## Understanding and Reclaiming our Two-Spirit Relatives

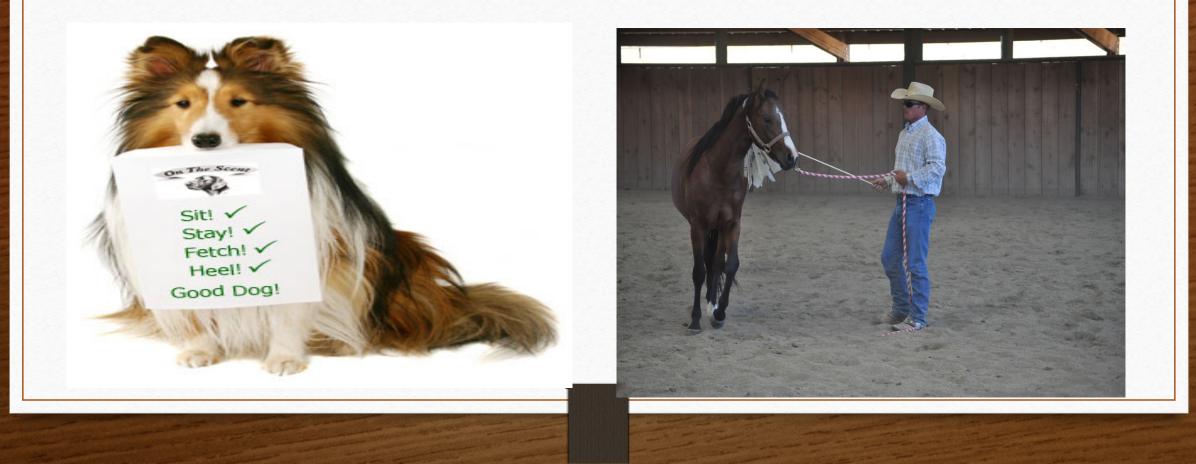
Sandy White Hawk Lenny Hayes, MA, LADC

### **ICWA Education Days**

- ICWA Ed Day is a cultural learning experience
- The curriculum is designed to stimulate the mind, body, and spirit.
- Ed Day topics: Historical trauma; Customary Adoption, ICWA 101, etc.



# You train dogs and horses.....



## You educate people or rather..... people educate themselves





#### We had a conversation and followed their lead

- Invited Two-Spirit individuals to our meeting
- Met after hours to make sure everyone was included.
- Asked them about language
- What did they want participants to know?
- Plan for safety

- Told them what I thought barriers might be
- Asked specific questions
- Developed vocabulary list
- Developed resource list
- Thought of initiative that would stimulate "out of box" thinking.

#### Indian Child Welfare Education Day and

#### Minnesota Two-Spirit Society Presents

From a Place of Honor to a Place of Shame Return to Honor Understanding the Native American GLBTQ Community



Indian Child Welfare Education Day Co-Sponsored by WMCL Indian Law Center

#### The Minnesota Two-Spirit Society Presents

#### Dynamic Families and Strengthening Children: A Two Spirit Perspective

Opening Remarks: Representative Susan Allen

Presenters: Antony Stately, PhD Honor Project – Critical Issues and LBGT Two-Spirit Populations

#### **Diverse Parent Voices Panel**

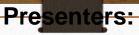
Lisa DeCory, Claudia Nicolosi, Antony Stately, Conan Comes Flying, Angie Thornhill

> Nick Metcalf, MSW Systemic Barriers for Two-Spirit Families

Lenny Hayes, MA Strength and Resiliency – Growing up Two-Spirited

#### Indian Child Welfare Education Day Co-Sponsored by WMCL Indian Law Center and The Minnesota Two-Spirit Society

#### Psychosocial Trauma: Boarding School to Bullying Two Spirit Resiliency and Coping, Best Practices



#### Florentine Blue Thunder Traditional Cultural Perspective of Two Spirit People

Antony Stately, PhD Historical Trauma Overview of Two Spirit People

Comanche Fairbanks

**Bully Transformation** 

Panel Discussion Reva D'Nova, Nathan Taylor, Conan Comes Flying Clarity, Truth, and Transformation: Two Spirit panel discussion on Healthy Safe Response to Bullying

> Nick Metcalf, MSW Lateral Violence: Hurt People, HURT People

Lenny Hayes, MA Clinical Implication of Bullying on Two Spirit People

# Welcome Back to the Circle





#### TWO SPIRIT AND LGBT NATIVE AMERICANS



# **Beginning of Time**

- 1492-1990 –Berdache: Two-spirit people (also two spirit or twospirit) is a modern <u>umbrella term</u> used by some <u>indigenous North Americans</u> for <u>Gender variant</u> individuals in their communities. Non-Native anthropologists have historically used the term berdaches /bərˈdæʃɨz/ for individuals who fulfill one of many mixed gender roles in First Nations and <u>Native American tribes</u>, but this term has more recently fallen out of favour.
- Before the late twentieth century, the term berdache was widely used by anthropologists as a generic term to indicate feminine Native men; however, this term has become considered increasingly outdated and even offensive.

