and expansive umbrella term of “trans” not in description of their identities but as a gesture towards trans studies methodologies that center gender variance and diversity. In other words, it is not that I am saying these three figures are trans so much as I am making survivance itself trans.

The primary form that survivance takes in this chapter, I contend, is the pursuit of gender euphoria. This term is widely popular within trans communities in North America, but it has only barely made inroads into academic discourse on transness. Adrian Silbernagel describes it as a “high” consisting of “the feeling of satisfaction, joy, or intoxication, with the congruence, or rightness, between one’s internal and external

¹ Gerald Vizenor, *Manifest Manners: Narratives on Postindian Survivance* (Lincoln: Nebraska, 1999), p. vii.

reality.”² A writer in the *Star Observer* named Fury defines it as a “feeling of comfort, certainty, joy, or excitement about your body or your identity.”³ Though it existed since the early 1990s, popular use of the term arose in the 2000s in response to the more well-known term of “gender dysphoria.”⁴ Since the DSM-5 was released in 2013, gender dysphoria is now the official title of the diagnosis given to trans people seeking medical transition, and it is defined primarily by discomfort with one’s body and gender status in society. Through the term gender euphoria, trans people have contested the definition of their experiences solely through a lens of negativity and discomfort. In this contestation of being defined negatively, there are resonances between the meanings of “gender euphoria” and “survivance.”

Because of the available records documenting the lives of historical figures who expressed gender beyond colonial binaries, it is difficult to say definitively, “this person was experiencing gender euphoria when they did this thing.” I will demonstrate, however, that it is still possible to discern the choices that these three Anishinaabe people made amid the context in which each of them lived. The choices they make suggest not dysphoria but euphoria: joy in expressing themselves through their gender and sexuality. To take this one step further, I argue that this euphoria, this joy, was most frequently expressed through their engagements with those they called kin.

² Adrian Silbernagel, “Gender Euphoria: The Bright Side of Trans Experience,” *Queer KY*, published October 14, 2019, <https://queerkentucky.com/gender-euphoria-the-bright-side-of-trans-experience/>

³ Fury, “How Gender Euphoria is Helping to Redefine What It Means to be Transgender,” *Star Observer*, published January 25, 2019, <https://www.starobserver.com.au/news/national-news/how-gender-euphoria-is-helping-to-define-what-it-means-to-be-transgender/175935>

⁴ A magazine focused on trans issues in the early 1990s was titled *Gender EUPHORIA*. Virginia Prince, a prominent trans activist, claimed to have coined the phrase in a speech given in the 1980s.

The first section, “The Headwaters,” focuses on several events in the life of Ojibwe figure Ozaawindib. I use evidence of Ojibwe and Dakota history in the eighteenth century western Great Lakes to show how she and her family were impacted by earlier waves of French and British fur trade colonialism, and especially how these earlier histories affected the social norms that shaped Ozaawindib’s experiences. Further, the story of her interest in marrying (but ultimately rejecting) a white man adopted by the Anishinaabeg reveals the ways economic needs and sexuality shaped her expressions of gender euphoria. The changing depictions of Ozaawindib’s gender, I argue, is a result of her living at a pivotal time and place when the framework for American colonization of Anishinaabewaki and Mni Sota Makoce was being set up.

The second section, “The Reservation,” draws primarily on an oral history recorded in the 1930s which tells of the life of Wzawshek, a Potawatomi person who lived through the height of the assimilation and allotment period in the aftermath of Potawatomi forced removal to the prairies. Wzawshek appears to have lived in an intriguing in-between status not of gender but of culture, preferring to dress in popular white American women’s fashions and expressing Catholic piety while also benefitting from Potawatomi acceptance of Two-Spirit people. I argue that her preferences of gender expression, her kinship ties, and Potawatomi removal to reservations are closely intertwined, with kinship and colonization shaping the conditions within which Wzawshek expressed her gender euphoria. In addition, her Two-Spiritness formed a critical tie for her mixed-blood (Potawatomi and white) employers which kept them tethered to Potawatomi community, enabling the survivance of Potawatomi people to the present day.

The final section, “The City,” tells the story of the scandal around a person born Cora Anderson who for a time was called Ralph Kerwineo. Kerwineo was to all eyes a married Bolivian man living and working in Milwaukee when in 1914 his ex-wife revealed to the police that he had born Cora Anderson to Black and Potawatomi parents in Indiana. Using the extensive newspaper records that covered his case, I trace his pursuit of gender euphoria through extensive discrimination and stigma. I also speculate on his family’s history as a Black Potawatomi family living in Neshnabé Ké before and after Indiana’s statehood. Though Kerwineo did not give evidence of any knowledge of Potawatomi cultural gender roles, rather than see this as a barrier to considering him part of Anishinaabe Two-Spirit history, I argue that the very deracination that made his lack of knowledge and connection possible is itself a sign of his specific experience as a Black Potawatomi person.

In this chapter, I am making a dual argument, each part one side of a flipping coin. The first side to the argument is that American colonization and Indigenous kinship alike deeply affected the ways that Two-Spirit Anishinaabeg expressed their genders and their gender euphoria in the nineteenth century. Though in many cases, particularly those of Wzawshek and Ralph Kerwineo, their lives had been profoundly shaped by violent forces beyond their control, they all found ways to live—not just to survive, but to find joy in their gender and sexuality. The second side to my argument is the flip side of this: I make the case here that Two-Spirit people’s histories are and must be seen as central to the history of Anishinaabe people and our history of colonization. They often reveal aspects of Anishinaabe, Indigenous, and colonial histories that have been scarcely examined. While much has been written about the experiences of Indigenous women in

the fur trade era and to a lesser extent, the early reservation era, few writers have considered what the place of Two-Spirit people was in the gender schematics they describe. Because Two-Spirit people expressed themselves through their kinship relations, they form a fundamental part of the story of Indigenous survivance as entire communities. This is critical for historians and tribal members to recognize if we are to tell our history in a way that remembers and affirms *all* of our diverse experiences.

Finally, a note on pronouns: All three of the individuals described in this chapter have are referred to in the records with different English pronouns at different times (i.e. all are called both “he” and “she” at different moments). I have done my best to make choices for describing them in gendered terms that I believe would have respected the way that they wanted to be referred to as well as the realities of how their communities described them. Both Ojibwe and Potawatomi (very closely related Anishinaabe languages) do not distinguish male or female gender in pronouns, and therefore particularly Ozaawindib and Wzawshek, who would have spoken mostly Ojibwe and Potawatomi, lived in worlds with somewhat different forms of gendering. Anishinaabe languages are not entirely genderless, however; words for occupations tend to distinguish between men and women by the endings (gikinoo’amaagewinini for a male teacher and gikinoo’amaagekwe for a female teacher—though the word gekinoo’amaaged is also available as a gender-nonspecific form “one who teaches”). There are also certain phrases that are used primarily by men or women, especially in Potawatomi, hence the description of Wzawshek as “using the women’s language,” though this gendering of speech is not nearly as extensive as in a language like Dakota wherein all utterances end

with a gendered marker. In any case, in each section below I spend some time discussing my choice for English pronouns, which in some cases are easier to determine than others.

The Headwaters: Ozaawindib

The first person whose life I examine is Ozaawindib, a Pillager Band Ojibwe agokwe (Two-Spirit) who lived west of the Great Lakes in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Daughter of a war leader (Wiishkobak) and an accomplished warrior in her own right, Ozaawindib was a prominent individual whose exploits were recorded by various American and British chroniclers who passed through the region; she was also remembered in several place names and in the late 19th century oral tradition of the Turtle Mountain Ojibwe.⁵ Born in the late 1700s, during her life she participated in the wars against the Dakota people and eventually became associated with Gaa-Miskwaawaakokaag, known in English as Cass Lake.

Though one source provides an Ojibwe term for Ozaawindib's gender, agokwe, and others refer to her as a "berdache" in English, it seems more or less accurate to also refer to her as a woman. John Tanner, a white man very intimately acquainted with Anishinaabe culture who will be discussed more below, described her as "one of those who make themselves women, and are called women by the Indians."⁶ She wore

⁵ Undated notes by lawyer John G. Carter state that Alfred Conover Farrell, a white settler who lived on the Turtle Mountain Reservation in the 1880s, recalled to him that the Turtle Mountain Ojibwe still told stories about "La Berdash," who was remembered as a "brave warrior" with whom other warriors would have sexual intercourse in order to retain some of her bravery. Found in the John G. Carter Papers, 1888-1952, "Documents on Unfamiliar Ceremonies, pages 32-44," 37.

<https://www.lib.montana.edu/archives/finding-aids/2204.html>

⁶ John Tanner, *A Narrative of the Captivity and Adventures of John Tanner (U.S. Interpreter at the Saut de Ste. Marie) During Thirty Years Residence Among the Indians in the Interior of North America* (London: Baldwin and Craddock, 1830), 105.

women's clothing, referred to herself and was referred to by community members as a woman (ikwe) in Anishinaabemowin, and spent most of her time performing the labor that other women performed. Though she spoke no English and would not have recognized its gendered pronouns, for these reasons I have chosen to refer to her with the pronouns she/her/hers, even though some twentieth and twenty-first century secondary sources may refer to her as a man.

In this section, I argue that Ozaawindib's family history and romantic relationships reveal important traces of pre-American colonial intrusions while also marking a turning point for her home community. Ozaawindib lived most of her life prior to the American land grabs, and she witnessed only the beginning of the treaty period in Minnesota. Her story exists on the pivot point or precipice which marked the beginning of on-the-ground American colonization in the region. In many ways, she seems to epitomize the image of the Two-Spirit person living in her precolonial tribal context—even white writers noted that she was essentially treated similar to any other woman among Ojibwe people. At the same time, allowing this image to go unexamined would obscure both the significant impacts of the (European-derived) fur trade that long preceded Ozaawindib's life, as well as the vast changes that were about to occur for Ojibwe communities at the hands of the very same American chroniclers writing about Ozaawindib and her people. All these changes were deeply imbricated with issues of land and gender. Ozaawindib's position in her community and the roles she took up were significantly shaped by nearly two centuries of Anishinaabe fur trading conducted to fulfill European demand. I would like to highlight two aspects that demonstrate the impact of the fur trade on Ozaawindib's life: first, the arc of the wars between Ojibwe

and Dakota people, and second, the rise of strategic political intermarriage between Native women and European men.

A first aspect of the fur trade that impacted Ozaawindib is the outbreak, continuation, and cessation of the wars between the Dakota and Ojibwe people throughout the western Great Lakes area. The longstanding enmity between Dakota and Ojibwe people is often discussed as an issue of “traditional enemies,” even among Dakota and Ojibwe people today. However, the wars began as a result of the political situation emerging from the fur trade of the 1600s. Throughout the seventeenth century, Native peoples in the Great Lakes region felt the impacts of intense warfare with the Haudenosaunee to the east. The origins of these wars are complex: over-hunting due to new firearm technology and high European demand had depleted fur sources in Haudenosaunee territory, while at the same time European diseases devastated the Haudenosaunee population. The result was that Haudenosaunee warriors began a series of wars to both gain access to western hunting grounds as well as to adopt captives into their nations. This set off a chain reaction, pushing Anishinaabe people and other Native peoples west into Dakota territories, both out of fear of the Haudenosaunee as well as due to their own desire to access better furs to trade.⁷

Initially, the Ojibwe and Dakota were allied along with other nations against the Haudenosaunee and their British clients. A series of events beginning around 1700 began to shift these alliances, however. First, the Haudenosaunee finally agreed to end the wars

⁷ Treuer, Anton. *Warrior nation: a history of the red Lake Ojibwe* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2015). Anishinaabeg, especially Ojibwe people, had actually been moving westward for a long time prior to this for other reasons, some of which are detailed in the Anishinaabe migration story. However, the process was certainly accelerated by the wars with the Haudenosaunee.

with other Great Lakes nations and signed the Great Peace of Montreal in 1701. This made the region substantially safer for French fur traders to enter more western territory where they could engage the Dakota as fur trade partners. Second, complex changes in political alliances in the first half of the 18th century ultimately set the Dakota and Ojibwe against one another. Wars with the Meskwaki initially destabilized the Dakota/Ojibwe alliance, and the decision of some Ojibwe bands to ally with the Cree and Assiniboine against the Dakota ultimately tipped the scales towards war between the one-time allies.⁸ These wars continued on and off until Americans forcibly removed Dakota people from Minnesota in the 1860s, though they were not constant and were often punctuated by peace, trade, and intermarriage. Ultimately the wars caused the Dakota to move further south and west (though the reasons for Dakota migration is disputed, and much more complex than a simple account of being “driven out” by the Ojibwe), while Ojibwe people moved into land that would become northwestern Wisconsin and northern Minnesota, and even further into North Dakota and Manitoba.⁹

This was the context into which Ozaawindib was born in the late 1700s. There is no record of her birthplace, but based on the timeline of Ojibwe westward expansion, she was probably born in what is currently northwestern Wisconsin. During her lifetime, she and her kin engaged in warfare against Dakota people primarily in the region around Red Lake to the Red River valley. Warfare was a critical part of Anishinaabe men’s identities, but *ogichidaawiwin*, warriorhood, was not limited to people who might today be called

⁸ Treuer, *Warrior Nation*, appendix.

⁹ Gwen Westerman and Bruce White, *Mni Sota Makoce: The Land of the Dakota* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2012).

cisgender men. Women, both those designated female at birth like the nineteenth century ogichidaakwe Aazhawigiizhigokwe, and those like Ozaawindib who were perceived as male at birth, also sometimes participated in warfare.¹⁰ There does not appear to be any evidence in the archival records that mention Ozaawindib to suggest that participating in war was viewed as contradictory with her other pursuits of women's activities, with which she was also said to be skilled.

I have provided this background on the Ojibwe/Dakota wars to contextualize Ozaawindib's life, and particularly to counter the perception that the way Anishinaabe people and other Native peoples were living when Americans first arrived on the scene was some kind of primordial, eternal state. In Ozaawindib's grandparents' generation, there were no Ojibwe people living at Gaa-Miskwaawaakokaag, only Dakota people—who would have had an entirely different name for the lake and its surrounding environs.¹¹ This is not intended to make Ozaawindib or Ojibwe people seem equivalent to white settlers, or to undermine the significance of white American colonization of this region. However, as an Anishinaabe person currently living on Dakota land not so far

¹⁰ The language of "assigned female/male at birth" is imperfect in the context of pre-assimilation Anishinaabe society. These phrases have been developed in the trans community to draw attention to the active and even coercive nature of designating newborn babies to one of two "sexes" in a binary based on the appearance of their genitals. In societies that did not have a concept of medicalized immutable binary sex, where gender expression, identity, and roles could shift over a person's lifetime without being pathologized, it does not necessarily make sense. My research and discussions with knowledge keepers suggest that Anishinaabe people historically did gender children to some extent, but using the language of AFAB/AMAB may imply the existence of a system that did not exist for Anishinaabe people the same way it does in Western/Westernized societies today. That said, there is still a need to have some kind of language to refer to the distinctions of roles, identities, and physical appearance that existed among Anishinaabeg, and as the idea of "biological sex" has been thoroughly discounted, I am choosing to use the language most preferred by transgender people in North America today.

¹¹ William J. Petersen, "Veritas Caput: Itasca," *Minnesota History* 18, no. 2 (1937): 180-85. Accessed May 31, 2021. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20162171>.

from Gaa-Miskwaawaakokaag, I find it important to recognize the complexity of Native history in this place.

The second aspect of historical context that I examine here is the history of intermarriage between Indigenous women and white men. One of the most well-known sources that discusses Ozaawindib is the autobiography of John Tanner, a white American who was kidnapped as a child and raised among the Odawa and Ojibwe. Tanner relates how around the year 1800, when Tanner was living with the Pillager Band of Ojibwe, Ozaawindib began courting him. Tanner describes being horrified and disgusted by her advances, while his adoptive mother, Odawa ogimaakwe Netnokwa, found this amusing and encouraged Ozaawindib's pursuit of his hand in marriage. Ultimately Ozaawindib turned her attention elsewhere and became the third wife of an ogimaa named Wenji-Dotaagan. While we have only Tanner's words in the historical record, I would like to take a moment to think about Ozaawindib's perspective on these events. Over the hundred years prior to this series of events, Anishinaabe women (and other Native women) marrying white men had become notably commonplace in Anishinaabewaki. Scholars have amply studied the phenomenon of marriages "à la façon du pays"—marriages between European men and Indigenous women not sanctioned by a church—with feminist researchers arguing that these marriages constituted a form of political, social, and economic alliance between Native communities and newcomers.¹² Debates remain unsettled as to whether the fur trade overall impacted Native women's

¹² See Sylvia Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur-trade Society in Western Canada, 1670-1870* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1983); Jennifer S.H. Brown, *Strangers in blood: Fur trade company families in Indian country* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1980); Susan Sleeper-Smith, "Women, kin, and Catholicism: New perspectives on the fur trade," *Ethnohistory* 47, no. 2 (2000), 423-452.

status for better or for worse, but regardless of the answer to that question, it remains true that Native women and their kin clearly saw marriage with European men as a means to a larger end than simply marking a union of love.

If we view Ozaawindib as a woman, as her community seems to have done, then we can contextualize her pursuit of John Tanner within the vein of this tradition of intermarriage. As the daughter of an ogimaa, she may have been expected to make a marriage that would extend her community's resources. Indeed, Tanner may have been particularly appealing as a partner due to his dual status as a white man who was already entangled in Anishinaabe kinship structures. Although at the time (ca. 1800) Tanner was not connected with any European or European-American power and reportedly only spoke Anishinaabemowin, he would eventually come to work as a guide, trapper, and interpreter for the United States military (presumably after he learned English). While Anishinaabe perceptions of race, ethnicity, and belonging were not as rigid as white American perceptions of these things, evidence suggests that Native people in the Great Lakes region did have a conception of race and ethnicity that distinguished between "white," "red," and "black" peoples, even if the boundaries could be somewhat porous.¹³ Ozaawindib, therefore, may have seen in Tanner the potential that his white skin held alongside his Anishinaabe cultural status.

Tanner's account is vague as to why Ozaawindib stopped courting him and married Wenji-Dotaagan instead; he simply describes himself as "relieved from the persecutions" of Ozaawindib because Wenji-Dotaagan married her. Immediately before

¹³ Nancy Shoemaker, "How Indians got to be red," *The American Historical Review* 102, no. 3 (1997), 625-644.

this, however, is a brief story that may reveal something about Ozaawindib's perspective. During a bout of hunger, Ozaawindib indicated that Tanner should follow her, leading him to a moose, which Tanner then failed to kill. This passage is immediately followed by Tanner's statement that he was "relieved" by the marriage between Ozaawindib and Wenji-Dotaagan. It would appear that perhaps Ozaawindib was unimpressed by Tanner's lack of hunting skill and decided he was not a worthy husband. Culturally, the expectation among Anishinaabeg was that men were responsible for hunting and providing meat for their wives and children. This would determine how large of a family they could support. The fact that Wenji-Dotaagan ended up with three wives, for instance, suggests that he was a skilled hunter of some wealth. So although Tanner portrays Ozaawindib as a horrid "creature" who will not leave him alone, it seems just as likely that he failed to measure up to Ozaawindib's standards for a husband—standards which were honed by both intra-Anishinaabe tradition as well as the changing lifestyle of the fur trade.

Yet while this incident can be read as showing traces of a long history of the Anishinaabe fur trade, it also can be read as an expression of kinship and gender euphoria on the part of Ozaawindib. Her decision to pursue Tanner and then Wenji-Dotaagan almost certainly had some level of economic underpinnings, simply because the extended family unit in Anishinaabe communities was very directly the basis for economic activity. One's family was fed by the hunting, fishing, growing, and gathering of one's direct kin; one was clothed by kinswomen's labor preparing the deerskins provided mainly through kinsmen's hunting or cloth purchased through their trading of furs. However, we must also recognize that Ozaawindib was an individual, not merely a stand-

in unit for all historical Anishinaabe women or Two-Spirit people. Tanner notes that Ozaawindib “had come a long distance” to meet him, “with the hope of living” with Tanner.¹⁴ This demonstrates a significant level of initiative on Ozaawindib’s part to find a husband who (she initially believed) would be a good partner and provider—a good person to create kinship ties with, especially considering his adoptive mother was a renowned ogimaakwe. When Tanner and his mother came to lack food during her visit, she sought out another band of Anishinaabeg and returned to Tanner with meat, suggesting her desire to serve as a good wife and daughter-in-law. It is immediately after this that Tanner fails to kill the moose, which perhaps showed Ozaawindib in turn that *he* was not prepared to be a good husband to *her*.

