

# Historical and Intergenerational Trauma and the Impact on the Two-Spirit/LGBTQ Community

Lenny Hayes, MA, LADC  
Tate Topa Consulting, LLC

TWO SPIRIT AND LGBT  
NATIVE AMERICANS



# What is Historical and Intergenerational Trauma?

Intergenerational Trauma is identified as “Responses to trauma manifested psychologically as unresolved grief across generations.” (Dr. Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart)

# Historical Trauma is....

Historical Trauma is held personally, yet may be transmitted over and over from one generation to the next; consequently, even family members who had not directly experienced the traumatic events may be significantly impacted by it because even these descendants carry that trauma within themselves and respond to their world in ways that would be typical of one who had experienced the trauma personally (Braveheart 2003, Whitbeck, Adams, Hoyt, and Chen 2004)

# Types of Historical Trauma:

- Extermination/Genocide
- Removal, Relocation and Containment
- Forced Assimilation
- Boarding School Era
- Sterilization of American Indian Women
- No rights to practice religious ceremonies
- Acculturation

# Effects of Historical Trauma:

- Psychological
- Social
- Economical
- Intellectual
- Political
- Physical
- Spiritual

# What does it mean to be Two-Spirited?

- "Two-Spirited" or "Two-Spirit" usually indicates a Native person who feels their body simultaneously manifests both a masculine and a feminine spirit, or a different balance of masculine and feminine characteristics than usually seen in masculine men and feminine women.
- Most Indigenous communities have specific terms in their own languages for the gender-variant members of their communities and the social and spiritual roles these individuals fulfill — including Lakota: *wiŋkte*, Navajo: *nádleehé*, Mohave: *hwame*

# Two-Spirit also means

- Male Two-Spirits were considered to be a "third gender," and female Two-Spirits were considered to be a "fourth gender" (similar to the way in which both male and female homosexuals are considered to be gay, while females are also considered to be lesbian).
- It is very important to remember that genders vary from tribe to tribe but are similar.
- It is said that some tribes have up to 15 genders to identify Two-Spirit individuals.
- It is important to remember that "Two-Spirit" is a Native American concept.



## History tells us that....

- Many years ago when American Indians lived off the land, Two-Spirited individuals were considered holy and were respected.
- Two-Spirit individuals had roles in their communities.

# What does it mean to be Two-Spirit?

- “Being given the gift of being Two-Spirited means that the individual has the ability to see the world from two perspectives at the same time.”

## It is said about being Two-Spirited:

- “That it is a special gift from the Creator; The Creator created Two-Spirit people to bring balance between man and woman.”

# Two-Spirit Community Roles

- Healers or medicine persons
- Parents of orphaned children
- Conveyors of oral traditions and songs (Yuki)
- Foretellers of the future (Winnebago, Oglala Lakota)
- Name givers of children or adults (Oglala Lakota, Tohono O'odham)
- Nurses during war expeditions
- Potters (Zuni, Navajo, Tohono O'odham)
- Matchmakers (Cheyenne, Omaha, Oglala Lakota)
- Makers of feather regalia for dances (Maidu)
- Special role players in the Sun Dance (Crow, Hidatsa, Oglala Lakota)

# What does it mean to be Two-Spirited?

- Alex Wilson (1996), a Two-Spirit woman activist and educator, wrote that the term Two-Spirit “proclaims a sexuality deeply rooted in our own cultures. Two-Spirit identity affirms the interrelatedness of all aspects of identity, including sexuality, gender, culture, community, and spirituality.”

# What happened to honor and respect?

- Out of the love and respect for Two-Spirit people, many chiefs were reluctant to defend their Two-Spirit people and they were sent underground to protect them.
- It has been said that Europeans and missionaries were murdering our Two-Spirit people.

# The murder of Two-Spirit people



# We'wha; a Zuni Two-Spirit; 1849-1886





# Quechan Female Two-Spirit



# Pine Leaf, Woman Warrior



# Issues That Impact Two-Spirit/LGBTQ Individuals and Community

- Loss of identity
- Loss of culture
- Being outside of our tribal circles/communities
- The coming out process
- Drug/alcohol abuse
- Serious Mental Health Issues
- Depression
- Suicide
- Discrimination
- HIV Infection
- Alienation from family and friends
- Bullying
- Rejection
- Sex addiction
- Gambling
- Hate Crimes
- Unemployment
- Domestic violence
- Sexual assaults/unreported