# Where did the Two-Spirit term emerge from?

Use of the *berdache* term has widely been replaced by the self-chosen *two-spirit*, which itself gained widespread popularity in 1990 during the third annual intertribal Native American/First Nations gay and lesbian conference in <u>Winnipeg</u>. *Two-spirit* is a term chosen to distinctly express Native/First Nations <u>gender identity</u> and <u>gender variance</u>, in addition to replacing the otherwise imposed and non-Native terms of *berdache* and *gay*.

### 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 <u>Lakota</u>: winkte, <u>Navajo</u>: nádleehé, <u>Mohave</u>: 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.

## **Traditional Two-Spirit Dress**

- Their dress is usually a mixture of traditionally male and traditionally female articles, or they may dress as a man one day, and a woman on another.
- According to Sabine Lang many tribes have distinct gender and social roles.

# **Two-Spirit Community Roles**

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

# **Two-Spirit Community Roles**

- Peace makers for the tribe
- Joined war parties
- Boys' and girls' puberty ceremonies
- Husbands
- Wives

Will Roscoe writes that male and female Two-spirits have been

"documented in over 130 tribes, in every region of North America,

among every type of native culture."

## 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?

- Since European colonization, the Two-Spirit community has been denied and alienated from their Native identity and community.
- As a result, Two-Spirit individuals were often looked down upon as being perverted and were shamed.
- Results of Historical and Integenerational Trauma

# What happened to our Two-Spirit people?

- 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.

## Issues that impact the Two-Spirit Individual

- Loss of Identity
- Loss of Culture
- Drug and alcohol abuse
- Serious mental health issues related to all forms of trauma
- Depression
- Suicide
- Discrimination
- Sexual Assaults
- HIV infection

- Alienation from family and friends
- Sex addiction
- Gambling
- Hate crimes
- Shame
- Homophobia
- Racism
- The Coming Out Process
- Bullying
- Domestic Violence

## Digital Recordings of Two-Spirit Individuals involved in the foster/adoptee system

## Statistics of Two-Spirit vs. Hetrosexual

#### **Two-Spirit Individuals**

- 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%

#### **Hetrosexual Individuals**

- Childhood physical abuse 20%
- Childhood sexual abuse 25.8%
- Lifetime sexual assault 35.1%
- Lifetime physical abuse by partner 29.1%
- Lifetime physical assault by other acquaintances 23.8%
- Lifetime experiences 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)

## Risks for Our Two-Spirit/LGBTQ Youth

- LGBTQ youth are up to 4 times more likely to attempt suicide than hetrosexual peers
- Over 30% of all reported teen suicides each year are by LGBTQ youth
- 50% of all LGBTQ youth reported being rejected by their parents and community due to their sexual orientation.
- 26% of LGBTQ youth are forced to leave home because of conflicts over their sexual orientation

## Risks for Our Two-Spirit/LGBTQ Youth

- Nine out of 10 LGBTQ students (86.2%) experienced harassment at school
- Three-fifths (60.8%) felt unsafe at school because of their sexual orientation
- About one-third (32.7%) skipped a day of school in the past month of feeling unsafe (GLSEN, the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network, National School Climate Survey, 2009)

### Risks for Our Two-Spirit/LGBTQ Youth in Rural Areas

• Two-Spirit/LGBTQ youth in rural communities and those with lower adult educational attainment face particularly hostile school climates (JG Greytak, Diaz EM-Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 2009)

# What Can We Do?

- Educate on Bullying
- Zero tolerance for bullying
- If we don't have the answers, seek them out
- Laws protecting LGBTQ victims
- Encourage
- Choose not be silent

# What can Mental Health Professionals and others do?

- Understand the effects of homophobia and to remember that "Homophobia is a choice."
- Don't focus therapy on the client's sexual orientation unless the clients wants to
- Be culturally competent on Two-Spirit/LGBTQ issues
- Be aware of Two-Spirit/LGBTQ community resources
- Exhibit gay-affirming attitudes
- Understanding what it means to be oppressed
- Being more understanding of Two-Spirit/LGBTQ issues

# What can Mental Health Professionals and others do?

- Show compassion and empathy
- Being willing to find services for Two-Spirit/LGBTQ individuals if you are not able to provide proper services
- Understand the impact of Native American Historical and Intergeneratinal Trauma and how it impacts the Two-Spirit/LGBTQ Community
- Allow the individual to define the identity of themselves either as Two-Spirited or LGBTQ

# As an individual, ask yourself

- If someone were to come out to you at Two-Spirited/LGBTQ, what would your first thought be?
- How would you feel if your child came out to you as Two-Spirited/LGBTQ?
- How would you feel if your mother, father or sibling came out as Two-Spirited/LGBTQ?
- Have you ever stood up for a Two-Spirit/LGBTQ individual who was being harassed?

# As an individual, ask yourself

- Have you ever laughed at or made a joke at the expense of Two-Spirit/LGBTQ people?
- If you do not identify as Two-Spirited/LGBTQ, how would you feel if people thought you were Two-Spirited/LGBTQ?

 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."