Although these actions, driven by economic and sexual concerns, may not appear to fit the typical definition of gender euphoria, I argue that economic issues and sexuality can in fact be intimately intertwined with gender euphoria. As I mentioned above, kinship and multi-gender cooperation were required for the production of clothing at this time. While it may seem trivial, Ozaawindib would have benefitted from a husband whose hunting and trading would provide the literal materials necessary for her to express her gender through her preferred clothing. Susan Sleeper-Smith has made the case that cloth was as central to the fur trade as guns, arguably *more* central by the numbers since clothing-related items made up over fifty percent of most fur trade posts’ expenses.¹⁵ The cloth trade was largely determined by Native women’s needs and desires as European

¹⁴ Tanner, *A Narrative*, 105.

¹⁵ Susan Sleeper-Smith, *Indigenous Prosperity and American Conquest: Indian Women of the Ohio River Valley, 1690-1792* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2018), 145.

suppliers were forced to respond to even their color preferences. Clothing made by Native women reflected social, economic, and spiritual statuses of the individual and their kin. Beautiful clothing reflected on both the skill of a trapper/trader to acquire skins and cloth as well as the Native seamstress's skill, and high quality clothes indicated abundance. In addition, extensive gifts of clothing were (and still are today) required for initiation into the Midewiwin society, one of the central spiritual institutions of Anishinaabe life.

Sleeper-Smith writes of Native women, "Clothing adorned their bodies in specific ways to create a sense of self, of belonging and being part of an Indian world."¹⁶ It reflected both communal values as well as personal taste, and gender was an incredibly important part of that. For Ozaawindib, who Tanner describes as having been very skilled in "the various employments of the women,"¹⁷ a skilled hunting and trading husband would have been necessary to provide the materials needed to express her gender—which involves community gender norms as much as personal identity. In seeking out this support, Ozaawindib also sought out the means to experience gender euphoria in expressing herself and being recognized as a woman and *agokwe* by her society. At the same time, these actions of euphoric self-expression contributed to her larger community's survivance.

Zooming out a bit, I would like to consider some of the larger implications of Ozaawindib's story. In some ways, Ozaawindib appears to be a perfect example of the "primordial Two-Spirit," a Two-Spirit person who lived before the time of reservations

¹⁶ Sleeper-Smith, *Indigenous Prosperity and American Conquest*, 202.

¹⁷ Tanner, *A Narrative*, 105.

and assimilation, who was largely respected by her community as holding a unique role. Yet in many respects, as I have shown, her life and her actions were already shaped by the consequences of French, British, and soon-to-be American colonization. Still, in comparison to the following two individuals I will discuss, Ozaawindib's life was characterized by greater freedom of movement for both herself and her community. These movements were not composed of the random roaming imagined in stereotypical portrayals of Indigenous movement. They were determined by and enacted through Ozaawindib's network of kin.

In addition to the obvious connections between Ozaawindib and her initial love interest John Tanner, her eventual husband Wenji-Dotaagan, and her father Wiishkobak, we also must think about the less visible relationships we can only slightly perceive in the documentary record: her relationship with other women such as Netnokwa as a potential mother-in-law and Wenji-Dotaagan's two earlier wives. Netnokwa encouraged Ozaawindib's pursuit of Tanner, indicating a positive relationship between the two women. The fact that Netnokwa was herself a powerful ogimaakwe with wide-ranging trade connections may have even been an incentive for Ozaawindib to pursue Tanner. We have less information about Ozaawindib's eventual co-wives, but Tanner writes that the marriage "occasioned some laughter, and produced some ludicrous incidents, but was attended with less uneasiness and quarreling" than if Wenji-Dotaagan had married a third woman assigned female at birth, suggesting that the relationship among the three wives was relatively good.¹⁸ As Wenji-Dotaagan was an ogimaa himself, their marriage may

¹⁸ Tanner, *A Narrative*, 106.

well have solidified or strengthened alliances between Wenji-Dotaagan's community and the community of which Ozaawindib's father Wiishkobak was ogimaa. In this way, Ozaawindib's individual seeking of gender euphoria in the form of marriage also contributed to the survivance of her community.

The Reservation: Wzawshek

In the Catholic cemetery in St. Marys, Kansas, a Two-Spirit Potawatomi mnedokwé known as Wzawshek was buried at the height of the Spanish flu pandemic of 1918-1920 in a brown silk dress she had made herself.¹⁹ She had been called by her community a mnedokwé, a spirit woman—like agokwe, a word for someone assigned male at birth who lived as a woman. About fifteen years after her death, a wealthy Potawatomi woman named Rebecca (Nadeau) Farrell spoke to anthropologist Ruth Landes about Wzawshek's time in her family's employment as a servant during the late nineteenth century. Landes, who eventually published a book on the Prairie Band Potawatomi in 1970 based on her fieldwork in 1935, evidently found Farrell's account of Wzawshek so intriguing that she reproduced her testimony in its entirety in her book under the heading "The Berdache." Besides a few records in the Indian Censuses, allotment records, and treaty annuity payments, this is the only record that exists to tell of Wzawshek's life in detail.

¹⁹ Note on names: I have transcribed all Potawatomi names and words in the current spelling system, with some assistance from members of the Potawatomi language Facebook group. Note on pronouns: I refer to Wzawshek with she/her/hers pronouns due to the statement in documents that "Louise liked [to be referred to as] 'she.'" Ruth Landes, *The Prairie Potawatomi: Tradition and Ritual in the Twentieth Century* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1970), 200.

Wzawshek lived through the height of the assimilation period, a generation after the forced removal of her family and community from their homelands, and the marks of these difficult times are clear from her life's story. Yet as we shall see, Wzawshek seems to have expressed a great deal of joy in the decisions she made with regards to her gender expression. Though those decisions were clearly shaped by the struggles she and her people faced, her relationships with kin and others such as her employer's family demonstrate the survivance of Potawatomi people as a whole and of Wzawshek as a Potawatomi mnedokwé specifically.

Recorded as 35 years old in the 1887 Citizens Band allotment roll and as 37 in an 1892 roll, Wzawshek was probably born around 1852 to 1855.²⁰ Her mother, whose name is not recorded, died young, and her father was named Nawgizhek, born in 1827. According to Rebecca Farrell, after her mother's death Wzawshek went to live with her grandmother in St. Marys, Kansas, near the Prairie Band Potawatomi reservation. Wzawshek was of the Thunder clan.²¹ Based on their ages, both Wzawshek's father and grandmother were likely born in the Potawatomi homelands in the Great Lakes and walked during the forced removal after the treaties of the 1830s, possibly on the Trail of Death of 1838. Wzawshek's father Nawgizhek would have been about ten years old when that forced removal took place, in which the Potawatomi walked from Twin Lakes,

²⁰ Don L. Knarr, Transcript of the 1887 Citizen Band Potawatomi Land Allotment. <http://freepages.rootsweb.com/~kansasindians/genealogy/Potawatomi%20Citizens%20Band%20/Citizen%20Band%20Potawatomi.html>. Wzawshek is recorded as "Wah-zow-o-shug (son of Non-ge-zhick)".

²¹ Landes, *The Prairie Potawatomi*, 198.

Indiana to Osawatomie, Kansas in sixty days. Over half of the 42 people who died were children like Nawgizhek.

As a result of these displacements, Wzawshek grew up in St. Marys, and when she was about “seventeen or eighteen” years old, (probably in the early 1870s) she began worked as hired help for the Nadeau family. The Nadeaus were a wealthy Potawatomi family that had intermarried with white traders and owned a large ranch in St. Marys. Although Wzawshek was originally assigned to care for the chickens, after she cooked chicken dumplings for the family one day, she was hired to work in the kitchen. Rebecca Nadeau Farrell’s description of what we might today call Wzawshek’s “transition” is worth quoting in its entirety:

He started off wearing a big apron over his pants and shirt. Father had a store, so he bought goods there and made his own apron. His next apron he made with a bib. The third one he made to button down the back. So then we took to calling him Louise. I must have started that. He cut his next bib to reach almost to his collarbone, with straps passing back and front. All the family left for a holiday, and we returned to find him in a *dress*. No more pants. We laughed but told him he looked nice.²²

This passage reveals a few intriguing facts: first, that Wzawshek felt comfortable enough to openly wear feminine clothing; and second, that the Nadeaus were accepting enough to tell Wzawshek she looked nice, despite their laughter. This contradicts somewhat an earlier statement from Landes that Rebecca Nadeau Farrell claimed “her own family wasted little sympathy on the man’s ‘infirmity.’”²³ In this regard, Landes seems to construct a dichotomy between “mixed-blood” or “assimilated” Potawatomi people like

²² Landes, *The Prairie Potawatomi*, 199.

²³ Landes, *The Prairie Potawatomi*, 196

the Nadeaus on the one hand, and “full-blood” or “traditional” Potawatomi people—especially elders—on the other hand. The former have supposedly adopted white customs, including more “civilized” gender roles that preclude space for people like Wzawshek to express themselves, while the latter “respected [mnedokwék] highly and lamented the passing of the berdache tradition.” However, just as Farrell’s recollections betray a more complex reception of gender diversity among the “assimilated mixed-bloods,” so too does she indicate that as a “full-blood Indian,” Wzawshek’s gender expression did not necessarily fit comfortably in the role of mnedokwé in the eyes of her community.

Before quoting Farrell at length, Landes provides some context for how Prairie Band Potawatomi elders perceived mnedokwék. Landes wrote that they were “said to possess visions...but not to practice sorcery. [Mnedokwék] exemplified a distinct category of ‘power.’²⁴ She notes that in her conversations with Potawatomi people in 1935 and 1957, mnedokwék were still spoken of with respect, even by younger people. As early as the 1870s, however, individuals such as Wzawshek were articulating their gender in ways that took into account the changing realities of Prairie Band Potawatomi life, an environment where they now lived far from their homelands on a small reservation increasingly surrounded by white settlers and were dominated by white American government.

²⁴ Landes, *The Prairie Potawatomi*, 196.



Figure 1 <https://www.kansasmemory.org/item/23673> Ellen and Carrie Vieux, Potawatomi in Kansas, 1880-1889. An example of Potawatomi dress during this period.

Wzawshek, according to Farrell, was “a real Catholic” who went to confession regularly.

She “didn’t care to dress with Indian beadwork, he wanted white people’s clothes only,

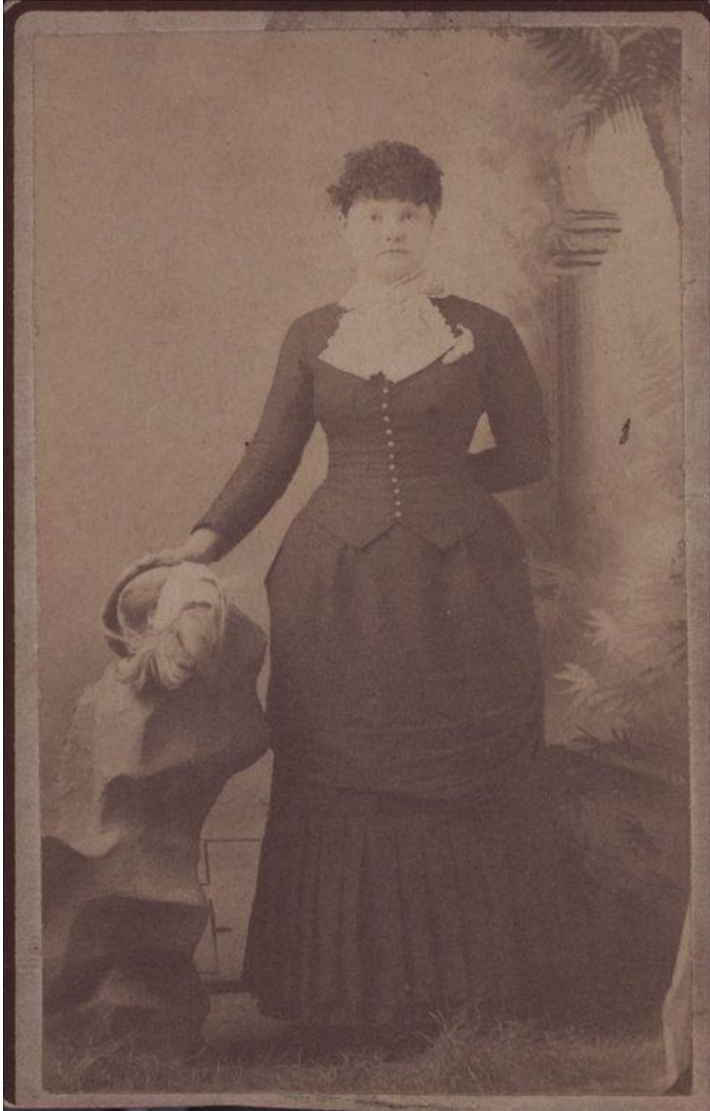


Figure 2 Jennie Adelle Cornish Howe (a white woman in Kansas, 1885). Presented for comparison to Potawatomi style dress. <https://www.kansasmemory.org/item/213382>

which were rather uncommon then.”²⁵ Instead, Wzawshek dressed in a corset, with “fancy” combs in her hair. The above photos show typical Potawatomi women’s clothing and white women’s clothing from this time period for comparison.²⁶ One Potawatomi

²⁵ Landes, *The Prairie Potawatomi*, 200.

²⁶ *Ellen and Carrie Vieux, 1880-1885*, photograph, *Kansas Memory*, <https://www.kansasmemory.org/item/23673>.

Dunham & Stidham, Jennie Adelle Cornish Howe, 1885, photograph, *Kansas Memory*, <https://www.kansasmemory.org/item/213382>.

elder woman, whose words were recalled later by Farrell, blamed the Nadeaus for Wzawshek's apparent rejection of traditional spirituality and roles:

He is mnetokwae, something unusual. The Good Spirit put [her] here for a purpose. If [this female man] lived with us Indians, instead of with you who are like whites, and if [he-she] had learned the Indian ways, then we would have heard something extraordinary from the [creature]. I suppose it is because of you that [he-she] won't follow the Indian ways and go to [Indian] dances.²⁷ (Brackets are in the original text.)

This passage is difficult to interpret as it is coming through several layers of recollection, first Farrell, then Landes. The brackets raise questions: what did this elder originally say in the bracketed places? Was she speaking Potawatomi or English? (Potawatomi notably does not have gendered third person pronouns.) Who added the changes, Farrell or Landes (or both)? There is a strange ambiguity in the use of "her" in the first sentence combined with the later ambivalence (and possibly derogatory use) of "he-she."

This elder's interpretation of Potawatomi society in some ways aligns with Landes' interpretation of it as divided between the traditional Indians and the assimilated mixed-bloods. In fact, her words to Farrell may also be read as a critique of the Nadeau family's practice of "living like whites." By the 1870s, there was a marked difference in economic status as well as social status among the Potawatomi in Kansas, and Farrell, herself of mixed heritage and daughter of a store- and ranch-owner, had married a white American man.²⁸ St. Marys, named for the Jesuit mission which was located there, had originally been central for the Potawatomi due to it being the location of treaty annuity

²⁷ Landes, *The Prairie Potawatomi*, 196.

²⁸ Mark J. Wagner and Michael J. McNerney, *Archaeological Investigations for the Cross Creek Flood Control Project, Rossville, Kansas* (American Resources Group, Ltd. report, Carbondale, Illinois, 1995), 13.

dispensation. In 1861 another treaty was signed, which provided for Potawatomi people to choose if they wanted to become American citizens and private landowners—the origin of the Citizens Band Potawatomi.²⁹ Two-thirds of the Kansas Potawatomi chose to become citizens, while the remainder kept their land in common and mostly centralized on the reservation in Mayetta, Kansas, becoming the Prairie Band of Potawatomi. After further negotiations, the Citizens Band exchanged their allotments for land in Indian Territory (present-day Oklahoma) and many moved there in the 1870s. Wzawshek likely had family and friends who joined the Citizens Band in Indian Territory, as Farrell mentions that she sometimes took trips there to go visiting people.

Clearly, many Potawatomi people perceived benefits to acquiring American citizenship and private land. Some mixed-ancestry individuals like the Nadeaus had already received citizenship and private land, and they had gathered considerable wealth because of it. As a result, things associated with whiteness and Americanness took on a certain status as well; the “white people’s clothing” that Wzawshek preferred was known locally as “citizens’ dress,” with the connotation of “altered status and wealth” according to Landes.³⁰ Although I have struggled to locate Wzawshek and other members her family in records prior to 1887, it appears that they did not take citizenship or allotments until the Dawes Act required it, at which point Wzawshek, her father Nawgizhek, and her brother Baptiste Nawgizhek all received allotments.

²⁹ Galen Rezac, “History of Immaculate Conception Church, St. Marys, Kansas,” Immaculate Conception Catholic Church, pamphlet, 2014.

https://www.immaculateconceptionstmarys.com/uploads/1/4/1/4/14140458/history_of_immaculate_conception_church.pdf

³⁰ Landes, *The Prairie Potawatomi*, 200.

In light of this information, Wzawshek's story reveals a number of intriguing complexities. She was a "full-blood" Potawatomi whose family chose to remain on communally-held lands, a person who was recognized by her community as being a Two-Spirit person, a mnedokwé—yet she also was deeply Catholic, loved American women's fashion magazines, and rejected Potawatomi spiritual interpretations of her Two-Spirit status. I do not want to call these contradictions. In an early presentation about my research, I suggested that Wzawshek's desire for white or "citizen" women's clothing in place of "Indian beadwork" likely reflect the power dynamics that equated white style with economic and social wealth. A woman in the audience, who identified herself as a citizen of the Prairie Band Potawatomi, interrupted me and said something along the lines of, "Maybe she just thought that the new styles looked pretty." This became a grounding point for me as I attempted to understand Wzawshek's story. It is critical, of course, to recognize the way power operates in even our most intimate choices. At the same time, it is just as important to respect personal autonomy, especially when we are at risk of going so deep in analysis that we obscure the actual experiences of the individual at hand. So perhaps Wzawshek was actively looking for ways to better her position socially by aspiring to white or citizen womanhood. It is equally likely that she was, like all of us, influenced by the norms of her time, and those norms said: tight-laced corsets are stylish! To use a phrase that is often heard in the trans community today, perhaps she was simply "living her truth" as she perceived it. Her determination to express her gender in whatever way she preferred despite some negative experiences from her employers and fellow employees reveals her powerful pursuit of gender euphoria.

Thus far I have focused on the ways that Wzawshek did *not* conform to what Landes and the elder Potawatomi woman she quotes perceived as “traditional” ideas of mnedokwék. I now want to take stock of the fact that Wzawshek’s presentation and life were possible precisely because of the history of mnedokwék who lived before her *as well as* the history of land usurpation that the Potawatomi people faced, including Wzawshek’s own father and grandmother. As mentioned earlier, despite Farrell’s insistence that the Nadeaus did not tolerate Wzawshek’s gender expression, she contradicts herself through the near-consistent use of the pronoun “she” in reference to her, as well as in the general lack of repercussions that Wzawshek faced while in her family’s employ. Farrell contrasts this tacit acceptance, for example, with the attitude of a white male worker on the ranch, who “always said Louise was an ‘it.’”³¹ It may be that the Nadeaus’ acceptance of Wzawshek came was an attitude that they inherited from the Potawatomi community around them, which Farrell stresses was very respectful of Wzawshek. This may have been through their own continued belief and participation in some aspects of Potawatomi culture, or it may simply have been due to the pressure from other Potawatomi community members to accept Wzawshek. Indeed, even though Wzawshek apparently never spoke of having had a dream that gave her power, other Potawatomi people apparently assumed that she must have had one, and they understood her through the lens of the mnedokwé role.³² Landes documents that a respectful understanding of this role persisted into the 1930s, when she was introduced to two

³¹ Landes, *The Prairie Potawatomi*, 200.

³² Landes, *The Prairie Potawatomi*, 201.

young people who were considered the “inheritors” of the mnedokwé tradition, and in memory until the 1950s at least.

Undoubtedly, the impacts of American colonization deeply impacted Potawatomi people and the way they engaged with traditions like that of the mnedokwék. The cession of their lands in the Great Lakes under duress of rapidly encroaching white settlers, the horrific forced removal to a completely different landscape in what would become Kansas, the breaking up of communal land into allotments and the subsequent loss of the allotments to white Americans—all of these things directly impacted Wzawshek’s life. Her experiences, perhaps aspiring to white and “citizen” womanhood but also relying upon resilient understandings of mnedokwék roles, reflects the shifting status of Potawatomi people in the late 1800s. While records of her life show us traces of her pursuit of gender euphoria, they also reveal the ways that Two-Spirit people are critical parts of the story of Native, Anishinaabe/Neshnabé, and Potawatomi history. The tolerance of the Nadeaus, for instance, suggests that in some ways, Wzawshek may have actually been a kind of “glue” that kept them connected to the Potawatomi community, with their tolerance representing one of the traditions they recognized (even if they didn’t express outward belief in the spiritual aspects of mnedokwék). The way that Wzawshek expressed her gender through these relationships form a part of the record of survivance of the Prairie Potawatomi people in the middle of a devastating time. Though not living in conditions of her own making, Wzawshek nonetheless made choices that demonstrate both personal gender euphoria and community survivance.