# Two-Spirit vs. Heterosexual

- Childhood physical abuse 40.0%
- Childhood sexual abuse 40.0%
- Lifetime sexual assault 48.0%
- Lifetime physical abuse by partner 29.2%
- Lifetime physical assault by other acquaintance 28.0%
- Lifetime experience of being robbed, mugged, physically attacked 60.0%

- Childhood physical abuse 20.0%
- Childhood sexual abuse 25.8%
- Lifetime sexual assault 35.1%
- Lifetime physical abuse by partner 29.1%
- Lifetime physical assault by other acquaintance 23.8%
- Lifetime experience of being robbed, mugged, physically attacked 48.3%

(Jane M. Simoni, PhD, Karina L. Walters, PhD, Kimberly F. Balsam, PhD, and Seth B. Meyers, PhD).

# The Effects of Hate Crimes

- All violent crimes are reprehensible. But the damage done by hate crimes cannot be measured solely in terms of physical injury or dollars and cents. Hate crimes rend the fabric of our society and fragment communities because they target a whole group and not just the individual victim. Hate crimes are committed to cause fear to a whole community. *A violent hate crime is intended to “send a message” that an individual and “their kind” will not be tolerated, many times leaving the victim and others in their group feeling isolated, vulnerable and unprotected.*

# Digital Recordings of Two-Spirit individuals who were in the foster care/adoptee system

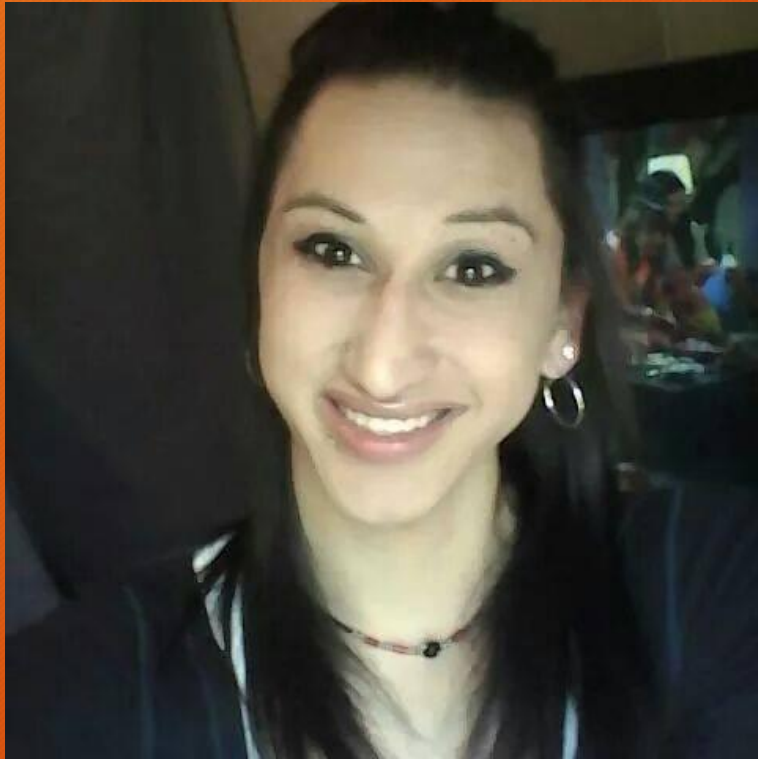
In Memory of our Two-Spirit Relatives who  
passed on due to violence

Jarrood Marks 06/17/1969-05/06/2013





Dallas Farmer 06/13/1992-09/08/2014



Vernon K Renville “Wambdi Mani O Yaka” (Sees the Eagle Walking) 09/06/1983-11/22/2014



- As Little Thunder, a Lakota Two-spirit woman activist said “The pain of being rejected by one’s own people can be the most devastating.”

# Resources

- Mn Two-Spirit Society
- Two-Spirit People, Edited by Sue-Ellen Jacobs, Wesley Thomas, and Sabine Long
- Becoming Two-Spirit; Gay Identity and Social Acceptance in Indian Country, Brian Joseph Gilley
- The Spirit and the Flesh; Sexual Diversity in American Indian Culture, Walter L. Williams,
- The Zuni Man-Woman, Will Roscoe
- Changing Ones; Third and Fourth Genders in Native North America, Will Roscoe

# Resources

- Transgender Voices; Beyond Women and Men, Lori B. Girshick
- The Transgender Child; A Handbook for Families and Professionals, Stephanie Brill and Rachel Pepper
- The LGBT Casebook, Edited by Petros Levounis, MD, Jack Drescher, MD, and Mary E. Barber, MD