The City: Cora Anderson/Ralph Kerwineo

Of the three individuals that this chapter centers, Ralph Kerwineo is by far the most well-known. This is not saying much: in terms of academia, “well-known” here means one scholarly article, substantial attention in a recent book published through a university press, and a thesis by an undergraduate student in history.³³ In addition, in recent years Kerwineo has been the focus of attention outside academia as well. There is an article about Kerwineo’s life in the *Wisconsin Magazine of History*, a portrait included in the book *Butch Heroes*, and a podcast by trans historian Morgan Page which tells Kerwineo’s story. Much as Kerwineo once sparked controversy in the pages of newspapers across the country, today the story of this African American and Potawatomi individual, designated female at birth, who lived as a man and married two women has grabbed many people’s attention. While the story has excited many, however, no one thus far has addressed it from an Indigenous lens, taking serious Kerwineo’s claim to Potawatomi heritage and what it means for Two-Spirit history.

Before delving into Kerwineo’s story, a short note about pronouns and names is warranted. In the case of Ozaawindib and Wzawshek, it is fairly clear what pronouns are most respectful and relevant, as both clearly were considered to be women or at least adjacent to womanhood by themselves and their communities. The person I attend to in this section is more difficult to pin down: born Cora Anderson, for about a decade Ralph Kerwineo, and later possibly taking the name Alice Seifert. As we will see, Cora/Ralph

³³ Emily Skidmore, "Ralph Kerwineo's Queer Body: Narrating the Scales of Social Membership in the Early Twentieth Century," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 20, no. 1-2 (2014): 141-166. , Emily Skidmore, *True Sex: The Lives of Trans Men at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (New York: NYU Press, 2019). Desirae Lezotte, "'Girl-Man': Cora Anderson and the Wisconsin 'Eugenic' Marriage Law" (undergraduate thesis, University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire, 2012).

does not clearly articulate a gender identity in terms that are easily legible to us today as either male or female, transgender or cisgender, or even as Two-Spirit. I have thought hard about what pronouns and names, including taking into account the practices of others. Emily Skidmore refers to Kerwineo with male pronouns and calls him a trans man in her book *True Sex*. Other scholars have tended to refer to this person as Cora Anderson and use female pronouns exclusively.

A third option might be to use another pronoun that is considered “gender neutral” such as they/them or sie/hir; a recent book on female husbands, figures whom Kerwineo in many ways resembles, takes this approach.³⁴ This option is somewhat tempting to me, especially as someone who uses they/them pronouns personally. However, I feel uneasy assigning a pronoun that would not have even been legible to Kerwineo. Attempting to respect the (varied and shifting) ways this person might have identified at the time, I have decided to use the name Anderson alongside female pronouns when referring to the period when she was presenting as a woman named Cora Anderson, and the name Ralph Kerwineo alongside male pronouns when he was presenting as a man. This is not a perfect solution, as there were a few moments when Kerwineo switched between the two, and the question of how to refer to him after he mostly drops off records after 1919 is tough to answer. I hope that in any case, this decision will be understood as one that I did not undertake lightly and which I attempted to make, as a nonbinary trans person myself, in a way that was most respectful of Kerwineo’s experience as possible.

³⁴ Jen Manion, *Female Husbands: A Trans History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

In Milwaukee, Wisconsin, May of 1914, a scandal broke out when police found out that a man in the city had been born with the name Cora Anderson and was to their eyes, “really a woman.” This “girl-man” as they called him, had married two women, and not only that, he had actually been inspected by a doctor prior to the second marriage and deemed a healthy male! Furthermore, it was revealed that though he had claimed to be of Spanish descent from Bolivia, he was in fact of African American and Native American descent. The news quickly spread in papers across the United States, becoming more and more outrageously exaggerated and derogatory as it progressed away from Milwaukee.³⁵ Kerwineo was jailed and subjected to a humiliating court case, and after ultimately being let go without charge, went on to travel the Vaudeville circuits until audiences got bored of the “girl-man.” In the abundant newspaper records, it can be difficult to untangle what Kerwineo really said and what was made up for the sake of higher sales.

The newspapers, however, are not the only record of Kerwineo’s life. According to census records, the person who would become famous as Ralph Kerwineo was born in 1877, Kendallville, Indiana as Cora Anderson. Her father, Jeremiah Anderson, was a barber who was the son of free Black immigrants that arrived in Indiana from North Carolina in the 1830s. Jeremiah had been born in a Black settlement in Indiana, but as young adults he and his brothers had migrated north to the predominantly white city of Fort Wayne, and then on to the even smaller and whiter nearby town of Kendallville. There is little information about Cora Anderson’s mother beyond her name, dates of birth and death, and her ethnicity. Frances Hurst (or Hearst), born in 1836, was said to be the

³⁵ Skidmore, “Ralph Kerwineo’s Queer Body,” 142.

daughter of Black and Potawatomi parents according to several sources close to the Anderson family.³⁶ Although she was described by a local historian in the early 1900s as having been “a very intelligent and bright woman,” she died in 1881, leaving behind her husband and six children.³⁷ Cora was four years old at the time. A year after Frances’s death, Jeremiah married a Black woman from another part of Indiana, Sarah Bainter, who worked as a teacher. The Anderson children were described by the same local historian as “bright and smart” people who “stood well above many of the white students.”³⁸ Cora’s older brother Warren was the first man of color to graduate from Fort Wayne College of Medicine, and Cora herself attended Providence Hospital School of Nursing in Chicago. After graduating, however, Cora found herself unable to get a job and had been unemployed for four months when she was recorded in the 1900 census in June.³⁹

In 1901, Anderson was living in Milwaukee, where s/he first began to live as a man for short periods of time. He worked for a while as a bellboy at the Plankinton House Hotel (which was a well-known hotel at the time), then in 1904 moved to Cleveland, attempting to once again get a job as a female nurse. In Cleveland Anderson met Mamie (or Marie) White, a fellow nurse. According to newspaper records of their words, they were struggling to find work that paid enough to survive, and Anderson offered to pose as White’s husband. They moved around for some time, with Anderson

³⁶ “Early Black Settlements by County.” Indiana Historical Society. Accessed June 13, 2021. <https://indianahistory.org/research/research-materials/early-black-settlements/early-black-settlements-by-county/>.

“They are now writing the last chapter in life of Ralph Kerwineo—I shall leave here and start life over again elsewhere,” *The Milwaukee Journal*, May 4, 1914.

³⁷ Amanda L. Blackman, *The Anderson Brothers of Kendallville and the Scandalous Cora*, (Kendallville, Indiana: Amanda L. Blackman, 2013), 6.

³⁸ “Early Black Settlements by County.”

³⁹ Lezotte, “Girl-Man,” 10.

sometimes appearing as a man and sometimes as a woman, before finally settling in Milwaukee in 1906, where Ralph Kerwineo (as he was now calling himself) once again took a job at the Plankinton. With the exception of a visit home to Kendallville in 1907, after this Kerwineo lived as a man until the scandal of 1914. In addition to taking on a different gender presentation, Kerwineo also took on a different racial identity, posing as South American, sometimes specifically a Bolivian man.

According to one quote from Kerwineo when he was in jail, during this time his “woman’s soul died and the man’s had taken its place.”⁴⁰ This evidently concerned Mamie White greatly. She stated for one article that “We led a happy life together until just recently, when Cora, I think, began to have delusions, and after posing so long as a man, thought she really was one.”⁴¹ From White’s perspective, Kerwineo was becoming “coarse” in his habits, and staying out late with friends from work. Kerwineo, for his part, seemed to be annoyed by White’s attempts to get him to be more feminine. In their last year together, White recorded that they often discussed “breaking up the arrangement,” and Kerwineo once even left for Chicago before returning (whether he did this as a man or a woman is not stated).⁴² White attributed this to the supposedly inherent female desire for a “real husband,” though according to both White and Kerwineo it seems more like that this was specifically *White’s* desire. Kerwineo seems to have felt more secure as a man than ever, and this may have caused tension with White. When Kerwineo began spending time with another woman, a Polish-American young woman named Dorothy

⁴⁰ “Will Not Prosecute Man-Girl,” *Sheboygan Press*, May 6, 1914.

⁴¹ “They are now writing the last chapter,” *Milwaukee Journal*, May 4, 1914.

⁴² “Girl Lives as Man,” *Milwaukee Journal*, May 3, 1914.

Kleinowski, White confronted him. They sold their apartment and separated.⁴³ After White discovered that Kerwineo and Kleinowski had legally married, she went to the police and informed them of Kerwineo's "true sex" (to use the phrase common at the time).⁴⁴

While there are many possible angles from which this story could be examined, here I will analyze it for what it reveals about the history of Anishinaabe Two-Spirit people. In some ways, it could be argued that Kerwineo's story is not especially "Two-Spirit" at all. He was of mixed heritage and his Potawatomi mother died when he was very small; as far as I have been able to ascertain he had no further interactions with his ancestral tribal community. In addition, in present-day terms Kerwineo does not clearly fit into a category that might be deemed LGBTQ2. According to one analysis, he consistently maintained three reasons for his actions: "to obtain freedom from men's sexual exploitation, to obtain better economic opportunities, and to avoid racial discrimination."⁴⁵ Most sympathetic articles about him in the newspapers of the time portray him as a woman of "normal" sexuality who simply took the only course she could see to deal with her unfortunate situation as a woman of color. Both the court and the press, in fact, took great pains to stress that there was no sign of "abnormal" sexuality between either Kerwineo and White or Kerwineo and Kleinowski.

For some time I struggled with the question of whether to conceptualize Cora Anderson/Ralph Kerwineo as akin to a trans man, a lesbian passing for love, or a straight

⁴³ "Girl Lives as Man," *Milwaukee Journal*, May 3, 1914.

⁴⁴ Skidmore, *True Sex*.

⁴⁵ Lezotte, "'Girl-Man,'" 13.

woman passing for work. Ultimately, however, the answer is “none of the above.” For all the newspapers (and at times, Kerwineo himself) tried to portray him as a “normal” woman protesting injustice—and there is undoubtedly truth to the claim that work was unattainable for Anderson and White as women of color—there are certain things that indicate other, more hidden aspects to Kerwineo’s story. Most notably, if Kerwineo did not actually have any romantic or sexual feelings for women, then why did he pursue Dorothy Kleinowski’s hand in marriage? Even Kerwineo could not seem to answer that question satisfactorily, saying “I don’t know why I did this. I suppose because I had become so accustomed to the masculine role.”⁴⁶ Yet it also does not seem fully accurate to describe Kerwineo solely as a “passing woman,” either. While he may have initially begun living as a man primarily for economic reasons, he also consistently maintained that, as quoted above, his “woman’s soul died” and that he truly had come to see himself as a man. This is also suggested by his quarrels with White in the last year of their partnership. When forced to once again don women’s clothing, he balked, claiming it felt unnatural.⁴⁷

What Kerwineo’s complex actions and identity suggest is that it is critical not to assume that current identity categories can be easily assigned to figures in the past. While that may seem widely taken for granted in gender and sexuality studies after the work of Foucault and others who worked to denaturalize gender and sexuality categories, the debates over whether various historical figures were “really trans” continue.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ “Girl Lives as a Man and Weds,” *Milwaukee Journal*, May 3, 1914.

⁴⁷ “They are writing the last chapter,” *Milwaukee Journal*, May 4, 1914

⁴⁸ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

Amusingly, while anthropologists argue about the importance of recognizing Indigenous roles like *agokwe* and *mnedokwé* as “third genders” outside of Western categories of gender and sexuality, historical documents are actually much clearer about how Ozaawindib and Wzawshek might have identified than they are about Ralph Kerwineo’s gender identity. Current models of gender and sexuality in the United States mainstream struggle to describe someone who was a woman, became a man, and then perhaps switched between the two. We might attempt to label such a person “nonbinary” or even “bigender” but that would miss the bigger point: that the experiences of Two-Spirit people, both historically and in the present, transcend the categories of colonially-defined gender and sexuality.

It is true that Ralph Kerwineo’s actions do not appear to have been influenced any knowledge of specifically Potawatomi gender roles.⁴⁹ It would be easy to dismiss his importance for Two-Spirit history by arguing that his Potawatomi ancestry does not matter, since his mother died when he was so young. I argue, however, that this actually reveals something very important about the trajectory of Two-Spirit Anishinaabe history in the early 1900s: first, it shows how by this period, colonization and antiblackness had forcibly disconnected many Two-Spirit Anishinaabe people from the memory of knowledge about “folks like us.” Second, Kerwineo’s insistence on recognizing his Potawatomi ancestry and his articulation of race as a central reason for his actions

⁴⁹ Whether Potawatomi culture and other Anishinaabe cultures had similar roles for women and transmasculine individuals as *agokwe* and *mnedokwé* is uncertain, but not especially relevant here. See Landes, *The Ojibwa Woman*, for examples in early 20th century Ojibwe culture.

indicates that even in the absence of any obviously “cultural” aspects, Two-Spirit experiences of gender and sexuality remain tied up with race and indigeneity.

To understand this, we must backtrack and consider the history of Potawatomi people in the southern Great Lakes region. In the early 1800s Potawatomi people lived primarily in a loop around Lake Michigan, stretching from northeastern Wisconsin down to the Chicago area around to northern Indiana and southwestern Michigan. In the 1830s, the United States signed several treaties with the Potawatomi in this region, in which the United States claimed the land and forcibly removed most of the Potawatomi in Indiana and Illinois. Not all were removed; today federally recognized Potawatomi communities still exist in Wisconsin and northern Michigan (the Forest County Potawatomi and the Hannahville Indian Community) and in southwestern Michigan/northeastern Indiana (the Pokagon Potawatomi, Match-E-Be-Nash-She-Wish Band of Potawatomi, and the Nottawaseppi Huron Band of Potawatomi).

Kerwineo’s mother Frances was born in the middle of this tumultuous period in 1836. Because little is recorded of her history, we can only make some speculations about the context she may have lived in. She was apparently the daughter of one Black parent and one Potawatomi parent—who were they? Where were they born? There were still not that many non-Indigenous residents of this region in the 1830s, though there were both free and enslaved Black people living in the Great Lakes region in the early 1800s. The enslaved population resided mostly in areas of old French settlement like Detroit, but there were free Black traders who travelled and intermarried among Anishinaabe and

other Indigenous communities.⁵⁰ For that matter, there were also large numbers of enslaved Indigenous people in the region as well, known as panis—it is entirely possible that Frances’s parents met while both were enslaved, as many French families owned both Black and Native people as slaves alongside one another. Or they may have both been free, perhaps a Black trader who married into a Potawatomi community. Unfortunately, speculation is as far as we are able to go.

Regardless of who her parents were, Frances was born right as her people were being forcibly torn from their homelands. She would have grown up to see the land and people transformed as white settlers, as well as some free Black families, came to turn Neshnabé Ke into Indiana, a haven for farms that looked nothing like the ones her Potawatomi family would have grown.⁵¹ Did she remain in contact with other Potawatomi people as the world changed? Did she have a Black community nearby she was connected to? We do not even know where she lived before she was in Kendallville, if she indeed lived elsewhere. But by the time her children were born, the Anderson family was one of only three families of color in the town. Her daughter Cora would have grown up with only a few faces around her that looked like hers.

Yet despite the deep level of disconnection from Potawatomi people and even other African American communities, as an adult imprisoned for “passing as a man” and marrying a woman, Kerwineo and those who knew him insisted on acknowledging his Potawatomi heritage. White described him as “a Potawatomie-Cherokee Indian, though

⁵⁰ The Bonga family of what became Minnesota is one notable example.

⁵¹ Neshnabé Ké = Neshnabé/Anishinaabe/Potawatomi land. See Sleeper-Smith, *Indigenous Prosperity and American Conquest* on Indigenous farming in this region.

only a halfbreed.”⁵² Kerwineo’s father, too, made a point to note in a telegram to the Milwaukee Journal that “her mother was part Indian.”⁵³ Most scholars who have examined Kerwineo’s life have claimed that this was most likely an attempt to avoid the antiblackness that would inevitably follow if Kerwineo was deemed African American by the press.⁵⁴ I do not disagree that this was probably a significant part of the reason they used this description. As Emily Skidmore notes, in Milwaukee and Chicago, African Americans were considered significantly more of a “threat” to whites than either Native people or South Americans (the ethnicity Kerwineo claimed as a man before his arrest). Still, it seems odd to disregard these insistences of Indigeneity, particularly given the history of devaluing the Indigenous identities of mixed-ancestry Black Native people.

As Kerwineo moved through the Midwest, from Kendallville to Chicago to Milwaukee and back, he never actually left Neshnabé Ké. In 1919, however, five years after his first and most famous arrest, he was once again found in men’s clothing, this time in bed with a woman and illegally in possession of another man’s money. He was brought in on charges of vagrancy, though the newspapers did not report the outcome. A vague charge used to criminalize a wide variety of actions, vagrancy usually references a state of homelessness without stable employment. How is it, then, that a Potawatomi person living in Mnenak (Milwaukee), Neshnabé Ké, a part of his own ancestral homeland, could come to be criminalized as a vagrant? This is the result of the complex

⁵² “They are now writing the last chapter,” *Milwaukee Journal*, May 4, 1914– note: there is no other mention of Cherokee heritage in other sources. It may be that Jeremiah Anderson claimed Cherokee ancestry as well, as he was from North Carolina. Or perhaps White thought “Cherokee” was more legible to white audiences as “authentically Indian” than just “Potawatomi.”

⁵³ “Man-Girl Hypnotized,” *Milwaukee Journal*, May 5, 1914.

⁵⁴ Skidmore, “Ralph Kerwineo’s Queer Body.”

cocktail of antiblackness, colonization, and heteropatriarchy that affected Kerwineo simply as a result of his existence as a racialized Black and Indigenous person who transgressed gender and sexual norms. There is a direct line that can be drawn from the colonization of Neshnabé Ké to the arrests of Ralph Kerwineo.

Yet as with the story of Wzawshek, the infamous events in the life of Ralph Kerwineo evince an overwhelming desire to pursue joy through gender and kinship. When frustrated by white male prejudices and systematic discrimination, he made a radical decision to both alter his gender expression and to throw in his lot with Mamie White, forming a Black and Native Two-Spirit kinship bond that lasted years. That kinship bond ended up wavering primarily due to Kerwineo's expression of his gender in a way that pleased him and displeased White. Evidenced by his relationships with Dorothy Kleinowski and the unnamed woman found in his bed in 1919, he enacted his sexuality in a way that pleased him despite stigma and threat of law enforcement. Even through the haze of criminalization and sensationalism that surrounds his life's story, the outlines of Kerwineo's pursuit of gender euphoria through kinship are still visible.

Conclusion

The first century of American colonization of Anishinaabewaki/Nishnaabewki/Neshnabé Ké brought immense changes for Two-Spirit Anishinaabeg, alongside their communities. The precise nature of these changes varied depending on the time and place, but no matter when and where one looks, the experiences of Two-Spirit people reveal important facts about the nature of the colonization of Anishinaabewaki. I am making a two-sided argument based on the stories

told in this chapter. Firstly, Two-Spirit Anishinaabe people's experiences of gender and sexuality were profoundly tied up with land losses in the nineteenth century. Though Ozaawindib lived before treaty cessions began in her region of Anishinaabewaki, her interactions with John Tanner show how the incursions of Americans came hand in hand with depicting Two-Spirit people as abominations. For Wzawshek, the impact of forced removal, relocation to reservations, and the division of communal land into allotments influenced her choice to define her gender through icons of white womanhood rather than Potawatomi spiritual traditions. Finally, the criminalization of Ralph Kerwineo's "transgression" of gender relied on the colonial process of turning Neshnabé Ké into the Midwest, ruled by white American laws that made it impossible for him to survive either as a Black Potawatomi woman *or* man.

The second part of my argument is that, on the flip side, the stories of Two-Spirit Anishinaabeg like Ozaawindib, Wzawshek, and Ralph Kerwineo actually reveal an incredibly important perspective on how American colonization functioned in nineteenth century Anishinaabewaki/the Midwest, one that has been underexamined thus far. Despite an increasing number of scholars attending to issues of gender and sexuality in the context of colonization, the experiences of Two-Spirit people specifically have often been ignored or glossed over as a side effect of colonization. One of my goals here is to show that Two-Spirit Anishinaabe people's history are very much a part of Anishinaabe history at large, and that critically, we cannot fully tell the story of Anishinaabe history without telling the story of Two-Spirit people in these communities.

This story, however, is not only about the ways that colonization has dispossessed Two-Spirit people from their lands, roles, and identities. It is also a story about how Two-

Spirit Anishinaabeg have drawn on memory of “folks like us” in varying degrees as they lived their lives. For Ozaawindib, this can be seen in her community’s acceptance of her as a woman and a warrior. Though she is not a “primordial Two-Spirit,” as I have shown, she nonetheless lived almost all her life surrounded by Anishinaabe people who had not yet faced the threat of assimilation, and this was reflected in how she enacted her gender and sexuality. Wzawshek, living in a time period when forced assimilation and land theft were reaching new heights, sought out white women’s status through material objects but still relied on her relatives’ understanding of *mnedokwé* as a valued part of their community. Finally, though Kerwineo did not indicate any knowledge of ancestral cultural roles, his articulation of his Black and Potawatomi heritage and his dark skin as the reason behind his gender transgressions indicate that even in the seemingly de-indigenized city at the beginning of the twentieth century, gender, race, and indigeneity remained deeply interwoven.

The overall trajectory created by reading these three individuals’ stories just in light of American colonization can seem depressing, showing as they do how Two-Spirit people along with their Anishinaabe communities were devastated by the nineteenth century assault on Native lands and lives. When read as stories of gender euphoria, however, the histories of Ozaawindib, Wzawshek, and Ralph Kerwineo offer a different narrative for Two-Spirit people in the first century of American colonization. Their ceaseless attempts to follow their own path—what is commonly referred to in Ojibwe as *biminizha’igewin*, following or pursuing something—remind us that life for Two-Spirit people and Indigenous people more broadly was not, even in dark times, entirely determined by their oppression. We have always flirted with the objects of our desire and

worn the clothes we felt were beautiful and right for us, and yes, sometimes we defied legal and social norms that held us down in the process. This is what survivance means: telling a story where Native people are not only reacting to oppression but actively defining our own presences. The story that I have told in this chapter centers Two-Spirit people, but I contend that in doing so, it demonstrates how Two-Spirit stories are absolutely essential for rewriting our collective narrative as Anishinaabe people, as Indigenous people through the active-not-reactive lens of survivance.

A fellow graduate student, Demiliza Saramosing, once made a comment that has stuck with me ever since: she said, we talk so much about intergenerational trauma, but what about intergenerational joy?⁵⁵ The collective tradition of gender euphoria among Anishinaabe Two-Spirit people constitutes one form of intergenerational joy that is experienced across generations no matter what situations we find ourselves in. This intergenerational joy forms a critical part of what I call in this dissertation trans*temporal kinship. As Two-Spirit Anishinaabeg like Ozaawindib, Wzawshek, and Ralph Kerwineo expressed their gender and sexuality through their kinship relations, they also formed links in a chain of Two-Spirit Anishinaabe intergenerational joy—Two-Spirit *aanikoobijiganag*, ancestors and descendants. Whether they were abundantly knowledgeable about Two-Spirit history and roles or knew nothing of them, their actions in search of joy are the grooves of legacy that subsequent Two-Spirit people trace.

⁵⁵ Demiliza Saramosing, “The ‘Young Kings of Kalihi: Boys and Bikes in Hawai’i’s Urban Ahupua’a,” in *Reppin’: Pacific Islander Youth and Native Justice*, ed. Keith L. Camacho (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2021), 239-262.

From Nookomis to Noozhishenh: Intergenerational Knowledge Transmission in Anishinaabe Two-Spirit Literature

In this chapter, I turn to writing by Two-Spirit Anishinaabeg from the late twentieth and early twenty-first century. This period was marked by the emergence of publications by Two-Spirit Anishinaabeg themselves, allowing them to insert their voices into larger literary scenes for the first time. Between the publication of Carole laFavor's novel *Along the Journey River* in 1996—the first book published by an openly Two-Spirit Anishinaabe author—and the present day, there has been a relative explosion of both Two-Spirit literature and specifically Anishinaabe Two-Spirit literature. This statement is somewhat misleading, however, as after laFavor's book, almost all of these publications have occurred since 2016. That year (which was also the year I started graduate school) two books were released by Two-Spirit Anishinaabeg: Ma-Nee Chacaby's memoir *A Two-Spirit Journey*, and Nathan Niigaan Noodin Adler's novel *Wrist*. When I first began thinking about my dissertation and what literature I wanted to include, these were quite literally the only books by Two-Spirit Anishinaabeg. Since 2016, however, there have been a number of other writers based in Canada who have published in a variety of genres, including Oji-Cree writer Joshua Whitehead's book of poems *Full Metal Indigiqueer* (2017) and novel *Jonny Appleseed* (2018), Cree-Métis-Saulteaux writer Jas M. Morgan's memoir *nîtisânak* (2018), and Oji-Cree poet jaye simpson's book *it was never going to be okay* (2020). Many other Two-Spirit Anishinaabeg have published shorter pieces in magazines and journals, or self-published work such as Sydney Flett's *Cusp of Brilliance* (2017) and my chapbook *AANAWI GO* (2020). So while I began with the intention of being able to literally cover the entire

range of Anishinaabe Two-Spirit authors, I now find myself having to choose among them based on specific rationales.

The lens through which I approach these writers' work in this chapter is that of intergenerational transfer of knowledge and relationships between different generations. In nearly all published work by Two-Spirit Anishinaabeg, whether they are writing fiction or memoir or poetry, the figure of the grandmother features prominently. While grandmother figures are very common in Indigenous literature more broadly, in Two-Spirit writing they often take on an even more specific role. In Indigenous literature, grandmothers are frequently the bearers of traditional knowledge and history, representing a connection and continuity with the past. This is also the case in much Two-Spirit writing, but there is an added twist, where grandmothers also serve as a (sometimes lone) figure of acceptance for queer and trans Anishinaabeg, and even as keepers of Two-Spirit knowledge. In works by Ma-Nee Chacaby, Carole laFavor, and Joshua Whitehead, while residential/boarding schools, adoption, forced assimilation, Christianization, and other forms of colonization have caused most community members to reject Two-Spirit people, grandmothers remain a critical link to the knowledge that Two-Spirit people have a long history of being accepted, respected, and loved.

This raises the question, how is it that these grandmothers have escaped the knowledge-destruction caused by colonization? Chacaby, laFavor, and Whitehead seem to accept the common idea in Indigenous communities that elders are more likely to hold knowledge of traditions that have ceased to be practiced, which they perhaps witnessed or heard about from their own elders long ago. Even as they and their children and grandchildren experience intense colonial violence disrupting these lifeways and

knowledges, the grandmothers remain able to pass on their wisdom and acceptance to subsequent generations.

Yet not all Anishinaabe grandmothers are identical. Younger Two-Spirit people like Jas M. Morgan and jaye simpson express more ambivalence about the ability of grandmothers to transcend the colonization of Two-Spirit traditions. Their work portrays grandmothers who, though still retaining links to the past, are unable or unwilling to pass on teachings about Two-Spirit people to their queer or trans grandchildren. There are various possible reasons for this split. It is notable, for instance, that Carole laFavor and Ma-Nee Chacaby were born in the 1940s and 1950s; their grandmothers were significantly older—Chacaby's grandmother was born in the 1860s and certainly lived a significant portion of her life before major white settlement as well as before the imposition of residential schools. By the generation that Morgan, simpson, and Whitehead are a part of, Chacaby and laFavor themselves had become the grandmothers to whom grandchildren turned for knowledge and acceptance. Their generation experienced a much more focused attempt by white Americans and Canadians to stamp out Indigenous and specifically Two-Spirit traditions, resulting in greater loss among elder knowledge keepers. In addition, Morgan and simpson have both written and spoken about their experiences having been impacted by adoption and foster care, which added a further level of disruption from Indigenous traditions.

Still, this is not to say that all Two-Spirit knowledge was wiped out by the time of the millennial generation. Joshua Whitehead, as mentioned above, portrays the grandmother in his novel in very similar ways to Chacaby and laFavor, as an accepting figure who reminds her grandchild of their traditional roles. For Morgan and simpson,

too, the picture is more complicated than simple and total rupture. For even as they lament the lacunae and even prejudices created by colonization for their grandmothers, they also reinforce the idea that those elder kin are central to the transmission of Two-Spirit history. These writers also make another critical move in the portrayal of intergenerational knowledge transfer: they discuss and depict the transmission of knowledge from themselves *to* future generations of Two-Spirit young people. In this move, Morgan and Simpson assert that whether they have inherited a long tradition from their grandmother or not, they have a kinship responsibility to care for the new generations by passing on whatever knowledge they have gained for themselves.

For the rest of this chapter, I will focus primarily on five pieces by four authors: Carole laFavor's novel *Along the Journey River*, Ma-Nee Chacaby's autobiography *A Two-Spirit Journey*, Jas M. Morgan's memoir *nîtisânak*, and Jaye Simpson's poem "this woman, nokum" and their short story "The Ark of the Turtle's Back." These pieces, while all composed by Two-Spirit Anishinaabeg, also comprise a range of genres: novels, short stories, poetry, and memoir. I consider this range of genres partly to showcase the variety of writing by Two-Spirit Anishinaabeg in the past thirty years, but more importantly to show how the images of grandmothers and of intergenerational transmission of knowledge are so critical to such authors that these themes have transcended genre. I am cognizant that these distinct forms cannot be analyzed in the same way—it is not the same, for instance, for Chacaby and Morgan to talk about their literal grandmothers than for laFavor to describe a fictional character as a grandmother. Still, all of these individuals made decisions in how to tell their stories, whether those were fictional stories, the stories of their lives, or poetic images potentially encompassing

both.¹ I consider the ways that each of these writers talk about grandmothers and intergenerational interactions to be reflections of the real significance they place on these topics.

While there are many differences and distinctions in each of these writers' portrayal of grandmothers, family both biological and chosen, and intergenerational transmission of knowledge, all four still rely on images of kinship to explain their experiences. This language of kinship is deeply rooted in Anishinaabe understandings of relationality, while also creating specifically Two-Spirit adaptations of those forms of relationality. Trans*temporal kinship, for Two-Spirit Anishinaabe writers in the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries, is made up of these creative ways of engaging with the past, present and future. In addition, though, particularly for the writers in this chapter, trans*temporal kinship is not abstract. Instead, it is embodied in the tangible relationships between grandmothers and grandchildren, nookomis to noozhishenh. Where in the first chapter of this dissertation we witnessed trans*temporal kinship as a form of recognition transmitted through language, and in the second chapter we saw it as a legacy that gender-diverse Anishinaabe people traced through their relationships with kin, in this chapter trans*temporal kinship is represented in the very direct interactions between grandmother and grandchild. These interactions may be supportive or disapproving or both or something else altogether. The dynamics contained within these literary

¹ One complication worth noting is that Ma-Nee Chacaby's autobiography was composed with the assistance of a non-Native friend, Mary Louisa Plummer, who transcribed and arranged Chacaby's narration over videoconferencing. As a result, some of the framing may be attributed to Plummer as well as Chacaby. However, ultimately the words are Chacaby's, and Chacaby went over the final form of the book with Plummer. Thus I feel comfortable commenting on how she describes her own story, while acknowledging the collaboration that may have affected some of the details of the book.

depictions give us a sense of what trans*temporal kinship looks like happening on the ground, so to speak.

Grandmother as Knowledge Keeper: Carole laFavor, *Along the Journey River*

One of the first pieces of literature known to have been published by a Two-Spirit Anishinaabe person was Carole laFavor's novel *Along the Journey River*. Published in 1996, the book follows an Ojibwe lesbian living on a fictional Minnesota reservation as she helps to solve several crimes relating to mysterious deaths on the reservation as well as thefts of Indigenous objects and ancestral remains. In addition to being the first Two-Spirit *Anishinaabe* novel, it was also only the second novel to be published by an LGBTQ2 Native writer with a queer main character, after Paula Gunn Allen's 1983 novel *The Woman Who Owned the Shadows*. Lisa Tatonetti, a scholar of Two-Spirit literatures, has noted that although both novels feature a queer Native woman as a protagonist, the two characters exist in a "radically different psychological space" from one another.² She writes that Allen's main character's "erotic desire leaves her fraught and tribally disconnected in the liminal space of the tragic mixed-blood," while laFavor's protagonist is portrayed as culturally grounded and connected to her tribal kin and lands while also retaining a strong sense of an identity as a lesbian and Two-Spirit woman.³ The temporal contexts in which the novels were written may have influenced this distinction: Allen's novel was published in the 1980s, a time when queer Native activism was largely limited

² Tatonetti, Lisa. "Detecting Two-Spirit erotics: The fiction of Carole laFavor." *Journal of lesbian studies* 20, no. 3-4 (2016), 375.

³ Tatonetti, "Detecting Two-Spirit erotics," 375.

to the San Francisco Bay area group Gay American Indians. The first anthology of queer Native writing, *Living the Spirit*, would not be published until 1988.

By contrast, when laFavor published *Along the Journey River*, she wrote in the midst of a flourishing of specifically Two-Spirit-identified activism that had begun with the 1988 Minneapolis gathering of LGBTQ2 Native people called The Basket and the Bow. This gathering continued to be held in following years in other parts of North America, gaining more participants each year; it also was the location where the term “Two-Spirit” was first accepted on a community-wide scale. By the mid-1990s, “Two-Spirit” became shorthand for a political attitude towards queer Indigeneity that was centered in a desire to reclaim historical Indigenous ideas of gender and sexuality for those who “colored outside the lines” of heterosexual male and female. In such a context, it makes sense, then, that laFavor’s depiction of her Ojibwe lesbian amateur detective roots the character so strongly in a tribal environment supportive of her sexuality. One of the tropes that became common beginning in the 1990s that appears in laFavor’s book is the image of the grandmother as a keeper of knowledge about Two-Spiritness. Early in the novel, the main character Renee reflects on her memory of coming out to her grandmother as a teenager. Her grandmother responds in this way:

“I’ve been waiting for you,” Gram began quietly, after listening to Renee. She wiped the teen’s tears then with her long apron. “You were named Wabanang Ikkwe for a reason. Morning Star stands between—not night or day, but guiding each. You live in the space between women and men. We are Great Spirit’s pure thoughts, nojishe, all of us. Here to love, so do not be ashamed of who that is. Creator made you and we don’t question the work of our Creator.” Gram’s attitude about her being a lesbian wrapped Renee with the love she needed. “Two-

Spirits have always been part of our community, nojishe. It's good you're ready to accept it.⁴

In this passage, Gram does not merely accept her granddaughter's sexuality, but actually offers her knowledge about what it means to be Two-Spirit. First, she suggests that she already knew of Renee's identity in some form, evidenced both by "I've been waiting for you" as well as in her statement that Renee was named Wabanang Ikkwe "for a reason." Gram's next words constitute a kind of argument for understanding queerness through an Anishinaabe lens—with the Morning Star as a symbol of "betweenness" and the Creator as an affirming source of gender and sexual variance. Finally, Gram asserts that "Two-Spirits have always been part of our community," linking Renee to a history of Two-Spirit Anishinaabeg reaching back indefinitely. She turns the tables on the popular idea that it is up to the relative of a queer person to accept their queerness by telling her granddaughter that *Renee* must be ready to accept the role and legacy of "folks like us" in their shared community. The source of that legacy, furthermore, comes from the knowledge of elders like Gram.

Throughout the book laFavor sets up elders, and specifically elder women and grandmothers, as keepers of knowledge about Two-Spiritness but also more broadly. In a section of the novel where Renee travels to the Twin Cities, she encounters a friend who is also an Ojibwe lesbian, but who has a different opinion on reservation life than Renee. After the friend suggests that "drunks and wife beaters on the rez" are unlikely to "remember the traditions" and will instead mock Renee behind her back for being a

⁴ Carole laFavor, *Along the Journey River* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), 11.

lesbian, Renee not only defends the reservation community, but the ancestral knowledge present there as asserted through the authority of elders. The following exchange then takes place:

“At least we have traditions about folks like us. More’n you can say for chimooks and their Christian-nuclear-family-missionary-position-boy-girl view of sex and relationships.”

“True enough, but our traditions aren’t so pure anymore, Renny.”

“No, but they’re comin’ back. Anyone hassles me I jus’ send ‘em to Gram and Auntie’s circle. Those elder ikkwe set ‘em straight.”⁵

This short exchange makes several significant moves on laFavor’s part. First, Renee flips the usual deficit model that portrays Native communities as lacking in comparison to white ones, stating that Indigenous people actually have a kind of knowledge that white people do not. In response, Renee’s friend points out that the “traditions aren’t so pure anymore,” which Renee does not dispute. The two women, and laFavor as an author, thus recognize the profound effects of colonization on Indigenous traditions, especially those related to sexuality and gender. Renee, though, quickly adds that the traditions are “comin’ back”—critically, under the auspices of her grandmother and auntie and their “circle” of “elder ikkwe [women].” Here the grandmother figures are not only sources of knowledge passed down from time immemorial, but also protectors, guardians shepherding traditions back into the community after they have been devastated.

Even in contexts outside of gender and sexuality, laFavor strongly positions elders and grandmothers specifically as healers of the community. As Renee drives through the reservation, she muses about recent changes: “two years ago, elders were elected a

⁵ laFavor, *Along the Journey River*, 131-132.

majority on the council for the first time in fifty years and a return to traditional ways began.”⁶ The wisdom of the elders, suggested to have been previously suppressed by some of the corrupt tribal officials encountered elsewhere in the novel, has powerful effects both direct and indirect. Renee describes tangible changes in the landscape of the reservation in the form of a new tribal council building made from local materials. She comments, “The ancestors’ spirits were everywhere: old ricing baskets, an aneak akween for harvesting wild rice, and bows and arrows hung on the walls next to the riving pole...”⁷ The return of elders to a position of power reforges the link to the ancestors through the presence of these traditional items which largely represent subsistence practices still performed today (gathering wild rice, hunting, and fishing). Another project of the elder-driven council involved reclamation and revitalization of local wetlands. Furthermore, she describes how many were “inspired by the ‘return to traditions’ campaign of the tribal council” to get sober and in some cases to see “the results of their spiritless lifestyle.”⁸ She concludes in another section that this is “All thanks to the wisdom of our elders, she thought. *Every time we lose an elder it’s like white folks losing a library.*”⁹ (emphasis in original.) laFavor puts this phrase, commonly heard in Indigenous communities, into Renee’s mouth to drive home how extensive and critical the knowledge Indigenous elders hold is for their people’s continuance.

The fact that elders must help the reservation *return* to traditions suggests that there was at one point a turn away from them, or a loss of knowledge at some point. A

⁶ laFavor, *Along the Journey River*, 60.

⁷ laFavor, *Along the Journey River*, 58.

⁸ laFavor, *Along the Journey River*, 68.

⁹ laFavor, *Along the Journey River*, 115.

passage that centers on a side character who had just come home to the reservation after college drives home the generational distinctions laFavor is pointing out:

Jesse didn't quite understand the two-spirit side of her new friend. While she'd known a few lesbians at Arizona State, she didn't know there were any Indian ones. A common myth, Renee had told her, but the admission still embarrassed Jesse. When she talked to her mother or her grandmother about their beliefs, Jesse got very different responses. Granny acted like it was just another way of living, while her mom recited bible verses against it. Looking at Renee now, Jesse had to admit she didn't seem any different than anyone else, which made her tend to side with her granny's point of view. (80)

This excerpt gestures towards some of the disruption that has taken place in transmission of Indigenous understandings of gender and sexuality in Anishinaabe communities, and it hints at some of the causes for that as well. Jesse, a young woman, clearly has not had much exposure to the idea that Two-Spirit people have long existed in positions of respect among Anishinaabeg, as Renee's Gram states earlier in the book. Her Granny, however, sees it as "just another way of living," while her mother has a negative response explicitly derived from Christian views about "homosexuality." Where Gram and Granny's generation seem to retain an understanding of queerness as natural, Jesse's mother's generation has been exposed to Christian proselytizing that rejects it as deviant and against their beliefs. Although she does not dwell on it extensively, laFavor does mention the abuses, racism, and theft perpetrated by priests on the reservation in the early twentieth century elsewhere in the book. Through such small mentions, she hints at the immense impact of the imposition of Christianity on the transmission of tribal knowledge about gender and sexuality. Yet as with the statements that the traditions are "comin' back" and the reflection on community revitalization, laFavor writes Jesse as ultimately accepting her granny's perspective.

In another section of the novel, Renee attends a powwow in the Twin Cities and reflects on some of the gender dynamics of Indigenous cultural practices. Renee is sad to find that a women's drum group she knows is not present at the powwow and notes that, "After talking with two of the women singers about how they'd gotten spiritual direction from an elder ikkwe but resistance from some of the male drum groups, she could see the problems they were up against."¹⁰ This scene may have been inspired by actual events; a similar incident occurred several years after the book's publication, when an Ojibwe women's drum group was denied the ability to sing at the 2001 St. Thomas powwow in Minneapolis and subsequently attempted to sue the university for discrimination.¹¹ laFavor anticipates the criticism that women do not "traditionally" sit at the drum in Ojibwe tradition by carefully pointing out that the women had been acting under the direction of an "elder ikkwe." Here, the grandmother figure of the "elder ikkwe" provides the authority to challenge binary gender practices in the urban Indigenous community. Renee concludes her reflection with the statement that "Men are men are men," suggesting that Indigenous men may also have incorporated colonial sexist ideas that prevent them from recognizing this grandmother's authority.

laFavor's novel, published as it was in the mid-1990s, reflects the later common portrayal of grandmothers and elders as keepers of knowledge related to Two-Spiritness and Anishinaabe culture more broadly. Of the four authors whose work I examine in this chapter, she presents the most relatively straightforward depiction of the power of

¹⁰laFavor, *Along the Journey River*, 136.

¹¹ "Tradition Goes to Court," *Windspeaker*, published March 2002.
<https://windspeaker.com/teachings/tradition-goes-to-court>.

grandmothers and intergenerational transmission of knowledge on Two-Spirit people's lives. Undoubtedly, she is direct about the challenges that still face Ojibwe people on this fictional reservation as well as in the city. Yet ultimately, laFavor's writing in *Along the Journey River* suggests that our grandmothers hold all that we need to undo the effects of colonization. For laFavor, the possibilities of trans*temporal kinship arise in our ability to turn to our elder grandmothers who may carry with them teachings that can nourish us as Two-Spirit people, as well as our communities.

Colonial Disruptions of Kinship: Ma-Nee Chacaby, *A Two-Spirit Journey*

Ma-Nee Chacaby, in her memoir *A Two-Spirit Journey*, portrays her grandmother in a way that resonates considerably with laFavor's portrayal of elder women. Where *Along the Journey River* strives to show the strength of kinship bonds in the face of continuing colonization, however, Chacaby's autobiography focuses much more intensely on the ways that colonization in the twentieth century has disrupted those kinship relations. Though Chacaby, like laFavor, centers her grandmother as a source of knowledge about Anishinaabe traditions of gender and sexuality, she also powerfully shows that a single supportive figure is not enough to overcome the community-wide spread of violence and abuse that comes about due to the experience of colonization.

Chacaby both begins and ends the book with stories of her grandmother, who was a Cree woman from the western prairies who was born in the 1860s. Because Chacaby's mother was an erratic presence in her life and her biological father not at all present, her grandmother was her primary source of connection to family history. Her grandmother,

for example, provided knowledge of what clan the three generations of women (Ma-Nee, her mother, and her grandmother) belonged to. She writes that although Anishinaabeg typically are known to pass their clans down through the patrilineal line, her grandmother made clear that just as she was beaver clan, so were her daughter and granddaughter:

I do not know if we were members of my grandmother's clan because her particular Cree tradition followed clans through a mother's family, or because we did not have a father's clan to follow....In any case, I have never had any doubt that I am a member of the beaver clan. My grandmother taught me to study beavers, like the hard-working ways they built and maintained their homes, and the smart ways they reused objects. She explained that members of our clan do not kill beavers, and we do not eat them."¹²

In this passage Chacaby places concrete transmission of knowledge from her grandmother (that she is beaver clan) against the abstract notion of what "tradition" is "supposed to be" (that Anishinaabe clans are patrilineal), and she makes clear that when faced with such a contradiction, the knowledge given to her by her grandmother is what she relies on. Furthermore, she explains *how* this knowledge was passed on to her: through the practice of studying the literal physical habits of beavers, as well as through direct instruction about clan-related rules.

In addition to family history, Chacaby's grandmother also represented a source of transmission of knowledge about gender and sexuality, one of the few positive representations Chacaby experienced as a child. In an often-quoted portion of the book, she writes about how "Starting when I was a young child, probably when I was four or five years old, my grandmother told me that I had two spirits. She would gently poke me

¹² Chacaby and Plummer, *A Two-Spirit Journey*, 32-33.

in the chest and say, ‘Little girl, you have niizhin ojijaak (two spirits) living inside of you.’ Over the years she explained this to me by saying that some people were special and had both a male and a female spirit inside of them.”¹³ In Chacaby’s memory, her grandmother shared teachings about not only the existence of these niizhin ojijaak Two-Spirit people, but also what roles they historically played in their communities as fire-keepers and medicine people. She writes that as she got older, her grandmother shared more with her about the kinds of romantic and sexual relationships that Two-Spirit people had with others, and that “She believed that, one day, I also would have a powerful, deep connection with someone.”¹⁴

Despite having this strong connection with her grandmother and through her, a connection with the history of “folks like us,” Chacaby writes that “For many years I did not understand what [her grandmother’s teachings about Two-Spirit people] meant.”¹⁵

She elaborates:

I did not act on my attractions to girls while I was in Ombabika. I would not have known how to do so. At that stage I couldn’t even imagine kissing a girl. I didn’t understand my own feelings, and I assumed that I was the only girl in the world who felt the way I did. It was many years before I made the connection between those feelings and what my grandmother told me about people who have two spirits inside of them.¹⁶

Despite having a strong teacher and role model in her life who was able to pass on knowledge about Two-Spiritness to her, then, Chacaby still struggled with her sexuality.

She could not, as she says, make the connection between the feelings she had and the

¹³ Chacaby and Plummer, *A Two-Spirit Journey*, 89.

¹⁴ Chacaby and Plummer, *A Two-Spirit Journey*, 89.

¹⁵ Chacaby and Plummer, *A Two-Spirit Journey*, 90.

¹⁶ Chacaby and Plummer, *A Two-Spirit Journey*, 92-93.

information her grandmother shared about being Two-Spirit. To understand why this may have been, we must examine Chacaby's descriptions of her relationship with her grandmother in the context of the wider community in her hometown of Ombabika.

In her abundant wisdom of Anishinaabe and Cree tradition, Chacaby's grandmother is portrayed as being rather unique throughout the autobiography. For example, Chacaby recalled virtually all the adults in Ombabika as regularly consuming alcohol to excess, while her grandmother refused to drink even one drop. At one point, she describes a common scene wherein she (at a pre-adolescent age) and her grandmother sat awkwardly in a corner of the house while all around them other adults held a raucous alcohol-fueled party, until things became violent and the pair were forced out of the house into the frigid winter. Several adults in her life, such as her mother and stepfather, were physically or sexually abusive towards her, and even her grandmother was unable to prevent these violations. Chacaby remembered trying and failing to tell her grandmother about the abuse she experienced:

I did try to tell my grandmother, but when I went to her, I found I couldn't say it out loud. My mother was often with my kokum, and I didn't feel comfortable talking about it in front of her. I tried to ask my grandmother about it indirectly, like it was a question about someone else. She said that when that kind of a thing happens, the adult knows what he or she is doing, not the child, so the child is not responsible for it. But I was still afraid to tell her. I feared I would hurt a lot of people.¹⁷

Despite expressing a great deal of wisdom and compassion in saying that abuse is not the fault of the victim, Chacaby's grandmother remains unaware of her granddaughter's

¹⁷ Chacaby and Plummer, *A Two-Spirit Journey*, 51.

violations. Furthermore, at another point, when Chacaby's grandmother witnesses Chacaby's mother slap or otherwise physically hurt her own daughter, the only advice she offers is that Chacaby should forgive her mother.¹⁸

At several moments, Chacaby describes her grandmother as warning her about the future, which she suggests to hold hardship due to Chacaby's Two-Spiritness. In one memory, Chacaby's grandmother "She said that in my life I would have a long and difficult bimose (walk or journey)."¹⁹ She directly attributes this to Chacaby's Two-Spirit status and provides historical context, explaining "that two-spirit people were once loved and respected within our communities, but times had changed and they were no longer understood or valued in the same way. When I got older, she said, I would have to figure out how to live with two spirits as an adult. She warned me I probably would experience many hard times along the way."²⁰ The rest of the book is largely Chacaby's description of exactly this journey of hard times and eventual self-discovery and recovery that she would experience.

After taking such care in the first part of the book to show her grandmother's attempt to pass on knowledge of traditional Two-Spirit teachings, Chacaby shifts to describing a very long and difficult period in her life following her grandmother's death. She guides the reader through the years of her abusive first marriage, single parenting and homelessness, and her journey to getting sober in the mid-1970s. Even after taking that enormous step, she still found herself unable to recognize her sexuality and ended up

¹⁸ Chacaby and Plummer, *A Two-Spirit Journey*, 50.

¹⁹ Chacaby and Plummer, *A Two-Spirit Journey*, 36.

²⁰ Chacaby and Plummer, *A Two-Spirit Journey*, 89-90.

marrying a second husband. It was not until the mid to late 1980s before she slowly allowed herself to consider the possibility that she was a lesbian. The long “bimose” or journey, as she calls it, is a direct result of the impacts of colonization on Indigenous people that made Two-Spirit gender and sexuality a taboo topic. Even after she became sober and started working to help Indigenous youth and pregnant parents, she still wrote that “I could not imagine any of my friends, family, or co-workers responding positively if I told them I was a lesbian.”²¹ Eventually, after a series of personal and family crises, she moved from Winnipeg to Thunder Bay and divorced her second husband, after which she was finally able to explore her feelings for women.

Beginning with her engagement with Alcoholics Anonymous during the process of becoming sober, Chacaby became increasingly involved in giving back to younger generations of Native people. She fostered numerous Native youth who were living on the street in Winnipeg, translated AA materials into Ojibwe, and mentored many more young people, especially Two-Spirit youth. She evinces a strong desire to help others not just for the sake of helping but as a way to return the care she had received: “I wanted to help other people to overcome alcoholism the way that others had helped me.”²² This reciprocity eventually took the form of passing on teachings she had received from her grandmother—which I have personally been the beneficiary of, as a young person who was able to learn from her at the Ojibwe immersion camp Ojibwemotaadidaa Omaa Gidakiiminaang.

²¹ Chacaby and Plummer, *A Two-Spirit Journey*, 173.

²² Chacaby and Plummer, *A Two-Spirit Journey*, 146.

Only after she accepted her sexuality and sobriety was Chacaby able to return to the traditions of her grandmother. Speaking specifically of smudging, drumming, and sweat lodge ceremonies, she wrote that “While living in Kaministiquia, I returned to the daily and seasonal spiritual practices that my grandmother had taught me...All of those practices helped cleanse and sustain me, and brought me back to a better balance, both emotionally and spiritually.”²³ At the end of the book, she returns to talk once again about her grandmother, expressing her gratitude for the teachings she passed on to her. Still, Chacaby makes the powerful point that healing is not linear. After twelve years of a loving relationship with her partner, Grace, she writes, “I began to feel out of control. I had difficulty functioning and concentrating on the tasks that I needed to do for Abigail [the young girl they were raising together]. When she was at school, I tried to work through my feelings by painting or writing in my journal, but it didn’t help. Grace tried to talk to me and support me, but I wasn’t able to speak to her about the pain that I was feeling.”²⁴ Chacaby found herself so distressed that she ended up amicably leaving her home with Grace and seeking out other forms of support such as therapy and counselling, and she poignantly recognizes in the book that these supports can be just as important as cultural and spiritual ones.

Chacaby concludes her story by reflecting on “many wonderful people I have known, and still know, today” who have helped her and who she has helped.²⁵

Throughout the book, she demonstrates the ways that intergenerational sharing of

²³ Chacaby and Plummer, *A Two-Spirit Journey*, 226-227.

²⁴ Chacaby and Plummer, *A Two-Spirit Journey*, 240-241.

²⁵ Chacaby and Plummer, *A Two-Spirit Journey*, 270.

knowledge and support are critical for Two-Spirit people as well as the ways that the disruption of this knowledge transmission on a community-wide scale can have devastating consequences. Chacaby's trans*temporal kinship—directed toward the past through her grandmother, and forward through both her direct descendants and the children she raises and nurtures—is a powerful force, and although she may be unable to completely solve the problems arising from the disruptive elements of colonialism, the web of kin relations she knits together is formidable.

Grandmothers, Colonized: jaye simpson, “this woman, nokum”

I now move to the work of two younger writers, whose work focuses more intently on complicating the narrative surrounding Indigenous grandmothers and Two-Spiritness. The first, jaye simpson, is an Oji-Cree Saulteaux non-binary trans woman whose family comes from Sapotaweyak First Nation. simpson's depiction of their relationship with their grandmother is in marked contrast to that in the works of laFavor and Chacaby. In this section I primarily focus on one poem titled “this woman, nokum” (which means grandmother in Cree and Saulteaux) which centers on the way simpson relates to their grandmother as a queer, transgender, Two-Spirit person. I argue that in this poem, simpson both complicates and reproduces the idea of the grandmother as a knowledge-keeper in a way that challenges the idea, sometimes perpetuated by Indigenous and non-Indigenous media, that elders are uniformly knowledgeable and accepting of Two-Spiritness. In the last part of the section, I turn to simpson's recently-published short story, “The Ark of the Turtle's Back,” to show how simpson reconfigures

images of trans*temporal kinship by imagining intergenerational relations *among and between* Two-Spirit people.

The poem, “this woman, nokum” begins with an explosive line: “how do i explain my queerness to the gatekeeper of my blood line when she flushed hers out with communion wine and holy water?” The full meaning of this line may seem unclear at first: who is “the gatekeeper of my bloodline”? What does it mean to wash out one’s queerness with “communion wine and holy water”? I quote the next section extensively to provide context:

how do i explain my ever-shifting body to the woman who prayed for damnation for me, rather than my absolution? my grandmother who held me at birth, has prayed for my end more than my success, she’d done this many times over, begging God that we’d be better off dead, burying two spirit cousins after two spirit cousin- hanging their queer bodies like a slaughtered coyote on a post as to say “do not come around here no more”.
this woman. does not see the two spirit as hallowed or sacred,
but sees me as crawling out of the mud like a demon to bring forth the end of the world like the four headed beast of Revelations.²⁶

Here the image begins to become clear. The “gatekeeper of my bloodline” is the speaker’s grandmother, who simpson depicts as someone virulently against queerness. This opinion is implied to be derived from the grandmother’s Christian religion through the repeated language of Christian theology (damnation, absolution, begging God, demon, the end of the world, the four headed beast of Revelations). Unlike the supportive grandmothers in laFavor and Chacaby’s writing, simpson paints a picture of a

²⁶ jaye simpson, “this woman, nokum,” *This Magazine*, September 4, 2018.

grandmother who fervently rejects her Two-Spirit grandchildren, the speaker's cousins and the speaker herself, for their queerness—going so far as to wish them dead.

In the second-to-last line of that excerpt, simpson explicitly references the association of elders with acceptance and keepers of Two-Spirit teachings by stating that their grandmother “does not see the two spirit as hallowed or sacred,” implying the reader might have falsely assumed this to be the case. Indeed, instead of carrying Two-Spirit teachings, the grandmother has “flushed [them] out with communion wine and holy water.” Not only are Two-Spirit people not sacred to her, but she actually views them as bringing about the end of the world. Yet while simpson vividly describes their grandmother's vehement rejection of the Two-Spiritness and with it, the role of the accepting elder, they also recognize the contradiction that their grandmother remains “the keeper of my bloodline.” That is, for many Indigenous people—especially those who are survivors of the foster care system, like simpson—grandparents are the keepers of family history and keys to social acceptance by other family members. For Two-Spirit youth, rejection by a grandmother due to being queer or trans can mean total exile from family relations and a total lack of access to knowledge about one's own culture. What is at stake for simpson, then, is not simply Two-Spirit teachings, but access to kinship and perhaps Indigeneity itself.

simpson's poem shows that in the hands of a hateful grandmother's, the status of gatekeeper is not an innocent one. They write in one line, “this woman. cut down the family tree to build the church where our funerals would be.” This short line does an immense amount of work in its few words. The grandmother—who simpson strips of her authority as grandmother by simply calling her “this woman”—“cut down the family

tree” by refusing to accept her own kin. Indeed, by rejecting simpson and their Two-Spirit cousins, she literally ends the formal transmission of kinship through their lines of descent. It is through this act, the “wood” of the family tree, that she builds the “church where our funerals would be.” She casts out her kin in order to create a proper Christian space, where the only appropriate role for Two-Spirit people is to die and perhaps be buried.

To conclude the poem, simpson repeats this line, followed by, “this woman. would rather an empty church and a graveyard full of her children than actually know who we were.” With this conclusion, simpson forcefully denounces their grandmother’s actions that prefer dead children to Two-Spirit ones. The clause “actually know who we were” subtly asserts the realness of simpson and their cousins’ Two-Spiritness in the face of the Christian fiction that their grandmother prefers. It hints at Two-Spirit youths’ vitality and defiance in the face of violence from kin.

In the short story “The Ark of the Turtle’s Back,” published in the new volume of Two-Spirit and Indigiqueer speculative fiction *Love After the End*, simpson expands on this hinted vitality and defiance by portraying a fictional family in the future that is composed almost entirely of Two-Spirit people. The main characters in the story are depicted as links in a chain stretching from a no-longer-present Two-Spirit grandparent figure to the two young Two-Spirit people that the main characters are raising. In the first pages, we learn that the main character, Nichiiwad Wahê is a trans woman, with a Michif partner named Axil Es who is helping raise two young trans/Two-Spirit children, Giiweden and ashe Wahê-Es. We also meet Nichiiwad’s sister Dakib and hear about Koko-Wahê, their grandmother. Early in the story, Nichiiwad protests her sister’s plan

for them to leave their community by saying, “Koko-Wahê didn’t return home after five generations of displacement and kidnapping for you to rush us outta here.”²⁷ Koko-Wahê, whose photograph Nichiiwad carefully packs to take with them, represents not so much a continuation of unbroken tradition as a figure who fought to reclaim her Indigeneity in the face of generations of colonization.

simpson does not go into detail about Giiweden and ashe’s past before they came to live with Nichiiwad and Axil, though the references to the “New Indian Agents” suggest they too may have trauma they are dealing with. Nichiiwad’s care for them is evident in the way she “keep[s] their hormone replacement therapy ongoing,” with Dakib sending them six months supplies “in case the NIA [New Indian Agents] come around.”²⁸ Nichiiwad’s caretaking of the Two-Spirit youth is also shown through her procuring of trans-related healthcare later in the story when both Nichiiwad and Giiweden undergo gender confirmation surgery at the same time. simpson portrays the love and care of an older generation of trans/Two-Spirit people for their younger kin explicitly in trans terms.

The story concludes with the Two-Spirit family traveling on a spacecraft away from the dying earth to a new planet, as Nichiiwad imagines the possibilities for future generations: “I want them to have everything Koko-Wahê tried to give me and Dakib. I want everything for them that we couldn’t have.”²⁹ Returning to Koko-Wahê’s stymied attempts to pass on language and culture to her grandchildren, Nichiiwad’s speech expresses both the possibilities and the responsibilities involved in intergenerational

²⁷ jaye simpson, “The Ark of the Turtle’s Back,” *Love After the End*, ed. Joshua Whitehead (Arsenal Pulp Press, 2020), 64.

²⁸ simpson, “The Ark,” 64.

²⁹ simpson, “The Ark,” 75.

transmission among Two-Spirit people. Through both their poem and short story, simpson's work suggests that trans*temporal kinship also means continuing to work towards creating a better future for coming generations of Two-Spirit relatives, even if we ourselves were denied by our elders the connections to ancestral knowledge that we deserved.

(Re)making Two-Spirit Kin: Jas M. Morgan, *nîtisânak*

The final author whose work I consider is Saulteaux-Métis-Nehiyaw writer Jas M. Morgan. As in the previous three writers' work, grandmother figures also appear in Morgan's memoir *nîtisânak*. Much like simpson, however, Morgan depicts their grandmothers as more ambivalent figures than laFavor or Chacaby. In contrast to simpson's nokum, however, Morgan's grandmothers are not necessarily disapproving gatekeepers. Instead, Morgan suggests that even the knowledge they carry cannot be taken as one hundred percent authoritative. This is not because they are unreliable or disreputable people from some inherent quality, however: it is largely due to the effects of colonization on their lives.

Near the beginning of the memoir, Morgan attempts to give a general overview of their family history, but ultimately states:

This story is made understandable by the admittance that when I listen to nikâwiy [the Cree word for "my mother"] talk about her life, I've often wondered if she's lying—where her (our) truth lies. I've told people, nikâwiy isn't lucid, you see, I don't know what's lies and what's the truth. Ergo, I've told people, nikâwiy is just another crazy squaw; I'm just another crazy squaw. As if the real world doesn't integrate with the otherworldly for us Cree people. As if the whole prairie world isn't the ultimate gaslight to someone like nikâwiy, designed to make her feel crazy when she contends that perhaps her disappearance, her spiritual destruction,

wasn't warranted. As if truth isn't relative and, if she contends that her experience is true, well then, isn't it, to her, at least?³⁰

In this passage, Morgan destabilizes the ideas of truth and falsehood while also recasting the figure of the “crazy squaw.” First they wonder if their mother is lying, seeking to find “where her (our) truth lies”—thus linking kin to family history, as the previous three authors do—then they state, as a kind of apology, that their mother isn't “lucid.” Yet Morgan realizes immediately the implications of what they've said, and counters their own statement with the assertion that “the whole prairie world [is] the ultimate gaslight.” What is truth and what are lies in a world where the world is “designed” to make Indigenous women feel as though their own “spiritual destruction” is not really happening?

Morgan continues this line with a later paragraph about their mother and maternal grandmother, who they call by the Michif/Cree term *nohkom*:

My family tells ghost stories to shield us from the truth by creating a protective barrier of lies—a mysterious skin. . . . Much like *nohkom*, *nikâwiy* has never said my granddad's name to me. While I don't know much about what happened in that house, during *nikâwiy*'s youth, I do know that the women who resided there left in pieces. *nohkom* has been a non-verbal shit disturber, a term I use with absolute respect and admiration, and more specifically completely snowed 24/7, for years. She has never been able to speak with clarity about where she came from or what her community before moving to the city might have been, preferring instead the “hiding in plain view” project of her generation of Cree-Métis women who made their way into prairie cities. (16-17)

In this paragraph, Morgan further reframes their mother and grandmother's possible lies as “a protective barrier” of “ghost stories.” Instead of perceiving lies as malicious or being frustrated with the lack of information about their ancestors, Morgan interprets the

³⁰ Jas M. Morgan, *nîtisânak* (Montreal: Metonymy Press, 2018), 12.

mixed messages of their mother and grandmother as being purposeful and, crucially, done out of love and a desire to protect their grandchild.

Even on the other side of the family, Morgan notes that their paternal grandmother also has put up barriers to the passing down of knowledge, for slightly different but related reasons: “Nookomis (my Saulteaux grandma) says we don’t say their names anymore, the men who chased us off the rez, terrorized us in the cities, and made us their emotional surrogates.”³¹ In this way, the erasure of family history by their grandmother is once again a form of protection or perhaps retaliation, an assertion that if they have power over one thing, it is that they will not pass on the names of these abusive men. Morgan calls this insistence on their grandmother’s part “the feminine and relational ways of understanding where I belong in this world.”³² They conclude by boldly stating, “Tl;dr: Kinship is the original and most important form of Indigenous law and governance. Fuck the treaties.”³³ Rejecting political forms of recognition that privilege white and/or male power in determine belonging, Morgan affirms kinship as central to Indigenous ways of existing.

As Morgan begins the book with descriptions of their family of origin, they conclude the book by reflecting on what it means to become responsible for passing on knowledge to the next generation. An extended section features Morgan’s thoughts about their brother and nikosis, their young nephew, in light of the immense violence that white Canadian prairie society inflicts on young Indigenous men. Much of this section and the

³¹ Morgan, *nîtisânak*, 13.

³² Morgan, *nîtisânak*, 14.

³³ Morgan, *nîtisânak*, 14.

end of the book in general centers around Morgan's thoughts about how to mitigate the passing on of violence to the next generation. They write,

I wish I knew how to tell nikosis about who we are as a people, whatever that means, without talking about violence, but I think it's at least significant that I witness him by not pretending that he can think himself out of the daily reality of his life. I'm not going to lie because I respect him more than that. I know whoever we are as a people extends into a deep-rooted culture of shame passed from generation to generation. It manifests itself in all kinds of ugly and abusive ways, both projected on one another and self-inflicted. But how do we even begin to unravel these inheritances, begin to heal ourselves and our bloodlines, without talking about the hurt? And why can't I talk about the pain without being a traitor to the cause?³⁴

Here Morgan stares the violence that has disrupted generations of kinship straight in the face. They refuse to ignore the ways colonization has embedded itself into the lives of Indigenous people and continues to inflict violence on new generations today. Instead of viewing discussions of this pain as a form of traitorhood to the Indigenous cause, as Morgan suggests some might think, they view addressing these issues head-on as critical for "unraveling these inheritances" and for healing "ourselves and our bloodlines."

Yet there is not only pain being transferred intergenerationally. Morgan also describes the strength being passed down: "Though we have troubled histories chronically fatiguing us now, fucking with our brain chemistries, our ancestors were warrior women, medicine men, and political leaders. We are here because someone in our bloodline struggled tooth and nail so we would survive. I want nikosis to know that his dad, my brother wâkâyô's, was born and bred in that struggle."³⁵ Although Morgan's brother passes down a legacy of incredible hardship to his son, Morgan makes clear that

³⁴ Morgan, *nîtisânak*, 151.

³⁵ Morgan, *nîtisânak*, 151.

the struggle to survive those hardships is a legacy of its own, one that will help the next generation survive as well.

In addition to commenting on their nephew's future, Morgan also spends a portion near the end of the book writing for "my descendants, for all my 2s [Two-Spirit] kin to come."³⁶ They offer a number of teachings organized by the seven teachings often called by Anishinaabeg "the Seven Grandfather/Grandmother Teachings." In this section, Morgan describes the ways that Two-Spirit young people have often been each other's only kin:

Nbwaakaawin: 2s urban kin raise one another, and take care of each other fiercely and uncompromisingly. Don't let anyone shame you into thinking your family is wrong because it doesn't look like theirs. Family is fluid, not finite, and you make it as you go along in life. 2s kin will be your teachers, and you'll teach your 2s kin. You will mirror to one another what 2s life is, and create new histories and traditions as you do. (162)

Like Simpson's Two-Spirit family in "The Ark of the Turtle's Back," Morgan recognizes the ways that Two-Spirit people have created their own forms of kinship, which may or may not look much like other non-Two-Spirit forms of kinship, whether Indigenous or non-Indigenous. Crucially, Morgan portrays this kinship as intensely reciprocal: "2s kin will be your teachers, and you'll teach your 2s kin," in the process creating "new histories and traditions." If older generations are not available, able, or willing to teach younger ones about Two-Spirit history and traditions, Morgan says, then they will create their own through their own unique Two-Spirit kinship practices.

³⁶ Morgan, *nîtisânak*, 157.

In fact, Morgan's book itself can be seen as a form of this Two-Spirit kinship making, especially when they pivot to address Two-Spirit youth directly, saying, "But I think you're badass. I think you're on a fantastic path. I think you're going to be such a radical 2s leader for your community, even if just by continuing."³⁷ In sharing their own personal story, Morgan offers something that young Two-Spirit people can see themselves in. Even if the past as represented by the usual figures of elders and grandmothers is hazy or unavailable, Morgan strongly affirms the ability of Two-Spirit youth to hold one another up. In an interview for *This Magazine*, they describe this as creating "constellations of support in cities we ran to, away from cis- and hetero-normative violence and relations."³⁸ Morgan wonders if some might call these queer/trans relationships "trauma bonds," but pushes back, stating that

All of my Queer and Trans NDN friends are traumatized. Aren't we worthy of love, of kinships bonds, regardless of the quality of care we can give or receive? So much of being a Queer and/or Trans Indigenous person is helping one another stay alive day to day, and providing material and emotional support to one another. There's also something about Queer and Trans Indigenous communities that is grounding of relation knowledges.³⁹

Like the Two-Spirit family in jaye simpson's short story, Morgan places their hope in queer, trans, and Two-Spirit communities and their ability to support one another in physical, emotional, and spiritual ways. Trans*temporal kinship is always in the process

³⁷ Morgan, *nîtisânak*, 163.

³⁸ Gwen Benaway, "Interview: Lindsay Nixon," *This Magazine*, September 2018. <https://this.org/2018/09/04/interview-lindsay-nixon/>

³⁹ Benaway, "Interview: Lindsay Nixon."

of being created and recreated within these communities as we find ways to transform our trauma bonds into something that can be beneficial for our survival.

Conclusion

These four Anishinaabe Two-Spirit writers discuss their connections to the past largely through the lens and vocabulary of kinship (especially in the form of grandmothers). Taken collectively, they demonstrate the varying amounts of disruption in intergenerational knowledge transmission caused by the violence of colonization. In addition, they emphasize the importance of Two-Spirit kinship-making and mutual care and compassion for upcoming and future generations of Two-Spirit people. While all four Anishinaabe Two-Spirit writers discuss the importance of intergenerational knowledge transmission and the effects of trauma from colonial violence on kin relationships, the younger writers in particular emphasize the fluidity of 2spirit kinship and its ability to encompass those outside our birth families.

I argue that each of these writers make a unique contribution to our understandings of how Anishinaabe Two-Spirit people perceive and enact trans*temporal kinship. In laFavor's novel, the main character's grandmother and other elder women are portrayed as figures of wisdom and authority. They offer the main character a link to the past, which includes acceptance of gender and sexual diversity as well as the tools needed to improve the struggles of Indigenous life on the reservation and in the city. Representing colonization in the form of Christianization and other forces of assimilation as the origin of the oppression of Two-Spirit people, laFavor shows how grandmothers

can be links to older ways that hold solutions for Two-Spirit people as well as their entire community. For laFavor, trans*temporal kinship involves strengthening those bonds and learning from our elders to remedy the violence and disconnection that plagues Indigenous communities.

Ma-Nee Chacaby, who was born in the same decade as laFavor, also strongly emphasizes the role that her grandmother played as a conduit of knowledge from the past regarding gender and sexuality as well as other traditional practices. She describes how her grandmother, born in the 19th century, was one of the only figures in her life who supported her fully in an atmosphere of sexual violence and alcohol abuse, and furthermore she relates how returning to her grandmother's teachings later in life became a major part of her healing process. However, Chacaby also makes clear that her grandmother alone was not able to fully mitigate the impacts of homophobia and violence that affected their family, and for the first part of her adult life Chacaby struggled with her sexuality, with substance use, and with abusive relationships. Later in life, however, she finds meaning in helping others the way people like her grandmother had helped her: by sponsoring people through Alcoholics Anonymous, and especially by fostering young Indigenous people who had no place to go. Chacaby's story suggests that although there may be many blocks to accessing ancestral knowledge, a single individual like a grandmother or a Two-Spirit mentor can make an enormous difference in someone's life. The importance of taking responsibility for passing on knowledge and mentoring young Two-Spirit people is a theme of trans*temporal kinship that is greatly elaborated on in the work of the two younger writers whose work I examine.

These two younger writers also focus more intently on some of the ways that colonization may disrupt relations between generations. In their poem, “this woman, nokum,” jaye simpson depicts a vastly different kind of relationship to their grandmother compared to laFavor or Chacaby. Deeply impacted by Christian beliefs, the grandmother in the poem rejects her Two-Spirit grandchildren, which simpson portrays as a form of rupture of kinship ties. Yet at the same time, simpson still acknowledges that their grandmother holds the connections to ancestral knowledge—she simply has chosen to “cut down the family tree” as simpson writes. In the face of this family violence, simpson’s short story “The Ark of the Turtle’s Back” provides another angle from which to consider Two-Spirit kinship: the chosen families created by Two-Spirit people across generations *with other Two-Spirit people*. Depicting a family in which older Two-Spirit people are raising Two-Spirit children who may not have had other family to care for them, simpson’s story offers hope for Two-Spirit futures even in dark times.

Jas M. Morgan’s memoir *nîtisânak* also raises complexities around the status of the grandmother figure as keeper of traditional knowledge. They describe how their grandmothers have been affected by colonial violence so as to make them “unreliable sources” of family history, yet Morgan defends them as victims of the ultimate gaslighting (which is Canadian society) and asserts that the kinship relations they have eked out in the face of this remain essential for defining who Morgan is as a Two-Spirit person. Towards the end of the memoir, Morgan too turns towards the question of how to pass on better conditions to the next generations, both in terms of biological kin and chosen Two-Spirit family. If ancestral knowledges are unavailable through the usual channels, Morgan’s instructions to Two-Spirit youth show that it is possible for them to

create new forms of relationality that will serve Two-Spirit people better. The disruption of direct transmission of Two-Spirit knowledge necessitates the development of trans*temporal forms of kinship. These future-oriented trans*temporal kin relations may not be perfect, but they are critical for supporting the continued survival of Two-Spirit people.

Inseparable: Collaborative Two-Spirit Anishinaabe Creative Expression

In the previous three chapters, I have examined language, history, and literature to consider the ways Two-Spirit Anishinaabeg have formed kinship ties across time and space with other “folks like us.” In this chapter, I look at several works of art by Two-Spirit Anishinaabe creators which came together during the process of making a zine. Just as Two-Spirit Anishinaabe writers demonstrate trans*temporal kinship in their literature, these artists show their relationships with folks like us in visual and tactile forms. It is important to take into account these visual and tactile spheres as they often say a great deal about how Two-Spirit artists are conceiving of kinship, gender, sexuality, and Indigeneity without the use of words at all. Whether working in media with historical resonances for Anishinaabeg such as pottery or making regalia, or in media that have been fraught for Indigenous people such as photography and comics, these artists use visual and tactile forms of expression to convey the things that they view as inseparable in their lives: queerness and Indigeneity, kin relations, human and other-than-human beings, and even the past, present, and future. This chapter closely examines these artistic contributions to the zine while also providing a narrative of how the creation of the zine itself is an enactment of trans*temporal kinship rooted in the relationships built during the process of gathering submissions.

When I started planning this chapter, I originally intended to interview three particular Two-Spirit elders who are also first language speakers of Anishinaabemowin. If the first chapter set the stage with linguistic analysis, the second chapter provided historical background, and the third chapter drew on the words of contemporary writers, then this chapter, I thought, would delve into the life experiences of Two-Spirit

Anishinaabe people from the twentieth century to present. Furthermore, I wanted to interview first speakers of Anishinaabemowin *in the language*, partly inspired by my previous plan for my dissertation, which was to collect stories in our language. While a few Two-Spirit elders have created memoirs and autobiographies in recent years, all have been published in English, and I thought that this would be an incredible contribution to our community in terms of linguistic, historical and cultural knowledge.

Cracks almost immediately began to appear in this plan. After some thinking and discussion with mentors, I decided that my language skills, though much improved since starting Ojibwe classes at the university, were not good enough to complete interviews with first speakers. Once that was off the table, my mentors and advisors pushed me to question why I was prioritizing language speakers over other elders, who may—and do—hold other knowledge of Two-Spirit Anishinaabe history even if they do not speak the language. As I continued my work and my dissertation became more focused on kinship and intergenerational transfer, beyond simply memory of history, I began to wonder as well why I was simply focusing on elders to the exclusion of younger people. With the metaphorical playing field suddenly much larger, I was not sure how to proceed.

Then early in 2020, the pandemic arrived in the United States. Interviewing people, especially elders, suddenly became significantly more of a challenge. While it might be theoretically possible to conduct interviews remotely, technology could be difficult to manage. More importantly, essential Anishinaabe protocol became nearly impossible. There is no way to digitally offer someone tobacco (though as I write in spring of 2021, some have begun to find ways to adjust this practice). At the same time as these limitations presented themselves, I also began to question whether interviews were

ethically what I wanted to do at all. When I asked a mentor what the typical process for compensating interviewees was in academic oral history, I learned that usually the answer is “the satisfaction of being able to share their story.” In other words, it was not apparently typical to remunerate interviewees. This clashed significantly with Anishinaabe practices as I have been taught, in which stories and knowledge sharing require gifts of tobacco, cloth, goods, and preferably money. While this may seem odd to some, the understanding I have learned is that in earlier times, people would provide knowledge sharers with gifts that substantially help them survive, such as clothing or food. Today, what helps our knowledge keepers survive is money. Honorariums, therefore, are in some ways a kind of new tradition, or tradition enacted in a way altered to fit the world as it exists today.

In addition to the difficulty of mixing interview protocol with Anishinaabe knowledge sharing protocol, I was also troubled by the question of what benefit an interview would give to the interviewees beyond the satisfaction of sharing their story. Why on earth, I thought, would anyone agree to share deeply personal information with me for free just so that I could put it in a dissertation that would be read by other academics, if anyone at all? It felt deeply out of step with the ethics of reciprocity that I hold dear. To be clear, I do not believe that interviews are inherently unethical; they can certainly be done in a good way if context-appropriate measures are taken (such as following Indigenous protocols). For myself and my project, however, I felt that they were not what I wanted to move forward with at this time.

As I considered what *would* feel ethically in line with my values while also helping me to complete this dissertation, I reflected on certain ideas that I had floated

around near the beginning of my PhD studies. In 2016, when I began, there were exactly three anthologies of Two-Spirit literature in existence: the 1988 collection *Living the Spirit*, the 2011 volume *Sovereign Erotics*, and finally, the brand new collection of Two-Spirit science fiction, *Love Beyond Body, Space and Time*. At the time I was also closely following the creation of the first ever anthology of fiction written by transgender women of color, edited by Ellyn Peña and Jamie Berrout, which was self-published on gumroad.com in March of 2016. In particular, I was inspired by the editors' decision to simply create this opportunity on their own, even though they did not have the support of a formal publisher or any institution. They felt it needed to exist in the world, and so they fundraised the money to pay contributors and editors, and created this groundbreaking volume of literature. I began to imagine the possibility of creating a similar volume of literature by Two-Spirit writers.

In the spring of my first year of graduate school, a friend told me about a conference happening near Minneapolis called the Native American Literature Symposium. It was about a week before the conference, so I was too late to present anything, but I decided to show up and check it out. In addition to just being a fantastic conference, it also led me to meet for the first time a Two-Spirit Ktunaxa graduate student, who would later take on the name Smokii Sumac. It turned out that I was friends with Smokii's ceremony father, Shaawano Chad Uran, and after I expressed my interest in creating a volume of Two-Spirit literature to him, Shaawano suggested I talk to Smokii about co-editing an anthology.¹ Although we had several meetings and phone calls

¹ Shaawano Chad Uran, "From Internalized Oppression to Internalized Sovereignty," *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 17, no. 1 (2005): 42-61.

talking about what such an anthology might look like—and even found senior scholars who were willing to support us—various events in both of our lives led to us setting aside the project.

So as I thought about what would be a way to be in conversation with Anishinaabe Two-Spirit people in the middle of a pandemic in an ethical way, I returned to the idea of an anthology. In searching for a form of collecting and displaying Two-Spirit Anishinaabe people’s voices that would match the goals and values I held, I eventually came to the format of the zine. The history of the zine has been well-documented as emerging first from the punk scene as early as the 1970s but becoming especially prominent in the 1990s when it was most commonly associated with Riot Grrrl feminism. Though stylistically varied, they are often associated with a DIY ethic and aesthetic (classically depicted with “typewriter” fonts and cut-and-paste images and text). Zines may be created by a single author, or they may be a collaboration; often the authorship is downplayed in favor of anonymity that allows the content to shine. Although some writers have claimed zine culture was or is predominantly white and middle-class, there is a vibrant scene of queer and trans zine-makers as well as zines by people of color—and of course, queer and trans people of color.² Scholars such as Adela C. Licona have argued that zines made collaboratively by women of color constitute a “third space” that allows “action-oriented” knowledges to flourish. She writes that the zines she examines

² Stephen Duncombe, *Notes from Underground: Zines and the Politics of Alternative Culture* (Microcosm Publishing, 1997), 12.

explicitly propagate grassroots literacies meant to effect change through the circulation of information and the production of new practices, perspectives, and knowledges. They are sites where traditional knowledges circulate and sometimes collide with newer knowledges to produce innovative and informed practices. They are action-oriented, feminist and sometimes queer-identified; they are conscious of race, racialization, sex, sexualization, gender, and class. In them readers witness acted-upon knowledge informed by critical and coalitional consciousness.³

This is the legacy of zinemaking that I wanted to draw upon in gathering the creatively shared stories of my queer, trans, and Two-Spirit Anishinaabe kin.

The argument that zines can be sites for “traditional knowledge” to collide with “newer knowledges” which thus create action is particularly relevant for the zine I was co-creating. As a graduate student ensconced in the world of academia, it was impossible for me to ignore the ways my academic positioning might impact the zine. Although I my interest in creating the zine extended far beyond the simple need to have something to write about in my dissertation, it is undeniable that I am indeed writing about it here, in my dissertation, that I will tangibly gain in terms of prestige and career advancement from creating and writing about the zine, and that the money I used to pay contributors comes from my research funds. In addition, several of the contributors to the zine are also graduate students; others are students at universities, tribal colleges, or art schools, and some have no background in higher education. The knowledges that emerge from our experiences as Two-Spirit Anishinaabeg, then, interact with academic knowledges in uneven and sometimes unpredictable ways. Within academia, some scholars have long

³ Adela C. Licona, *Zines in Third Space: Radical Cooperation and Borderlands Rhetoric* (State University of New York Press, 2013), 2.

recognized the problems with the closed-off, gatekept nature of academic knowledge represented perhaps best by the expensive journal subscriptions required to access most academic articles. While some university presses and other publishers have started to address this with open-access publishing, others have taken to zines as an alternative. In a recent article, Amelia Merhar argues that “Academic zines are a refreshing way to share knowledge broadly, and are particularly well-suited for community-based projects, research that tells a narrative, or explaining something that people could apply to their lives.”⁴ While I would not precisely characterize the zine we created as an “academic zine,” the idea of sharing knowledge and working on community-based projects resonates with my goals for the zine.

There are also specific models that have recently emerged among Indigenous people that I view as inspirations for the type of work I hope the zine will do. While I have not found much research documenting the history of Indigenous zines, I was introduced to them in the 2010s by which time they existed in abundance. One of my early publications was in the zine series *Queer Indigenous Girl* edited by Akimel Otham/Hopi/Diné artist Se’mana Thompson which collected work by queer Indigenous people and other queer and trans people of color. Thompson created the zine with virtually no institutional assistance by reaching out to people they knew for contributions. Other zines have been put together by collectives—I was published in a Two-Spirit issue by Red Rising Magazine, a Winnipeg-based Indigenous education collective, while the Mamawi Project, a Métis collective of which I am a founding member, published a zine

⁴ Amelia Merhar, “Too Long; Didn’t Read: The Case for Academic Zines,” *Northern Review* 49 (2020), 191-194.

on the Métis tradition of visiting relatives which used grant money to pay contributors a competitive honorarium.

Through my exposure to these various zines and publishing practices, I eventually came up with criteria for my own zine's creation. First, I wanted to pay all contributors fairly for their work. Second, I wanted the zine to be publicly released so that contributors would be able to essentially "collect a line on their CV/resume" and receive credit for their work. Third, I wanted to include writers and artists who, while sharing the identities of queer/trans/Two-Spirit and Anishinaabe, also represented the incredible variation within our communities. Finally, I wanted to conduct this entire project with the intention of learning about how Two-Spirit Anishinaabe artists think about time, history, memory, and kinship in the context of being Two-Spirit Anishinaabeg. As is typical for both dissertations and art projects, my plans did not play out precisely as expected. I was able to find funds to pay the contributors \$200 USD or approximately \$250 CAD by using my \$3,000 research funds, allowing me to include about 10-15 artists. In the end, only nine artists were able to submit final pieces. Due to delays in receiving submissions (understandable, given the pandemic) the zine itself is still in the final stages of graphic design before being released, despite my hopes that it would be available before the completion of my dissertation.

Ultimately, there are two parts to the argument I am making in this chapter. The first is told *through* the contents of the zine itself, an explication of how these queer, trans, and Two-Spirit Anishinaabe artists and writers explore time, gender, sexuality, and kinship in their work. The second part is based on the fact that the creation of this zine is in fact a continuation of the work that I have been describing throughout this dissertation.

In other words, the interpersonal labor I engaged in to bring about the zine is itself a form of trans*temporal kinship work in service of creating something that reflects our Two-Spirit Anishinaabe relationships to the past, present, and future. While I am reticent to make too grand of a claim, in some ways this was always the direction this dissertation was headed: to put into practice what it was describing.

Before we dive into examining some of the works of art included in the zine, I will provide a basic overview of who the contributors are as well as the progression of the argument I make based on some of their pieces. The following individuals will be included in the zine: Sâkihitowin Awâsis (Métis/Anishinaabe), Awanigiizhik Bruce (Turtle Mountain Ojibwe and Michif), Elijah Forbes (Little Traverse Bay Band of Ottawa Indians), Fritz Keahna Warrior (Meskwaki/White Earth Ojibwe), Jas M. Morgan (Métis-Saulteaux-Nehiyaw), Shawna Redsky (Anishinaabe-Irish), jaye simpson (Sapotaweyak Oji-Cree), Shanese Steele (Black/Nbiising Anishinaabekwe) and Ryan Young (Lac du Flambeau). I met most of these people through various other networks of queer Indigenous kinship in the past ten years, though a few I only contacted directly for the first time to inquire if they would like to contribute to the zine. Throughout this chapter, because of this kinship, I refer to the artists by their first names—not intending disrespect, but as Neo Sinxolo Musangi and Keguro Macharia write, out of recognition for the relationships we have.⁵

In this chapter, I specifically examine the pieces contributed by Ryan Young, Awanigiizhik Bruce, Shawna Redskye, Elijah Forbes, and Fritz Keahna in more detail to

⁵ Neo Sinxolo Musangi. "Homing with My Mother/How Women in My Family Married Women," *Meridians* 17, no. 2 (2018), 404.

argue that queer, trans, and Two-Spirit Anishinaabe artists articulate their world as characterized by inseparability—the inseparability of queerness from Indigeneity; the inseparability of past, present, and future; and the inseparability of self and kin (whether human or other-than-human) across all of time and space. Whether they are working in the medium of photography, pottery, digital drawings, regalia-making, or writing, these creators, in all their diverse experiences, express trans*temporal kinship in its most expansive form. Although any of the contributors' works could be analyzed to show these themes, I have chosen these five to look at closely here for several reasons. First, their work showcases the breadth of styles and media that characterize the zine. In addition, looking at their works in this order shows the various elaborations on trans*temporal kinship that are present in each individual's submission. Ryan Young provides us with the critical foundation in asserting the inseparability of queerness and Indigeneity. The story and images of the regalia created by Awanigiizhik Bruce show how kinship provides meaning to changing traditions in a Two-Spirit context. Shawna Redskye's raw clay vessel and the words that accompany it remind us that kin goes far beyond the human. The comic "People Like Us" by Elijah Forbes extends Anishinaabe Two-Spirit experiences into the past and future, and finally, Fritz Keahna's mixed media contribution challenges even the separation of past, present, and future kin by asserting them as eternally in the present with us. Taken together, the artistic contributions of these creators reveals the extent to which trans*temporal kinship is central to Two-Spirit Anishinaabe life.

Ryan Young: The Inseparability of queerness//indigeneity

Ryan Young is a celebrated Two-Spirit Ojibwe photographer and multimedia artist from the Lac du Flambeau reservation in Wisconsin. Perhaps most well-known for their creation of the Two-Spirit blanket design for the Native-owned business Eighth Generation, I first became familiar with Ryan's work during the heyday of what was known as Native Tumblr. For several years in the early 2000s, the microblogging site of Tumblr was home to a large Native community who shared text posts, videos, photography, artwork, and quotes with one another. One blog in particular attracted my attention for the stunning images that asserted the artist's Two-Spirit, queer Indigenous identity. After following the blog for many years, I eventually connected with its creator, Ryan Young, on Facebook. By that time, I had entered the world of Native art myself and we had a number of friends in common. When I started planning the zine, I knew I wanted to reach out to them to see if they would be willing to contribute any of their iconic photographs.

Ultimately, Ryan ended up sharing three images for the zine, along with a written response to some questions I asked about their experiences with learning about what it means to be Two-Spirit. Here I will analyze two of their photographs alongside portions of the written response. To my delight, one of the images Ryan submitted was the first of their work that I had seen on Tumblr so long ago, a photograph titled “My Gender is



Figure 3 Ryan Young, "My gender is Indigenous"

Indigenous.”⁶ The black-and-white image features a long-haired individual in a T-shirt and jeans staring at the camera with a neutral expression. On top of their body and the background, the repeating words “My gender is Indigenous” are projected across the entire image, with a portion of the words in the upper area of the image covered by the subject’s shadow. Because of their neutral clothing and long hair (which for Indigenous people can be read as masculine, feminine, or neutral), and the lighting and presence of the overlaid words, the viewer’s attempts to gender the individual in the photograph may be initially stymied. Any attempt to look more closely to try to discern gendered characteristics, however, must confront the overwhelming presence of the phrase “My gender is Indigenous.”

In fact, this phrase provides the answer to the gender-curious gaze. As a statement, the phrase can be read in at least two ways: first, it could be stating that the speaker’s gender, which is unstated, falls into the category of Indigenous. For example, “my gender, which is male/female/Two-Spirit/winkte/nádleeh/etc., is an Indigenous gender.” In this reading, the speaker’s gender is recast as within the bounds of Indigeneity. It may be a statement that their gender is *only* or *uniquely* Indigenous, that it is not a gender that can even be applied to non-Indigenous people (for example, Two-Spirit or winkte or nádleeh, which are Indigenous, Lakota, and Navajo-specific identities, respectively). Alternatively, it may be a statement that the speaker’s gender is made Indigenous by dint of their own Indigeneity, even if non-Indigenous people may also identify as the same gender (for example, male or female or nonbinary, which are

⁶ Ryan Young, “My Gender is Indigenous,” photograph in the author’s possession.

identities that are shared by people from many different racial groups). In either of these cases, this reading suggests that Indigeneity impacts individual experiences of gender in a deep and profound manner.

In their interview, Ryan describes how learning about the long history of Two-Spirit people was a lifechanging experience for them and their understanding of their queer Indigenous identity. They state, “There’s definitely a disconnection due to colonialism, but getting a chance to learn even just a little bit of history between Two Spirit people in Anishinaabe culture creates a strong connection for me. For someone who has had little to no representation of queer Indigenous/Two Spirit people growing up, I always thought those identities were separate.” The piece “My Gender is Indigenous” is a strong rebuttal to the idea that queer/trans gender is separate from Indigeneity.



Figure 4 "The Creator is Two-Spirit"

The piece, “The Creator is Two-Spirit” takes the inseparability of gender and sexuality from Indigeneity to another level through its assertion that the Creator, a central spiritual figure for many Indigenous people, is Two-Spirit. In this black-and-white photograph, we see two long-haired figures from the shoulders up. Unlike in “My Gender is Indigenous,” no specific clothing is visible, giving the image a sense of unplaceability in time. The figure on the left, who has the words “THE CREATOR” written in white on their cheek, looks directly at the camera, while the figure on the right looks at the first individual, bearing the words “IS TWO SPIRIT” on their own cheek. Like “My Gender is Indigenous,” this piece places words upon individual bodies.⁷

We might read the relationship between the two people in this image as the Creator themselves looking at the camera, perhaps challenging those who might deny their Two-Spiritness, while the person on the right looks up at the Creator with a certain amount of awe in their eyes. We might consider this in relation to Ryan’s words about how they personally began their journey learning about Two-Spirit history and identity:

In the articles I would read, I began learning about Two Spirit identity and even how the word Two Spirit was translated from the Ojibwe language at the Gay and Lesbian Gathering in Manitoba in 1990. It wasn’t much, but even just knowing those words and meanings existed in our language strengthened a bond that I did not even know existed between those identities. For someone who experienced a lot of hypermasculinity and homophobic behaviors in cultural spaces, it gave me a refreshed perspective on my right to exist in those spaces.⁸

⁷ Ryan Young, “The Creator is Two-Spirit,” photograph in the author’s possession.

⁸ Ryan Young, interview with the author.

Once again, Ryan emphasizes the “bond” that “existed between those identities” of queer and Indigenous. Much of their response to the interview questions focuses on their experiences of rejection and denial of ceremony, history, and community in what they call “cultural spaces” due to being Two-Spirit. Asserting that the Creator is Two-Spirit, then, flips the script on those homophobic and transphobic Indigenous gatekeepers who deny the presence of Two-Spirit people in their own communities, while also providing affirmation for Two-Spirit people themselves.

One of the most striking elements of these two photographs is that they feature presumably Two-Spirit Indigenous models who are *not* wearing regalia. If you search the words “Two-Spirit People” in Google Images, virtually every image is either of historical figures or of present-day individuals wearing regalia. Images of Two-Spirit people in regalia certainly do important work by showing that queer and trans people exist in “cultural spaces” as Ryan asserts, and we will examine the regalia of a Two-Spirit artist in the next section. The overwhelming preponderance of images of Two-Spirit people as either historical or culturally-marked, however, may also reinforce the idea of Two-Spirit people as being only of the past or as being an “exotic” identity.

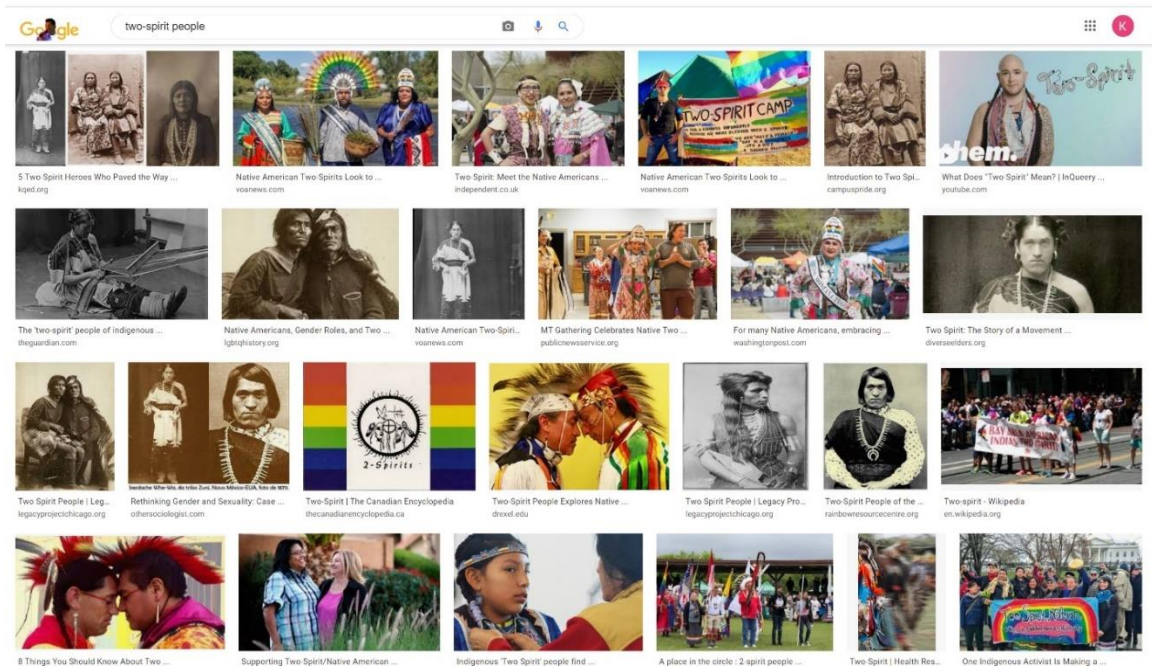


Figure 5 Top Google Image search for "Two-Spirit People," April 20, 2021.

Although Ryan has also taken pictures of Two-Spirit people in regalia (their third image in the zine shows trans Ojibwe/Oneida artist Ty Defoe in the midst of hoop dancing in regalia), the two images I have analyzed here offer slightly different angles on Two-Spiritness. Like the historical photographs of people labeled “Two-Spirit,” Ryan’s images are taken black and white. In the case of “The Creator is Two Spirit,” along with the lack of identifying clothing, this gives the piece a sense of timelessness, allowing the viewer to perceive the Two-Spiritness of the Creator and of queer and trans Indigenous people across time. On the other hand, “My Gender is Indigenous” features a model wearing a T-shirt and jeans with no recognizably “culturally Indigenous” accessories. The presence of clothing that could be current everyday wear asks the viewer to consider that Two-Spirit people’s gender is still Indigenous even when they are not wearing regalia or participating in something explicitly “cultural.”

Awanigiizhik Bruce: The inseparability of kin, tradition, and change

The next work I will examine is the Two-Spirit regalia and accompanying writing by Awanigiizhik Bruce, a multimedia artist from the Turtle Mountain reservation in North Dakota. I was introduced to Awanigiizhik by a friend and collaborator on numerous language revitalization projects, who excitedly told me of another Ojibwe-Michif person who made art and used they/them pronouns like me. My friend told me, also, of the amazing Two-Spirit regalia Awanigiizhik had made recently with the help of an elder who they know as Kookum Frances, and when I asked Awanigiizhik if they wanted to contribute to the zine, they immediately answered that they'd like to include images and writing about the regalia and the event they made it for. The event was the Two-Spirit Healing Stories gathering run by the Native Justice Coalition in Grand Rapids, Michigan in fall of 2018. Awanigiizhik was invited by friends to go and share their story, and decided to create this regalia after seeing the artwork of another Two-Spirit Anishinaabe person, Neebinaukzhik Southall. Inspired by their artwork and historical images of what Awanigiizhik describes as "our Anishinaabek grandmothers' fashion with their strap dresses," Awanigiizhik approached Kookum Frances, a mentor who has helped them in their journey as a Two-Spirit Anishinaabe, to design a modern Two-Spirit regalia.⁹

The strap dress is a type of dress that was commonly worn by Anishinaabe women and Two-Spirit people in the first half of the 1800s, and possibly earlier, held up

⁹ Awanigiizhik Bruce, "The Creation of the First Anishinaabe Two Spirit Strap Dress Inspired Shirt," manuscript in the author's possession.

by straps like those you can see in turquoise on Awanigiizhik's regalia, with detached sleeves. However, after the 1850s, these dresses largely went out of style, and even in powwow and ceremony were not seen in Anishinaabe communities again until the past thirty years.¹⁰ Since then, the strap dress has started to have a comeback among Anishinaabe women. Awanigiizhik, in participating in the movement of revitalizing this style of regalia, is therefore participating in a wider scale revival of Anishinaabe strap dresses.

¹⁰ Cory Ann Wilmott and Siobhan Marks, "Collaborating to Revive the Anishinaabe Strap Dress," Native American Art Studies Association Conference, Minneapolis, MN, October 4th, 2019.



Figure 6 Awanigiizhik, right, wearing their regalia

Yet Awanigiizhik has not simply recreated this style of dress, but made it Two-Spirit and adapted it to present-day conditions. Their adaptations include making a strap tunic rather than a dress, and making ribbon jeans in place of the more common ribbon skirt. The tunic is made from a dark blue floral fabric, resonating with both historical preferences for dark colors in strap dresses as well as the common practice today of using floral prints in regalia. The sleeves, which are detached and worn with a strap across the chest holding them up, are made of plain blue fabric with three colors of ribbons applied to the cuffs. The ribbon jeans have matching colors applied to the bottom of the jeans as well. Indigenous ribbonwork and ribbon skirts themselves were actually 19th century adaptations of Indigenous women to new materials—namely, satin ribbons—which they



Figure 7 A close-up shot of Awanigiizhik in their regalia

used to create old and new designs, and continue to do so today.¹¹ Awanigiizhik further meshes these new-old styles by applying ribbon designs to denim jeans. The decision to create ribbon jeans rather than a skirt or even fully handsewn pair of ribbon pants is one way that Awanigiizhik’s regalia reflects both adaptation to the present as well as Two-Spirit identity—jeans are of course a powerful symbol of twentieth and twenty-first century “modernity,” especially in the United States, and while they have been adopted by people of all genders, they were initially also a symbol of a certain rugged masculinity. Resewn with satin ribbons in Indigenous styles, however, Awanigiizhik repurposes both denim jeans and the ribbon skirt, melding them ingeniously into the newly invented ribbon jeans design. Taken as a whole, the physical design of the regalia represents a powerful representation of how Two-Spirit Anishinaabe artists apply and alter traditions from the past in creative ways to make a present and future in which they as Two-Spirit people are affirmed in their gender and sexuality.

Critically, Awanigiizhik’s story shows us that the way they do so is not just the result of individual genius but a process brought about through their relations, with the purpose of strengthening existing kinship ties and creating new ones. Awanigiizhik created their regalia with the essential help from Kookum Frances, and they state that during the process, quote, “We smudged, prayed, sang, danced to music, and laughed when we had to seam-rip parts and redo the stitchings. We discussed the identities and prayers and inclusions of our 2S relatives within our ceremonies and the return of gradual local community acceptance.” These actions and experiences in the process of creating

¹¹ Wilmott and Marks, “Collaborating to Revive the Anishinaabe Strap Dress.”

the Two-Spirit regalia are part of the broader process of reconnecting generations in our communities and healing some of the divides and exclusions that have isolated Two-Spirit people in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Awanigiizhik writes, quote, “I was the energy, prayers, and happy tears that went into the literal creation of it,” literally identifying themselves as being made up of this collaborative action. The Two-Spirit regalia is not simply a strap-dress tunic and ribbon jeans in their physical forms, but an incarnation of the process of creation and the power of intergenerational kinship.

Awanigiizhik concludes by describing the event itself and how affirmed they felt by wearing the regalia and by the connections they made with other Two-Spirit people. Their reflection finishes, “The evening had ended with a sacred ceremony. New friendships were made. Many of the people left feeling heard, respected, and hearts full with teachings, good memories, and new strengths.” Past, present, and future kin come together in this moment, as the collision of past and present styles brought together by Kookum Frances and Awanigiizhik is invoked in service of new trans*temporal kinships formed. Awanigiizhik’s regalia and the story of its creation provides the clearest example among the zine contributors of how Two-Spirit art is not merely created out of individual interest and aesthetics—though that is not intended to diminish the creative work Awanigiizhik engaged in to create the regalia. The story of Awanigiizhik’s regalia, though, shows how it was created for a specific purpose: establishing and/or maintaining kinship ties with other Two-Spirit people in the present, while honoring the work of Anishinaabe women and Two-Spirit people of the past.

Shawna Redsky: The Inseparability of Human and Other-Than-Human Kin

Shawna Redskye is an Anishinaabe and Irish artist and language teacher-in-training from northern Ontario. I met Shawna when she and a mutual friend, Sâkihitowin Awâsis (who also contributed to the zine), came to visit me in Minneapolis. Like Awanigiizhik, Shawna is a multiply-talented artist, and for the zine she decided to create a ceramic vessel, which she then photographed and sent to me along with the accompanying words.



Figure 8 raw clay vessel by Shawna Redskye

raw clay vessel.

Here are the words to go with it:

two spirit songs singing far beyond static & shame

*cycles of creation & reduction; beautiful truths remembered | etched into our
ancient vessels
reminders from aki, nibi, anangoog; our kin forever breathing life into bloodlines
/ storylines*

Shawna's contribution, also like Awanigiizhik's regalia, represents a revitalization of Anishinaabe traditions that have not been practiced in most of our communities for a long time. When anthropologists such as Frances Densmore conducted research among Anishinaabe people in the early 20th centuries, they noted that European-made iron pots were ubiquitous, but that the oldest Anishinaabeg "always" mentioned that their grandparents said the "old time" Anishinaabeg had once made ceramic pots.¹² Shawna's revisiting of this practice, then, is an example of nonlinear tradition, not necessarily passed down from the direct generations before her, but gone to sleep for some time only to be reawakened by this Two-Spirit artist. Perhaps this is what she refers to when she writes, "cycles of creation & reduction; beautiful truths remembered | etched into our ancient vessels." Time is cyclical in her words, as it is in Anishinaabe thought, made of creation and not destruction but *reduction*, which gestures towards the inability of colonization to fully erase our ways. Instead, we remember them and etch them into these "ancient vessels."

This is certainly trans*temporal, as I use the term, but Shawna also emphasizes kin in the most expansive way both in her words and in the vessel's design itself. She

¹² Frances Densmore, *Chippewa Customs* (Washington D.C.: United States Government, 1929), 41.

speaks of “reminders from aki, nibi, anangoog; our kin”—aki meaning earth, nibi meaning water, and anangoog being stars. Kin, then, for Anishinaabeg as for most Indigenous peoples, extends beyond the human, and this is as true for Two-Spirit people as for any other Anishinaabe person. The designs on the vessel depict two antlered animals, perhaps pictured in a protective stance. Below them is an ambiguous figure which looks perhaps like two children sitting back to back, but whose design seems purposefully to evade any clear interpretation. The beings, who may in fact be one singular being represented in two halves, hold plants or branches in their hands reaching upward. Small circles suggesting bubbles of water also speckle the spaces in between the figures. Overall, the design emphasizes animals, plants, and water as not just our kin, but—through the ambiguously transforming seated beings—also the fact that we as humans are not different from them in a significant way. Finally, I also want to note the significance of the fact that this vessel is made from clay. While I do not know where Shawna sourced the clay from, it too is a substance that comes directly from the earth, and in Shawna’s own words is therefore a relative to us as well. Shawna’s piece suggests that perhaps, even if Two-Spirit people are prevented from accessing knowledge about ourselves by “static and shame” in our communities, we may still be able to turn to our oldest relatives, our other-than-human relatives, to find ways to reconnect ourselves. In doing so, she reminds us that trans*temporal kinship expands far beyond the expanse of human relations.

Elijah Forbes: The Inseparability of Past, Present, and Future

Elijah Forbes is a comics creator from the Little Traverse Bay Band of Ottawa Indians and the founder of a Two-Spirit group in Petoskey, Michigan, who I met through the network of Michigan-origin Two-Spirit Anishinaabe Twitter users who have jokingly titled ourselves “the Mich-Nish.” I have had many conversations with him about the realities of being Two-Spirit in Anishinaabe communities today, and he was one of the first people I invited to contribute to the zine. He ultimately sent in this two-page comic called “People Like Us,” a title which gave me goosebumps when I saw it, because I had not yet told him that the name of my project was “Folks Like Us.”¹³ The similarities of the title indicate to me that there is something in this verbal formation that resonates with Two-Spirit people beyond myself. Perhaps it is because—despite the creation of the word Two-Spirit a few decades ago—we often struggle with finding ways to name ourselves and our ancestors given the huge range of identities and experiences that exist among us. That enormous range is very real, but “people like us” and “folks like us” remind us all that there is something very real, if sometimes elusive or even intangible, that connects us. In recognition of that elusive something, that trans*temporal kinship that exists between us, we grasp at words and phrases that might encompass us even in their own vagueness.

¹³ Elijah Forbes, “People Like Us,” comic in the author’s possession.



Figure 9 Elijah Forbes' comic, "People Like Us," page 1



Figure 10 Elijah Forbes, "People Like Us," page 2

Eli's piece addresses head on the violence that many Two-Spirit people face in our communities today. In particular, his comic is concerned with the attempt by the

violence of non-Two-Spirit people trying to suppress the past. He parallels two kinds of past-suppression: first, the house that he cannot visit containing pictures of his childhood, and second, the suppression of stories about ancestors who do not fit within heterosexual boundaries. In making this parallel, he collapses the space between history and memory and makes clear that violence against our ancestors and our selves, in all our past/present/future forms, are connected. In addition, this first page of the comic also deals with the painful fact that kinship ties do not always result in Two-Spirit people being treated right. Through the images of the childhood home and the stories of aunts and uncles, he suggests that the perpetrators of this violence may in fact be family members themselves, which is unfortunately a common struggle Two-Spirit people face. The image of the church graveyard implies that there are deep reasons for why Anishinaabe family members may want to bury Two-Spirit pasts, gesturing to the legacies of conversion to Christianity in Native communities, but while he recognizes this, Eli does not allow it to excuse his kin for their violent actions.

Instead, in the second page of the comic, he turns to a different set of ancestors. He writes that “my ancestors protect me,” while depicting the head of a deer. Like Shawna’s antlered figures, this image acknowledges the importance of our kin beyond humankind, and as I said of Shawna’s piece, this imagery of nonhuman ancestors offers us an alternative way to reach back to our history if the stories of literal human Two-Spirit ancestors are blocked to us. In the next panel, we see a person with a braid and a blanket emblazoned with the transgender symbol next to the assertion, “and I refuse to die politely.” The braided, blanketed individual calls back to images of Indigenous people referred to by white Indian Agents as “blanket Indians,” the ones who refused

assimilation—who refused to die politely. Eli’s evocation of this common image in a Two-Spirit context draws on broader Indigenous traditions of resistance for a specifically Two-Spirit purpose. Even within our communities, this panel seems to indicate, we are the ones who hold onto these traditions. This strong assertion is followed by the final panel featuring a scene of an older person and a younger person together in a canoe. As the younger person looks up to the older person, the text states, “Two-Spirit people will never stop existing.”

These two panels move us from the past into the future with the suggestion that the strong transgender Two-Spirit person refusing to die politely may themselves go on to become someone who can teach future generations of Two-Spirit people. Eli thus contributes to the concept of trans*temporal kinship the powerful idea that Two-Spirit people will always exist regardless of whether our biological human kin want us to or not. Like Shawna, he draws on other-than-human ancestors as guides, and like Awanigiizhik he depicts the ways that intergenerational transfer continues to be important for Two-Spirit people. All three also emphasize the trans**temporal* part of trans*temporal kinship in their depiction of nonlinear time, the ways that the past, present, and future come together for Two-Spirit people.

Fritz Keahna: The Inseparability of Past, Present, and Future Kin

Fritz Keahna is a White Earth Ojibwe and Meskwaki writer and artist who I came to know in a somewhat roundabout way. Fritz’s father is Shaawano Chad Uran, who I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter as a friend I had met online and then through

conferences. For some years I knew Shaawano better than I knew Fritz, who I was mostly familiar with only distantly as an actor and poet. Then in 2018, I applied to an online poetry workshop for Indigenous writers, and was placed in a group which coincidentally was composed entirely of trans/nonbinary Indigenous people—including Fritz. We got to know each other as people and as poets, and the three participants (Fritz, tanner menard, and myself) stayed in touch afterward through social media. When I asked if he would be interested in contributing to the zine, I was nervous considering I had heard him talk about the weirdness of being the child of an academic and someone whose creative works are discussed in academia while they themselves are not based in the university system. Fritz was one of the first people who responded to my inquiries, and he told me that he would like to contribute to the zine, but that they had a request: that this be part of a continuing conversation between us, not a one-off exchange. This request reoriented my thinking around what this entire process of zine-making meant, and what the point of this chapter really was. I began to see it as a form of trans*temporal kinship work in its own right, a way of bringing Two-Spirit Anishinaabe people together and strengthening our relationships in the process of engaging with our *aanikoobijiganag*, our ancestors and future descendants.

Fritz's contribution to the zine beautifully illustrates these themes of trans*temporal kinship and the ways that past, present, and future kin are inseparable from our own selves. His submission consists of six pages of visual and written work, including blackout poetry, illustrated digital drawings, annotated text message records,

and three pages of poetry and prose.¹⁴ I will focus here on the page of illustration and the poetry and prose writing, which most clearly show how Fritz engages with kinship and temporality. The page of illustrated digital drawings is, on first glance, bursting with color and images, and it is not immediately clear where one should begin to read the story. There are no lines or boxes to separate “panels” as in most comic strips; instead, the page is arranged in a clockwise circle around a self-portrait of Fritz. There are a number of references to time present: “10 months later,” “me, age 20,” and “October 31, 2019,” but unless you know certain details about Fritz’s life, they do not quite cohere into a clear timeline for the viewer. The smaller images around the central self-portrait include more depictions of Fritz himself, but also numerous other people in Fritz’s lives, all of whom are labeled. Some of the labeled figures’ identities are obvious: “award-winning poet Smokii Sumac” and “literally fkn Eugene Brave Rock & Irene Bedard,” while others, especially on the left side of the image near the end of the clockwise cycle, are labeled only by first name and presumably reference people important in Fritz’s life: Mars, Gabby, Milo, Nic. While the overall inclusion of so many people gestures towards the significance of relationships with others for Fritz, the last section of the image also uses a visual motif of a string or vine wrapped around the limbs of Mars, Gabby, Milo, and Nic, which finally lead to their endpoint lifting up a figure labeled “NIIN” (“me” or “I” in Anishinaabemowin). The words “Breaking the cycle” are placed next to this image with an arrow pointing to Fritz being lifted up, suggesting that it is through the efforts of these people that Fritz is able to break the cycle that has been depicted in his troubled

¹⁴ Fritz Keahna Warrior, document in the author’s possession.

relationship with the unnamed person shown through texts and phone calls throughout the rest of the clockwise images.



Figure 11 The second page of Fritz's submission

The page immediately following the page of images is a written piece titled “all the men i love are the men i am.” The piece consists of a list of the names of men in Fritz’s life followed by snippets of memories or dreams or even imagined scenarios that relate to them. Between the title and the snippets, the piece gives the impression that these are moments and men who have shaped Fritz in some way. For instance, the line “ernie, my brother, the white man who taught me a way out could also be a way in” explicitly gives one of the examples of the lessons Fritz has learned from these men. (It also jostles the reader’s expectations of kinship by asserting “the white man” as “my brother.”) Yet if we truly take the title at face value, we must consider that Fritz is not just stating that he is *shaped* by these men, but that he is actually *made up of* the men that he loves. This idea will be elaborated on in the final part of Fritz’s submission, but I would like to take one more moment to consider the line that references “smokii,” who is undoubtedly the same Smokii Sumac referenced in the previous page. Fritz writes, “smokii in the future, grey hair and strong hands lifting my daughter from the lake as she cackles, so much like her mother (which one?) so much like my mom”. Here Fritz moves from memories of the past to what might be called a memory of the future, imagining an intergenerational future with himself, his future daughter, his mother, and a grey-haired future Smokii. The men that make up Fritz, this suggests, include not just past experiences but also dreams and potential futures.

At the beginning of the piece that makes up the last two pages of his contribution, Fritz writes, “i didn’t set out to be a woman. you’ve seen my pain. now hear my joy.” Turning from the pain that he has shared in the first parts of their submission, Fritz now speaks of what he has been taught by a number of other individuals, at least some of

whom are marked as women. He learns that “touch could come without terror,” “the sacred breath,” how to kiss, how to fight, and how to cry. Near the end he writes that “averie taught me love,” which leads to a list of wisdom about love which concludes with several statements about being human. Fritz writes, “you are always enough. you are a human being, which means you are flawed. you are a human being, which means you are pitiful. you are a human being, which means because of this, your propensity for prayer can open mountains. you are a human being, which means your love can wake giants.” Some of these assertions especially resonate with Anishinaabe ideas about humanity: in particular, the reference to humans being “pitiful” is common in Anishinaabe discourse, with the word for “to bless someone” being the same as “to pity someone.” To be pitiful is to be in a state of needing others—needing kin, both human and other-than-human. Yet Fritz also asserts the power of being human through the power of prayer and love. If we as individual humans are pitiful beings in need of kinship, then we also all have the ability to bestow blessings on our fellow human kin through our own love.

The final lines of this piece, and of Fritz’s entire submission are as follows, in their original formatting:

infinity is everything now. the past and future are no different than the present.
your ancestors are here. your descendants are here. every spirit, every iteration
this is what it means to be anishinaabe.
this is what it means to be

The first line here is an incredible definition of what trans*temporal kinship means. Fritz collapses past, present, and future into infinity and the now, asserting that our ancestors and descendants (our aanikoobijiganag) are all here with us. As Fritz stated in his title

“all the men i love are the men i am,” we are literally made up of these trans*temporal aanikoobijiganag kin. Going further, Fritz ends by telling us that this state is “what it means to be anishinaabe,” and further, “this is what it means to be.” Although the word Anishinaabe is usually translated as meaning specifically “Indian” or “of the group that identifies as Anishinaabe,” when contrasted with other kinds of beings, it also (and perhaps originally) means simply, human. In ending his piece this way, Fritz centers Anishinaabe understandings of what it means to be human as the default. His conceptualization of trans*temporal kinship, in these last lines, becomes generously broad, recognizing that all beings on this planet are potential relatives (recall “ernie, my brother, the white man”) while also never relinquishing the specific experiences of being a queer/trans/Two-Spirit Anishinaabe person.

Conclusion

As I write in April of 2021, the project of creating the zine is not yet complete. I am still waiting for a few pieces to be sent in, and I have yet to finish the process of laying out the design of the zine. There is also the matter of how it will be distributed—while it is relatively easy to create a document that can be shared online, creating paper copies is more difficult, and the overall task of publicizing the zine is also something I am still figuring out. Despite this incompleteness, I am proud of what I and the other contributors have achieved so far. As the first publication to feature exclusively Two-Spirit Anishinaabe creators, it will be groundbreaking for reasons of identity alone. Yet I am more excited about the range of backgrounds, experiences, styles and media, and

ideas that are expressed in the pieces I have gathered, and even more so, I am grateful for the relationships I have built with the other contributors. In taking time to think together about the relationship between the Two-Spirit Anishinaabe past, present, and future, we have created a document that reflects our own trans*temporal kinships.

While each contributor has their own focus and way of expressing their ideas, I argue here that collectively their work demonstrates that Two-Spirit Anishinaabe people draw on Anishinaabe concepts of kinship like *aanikoobijigan* (ancestors/descendants), which transcend linear space and time, in ways that show queerness, transness, and Two-Spiritness as inseparable from those concepts. Ryan Young's photographs make the case that queerness and Indigeneity are inseparable from one another for Two-Spirit people. Awanigiizhik Bruce's story of making regalia with Kookum Frances for the Two-Spirit gathering brings together past, present, and future artforms in service of kinship. Shawna Redskye's clay vessel asks us to consider the inseparability of humans from our other-than-human kin across space and time. In Elijah Forbes' comic, he gestures towards the power that other-than-human kin have to help Two-Spirit people connect the past and future. Finally, the works by Fritz Keahna Warrior powerfully show that we as Anishinaabeg, as human beings, and as Two-Spirit people are inseparably made up of our kin from infinite time and space in all directions.

When I began planning this chapter, I did not set out to enact trans*temporal kinship myself. Yet that is what we, the creators of this zine, have done together in making this thing which illustrates our kinship ties across space and time. Critically, at every step of the way I was guided by the words, thoughts, and suggestions of my Two-Spirit Anishinaabe kin. Someday, future generations of Two-Spirit Anishinaabe people

will be able to look at this zine and see our creation as a marking point, a place where we as Two-Spirit kin stopped to rest and look out at the landscape we inhabit. We will be their aanikoobijiganag, and they will be ours. We look back and we look forward, and everywhere we find folks like us.

Conclusion: Mii Iw, Mii Sa Ekoozid, Miigwech

At the beginning of this dissertation, I started by introducing myself in an Anishinaabe way, a format that has been well-treaded and normalized among first speakers and learners alike. There exists much less formality around concluding in Anishinaabe contexts. Most of the time, speakers simply conclude by saying “mii iw”—“that’s it.” That is all I have to say, is what is inferred. People may say mii iw after a speech, after telling a personal or sacred story, after giving advice; anything that needs to be concluded. Yet there is also another way of ending stories, especially aadizookaanag or sacred stories: “mii sa ekoozid.” This means, roughly translated, “that is the whole length of it.” It perhaps emphasizes that you’ve told the entire story, leaving nothing out.

In ending this dissertation, I wish to say “mii iw,” and not “mii sa ekoozid.” The work I have done here is not exhaustive. There are many more avenues through which the trans*temporal kinship of Two-Spirit people could be explored. I do not wish to close off this story, because there is much work left to be done within our communities. Even for me as an individual, completing this dissertation simply means that the process of figuring out how to share what I have learned must now begin.

The progression of this dissertation began with language, a grounding space that helps us understand the Anishinaabe worldview on which the rest of my analysis is based. It moved through the past, showing us how these ancestors who survived a great deal of violence still found ways to pursue joy with their gender and their kin. Following the paths they left, Anishinaabe Two-Spirit writers and artists articulate their own relationships to kin past, present, and future. Through their words, art, and actions, we come to understand that these things are all connected and even collapsible. As Fritz

Keahna Warrior writes, our ancestors and descendants are all here with us in this moment, and this is what it means to be Anishinaabe, what it means to simply *be*.

At the beginning of this process I asked the question, how have Two-Spirit Anishinaabeg remembered the history of folks like us in spite of centuries of colonization? Ultimately the answer is complex, in that there are many interbraided yet distinct ways that we have found ways to do this. We might also say the answer is *indaanikoobijiganinaanig*: our ancestors and descendants. To the word *aanikoobijigan*, I add prefixes and suffixes that mean “ours.” Those folks like us, spread across time and space. Put simply, the way we have remembered our history is through these *trans*temporal* kinship ties. We seek out ancestors, present relations, and future descendants and we explore our inheritances and responsibilities with them. We remind each other of our ties to one another.

“*Mii iw*” and “*mii sa ekoozid*” are the most common ways to end a story in Anishinaabemowin. Neither of them feel like quite enough here. So I will end with another word, one that I use often, one that explicitly places me in relation to the many people who I am indebted to for helping me come to this point. To Ozaawindib, Wzawshek, and Ralph Kerwineo. To Carole laFavor, Ma-Nee Chacaby, jaye simpson, and Jas M. Morgan. To Sâkihitowin Awâsis Awanigiizhik Bruce, Elijah Forbes, Fritz Keahna Warrior, Shawna Redsky, jaye simpson, Shanese Steele and Ryan Young. To all the speakers of Anishinaabemowin I have learned from. To all the ancestors and descendants whose names I will never know, my *aanikoobijiganag*. To you I say,

miigwech

miigwech

miigwech

miigwech

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Appendix: Glossary of Ojibwe, Odawa, and Potawatomi Words

Aanikoobijigan (plural: **aanikoobijiganag**) – an Ojibwe word that means both great-grandparent and great-grandchildren, or ancestors and descendants

Agokwe/a-go-kwa (plural: **agokweg**) – a 19th century Ojibwe word for a woman who was designated male at birth

Anishinaabe (plural: **Anishinaabeg**) – an Indigenous person affiliated with the Ojibwe, Odawa, Potawatomi, Saulteaux, or Mississauga peoples

Anishinaabewaki – Anishinaabe territory (Ojibwe)

Mii iw – concluding phrase meaning “that is it” (Ojibwe, Odawa)

Mii sa ekoozid – concluding phrase meaning “that is the whole length of it” (Ojibwe, Odawa)

Miigwech – thank you (Ojibwe, Odawa)

Mnedokwé (plural: **mnedokwék**) – Potawatomi word for Two-Spirit people (literally “spirit woman”)

Mnenak – Potawatomi word for Milwaukee

Neshnabé Ké – Anishinaabe territory (Potawatomi)

Nishnaabewki – Anishinaabe territory (Odawa)

Niiji – an Ojibwe and Odawa term of affection used between men

Nookomis – grandmother (Ojibwe)

Noozhishenh – grandchild (Ojibwe)

Ogimaa – Ojibwe male civil leader

Ogimaakwe – Ojibwe female civil leader

Ogichidaakwe – Ojibwe female warrior

Gaa-Miskwaawaakokaag – Ojibwe name for Cass Lake

Gaa-Zagaskwaajimekaag – Ojibwe name for Leech Lake