# Naming and Claiming

## *Recovering Ojibwe and Plains Cree Two-Spirit Language*

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***Abstract*** This article analyzes archival and oral records of Ojibwe and Plains Cree words for Two-Spirit people to show the continuity between historical and modern Two-Spirits. In the face of appropriation of historical Two-Spirits by both cisgender and transgender non-Indigenous people, as well as scholarly insistence on a disconnect between historical and modern Two-Spirits, examining the linguistic history of specific communities reveals what the author, a Two-Spirit person themself, terms "trans*temporal kinship." Referring to the ability of Two-Spirit people to establish kin relations across time, with both ancestors and descendants, the application of trans*temporal kinship and other Indigenous concepts allows Two-Spirit people to circumvent the debate in transgender studies as to whether transgender people can and should claim historical figures as "transgender ancestors." The article argues that Two-Spirit reclamation of language for people "like us" is a vital element in redressing the violence and exclusion perpetrated against Two-Spirit people today.

***Keywords*** Two-Spirit, Ojibwe, Plains Cree, transgender history

The transgender native, the third gender, the berdache, the Two-Spirit—these figures, overlapping but not always identical, have become well-known images in both Indigenous and non-Indigenous queer and trans communities in the past thirty years. Both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people have laid claim to these figures as ancestors and queer/trans predecessors. Most of the researchers involved in "uncovering" or "rediscovering" these figures have been non-Indigenous, and many of them have had a universalist goal of shedding light on gender variance as a global phenomenon. Two-Spirit people, meanwhile, have criticized anthropologists and other scholars for this appropriation, as well as for their construction of a strict binary between "traditional/historical" and "modern" Two-Spirit people. Despite this criticism, however, Two-Spirit people have often been forced to rely on the research generated by white scholars simply to access any information about people like them from the past.

Like previous researchers and Two-Spirit laypeople, I too began my work out of a desire to find historical records of people "like me." Knowing that the

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term *Two-Spirit* has been said to come from the Ojibwe term *niizh manidoowag* (popularized in the 1990s), and already involved in Ojibwe, Michif, and Cree language revitalization in my ancestral communities, I began to search for linguistic records of language for Two-Spirit people. As a Two-Spirit and transgender person, this was not just an idle curiosity of mine but a vital necessity for my continued participation in Indigenous cultural spheres: What do I call myself in my languages when speaking to others? What history can I draw on to help my community members, especially elders who speak our languages, understand who I am? These questions face nearly every Two-Spirit person who is involved with linguistic and cultural revitalization, a movement that is sweeping Indigenous communities today.

Yet in addition to the process of recovering Two-Spirit history, Two-Spirit people must also deal with the legacy of non-Indigenous claims to our Two-Spirit predecessors by both white cisgender queer people as well as white transgender people. These claims not only appropriate Two-Spirit history but also minimize the trauma of settler colonialism and heteropatriarchy that affects Two-Spirit people. Likewise, we face abundant scholarship that claims complete disconnection between historical and modern Two-Spirit people, as well as scholarship chastising transgender people of all races for attempting to claim historical figures as transgender ancestors. I argue here that examining the linguistic history of Two-Spirit people reveals the falsity of the claimed disconnect between historical and modern Two-Spirits. I also argue that by rooting ourselves in Indigenous methodologies, Two-Spirit people are able to circumvent the debate within transgender studies as to whether it is possible and desirable to claim historical figures as transgender or Two-Spirit ancestors. Despite frequent rejections within recent queer theory of ancestral claims in general, the notion of trans*historicities encourages scholars to work with the tension between recognizing similarities and situating differences, rather than simply picking a side. For Indigenous people, engaging with this concept may be an especially fruitful way to challenge assertions of a radical disconnect between the Indigenous past and present without resorting to overly romanticized or atemporal ideas about the past. Though the skepticism of reclamation work in queer and trans studies may be warranted in service of avoiding such romantic and dehistoricized portrayals of history, it can also have the effect of delegitimizing Indigenous understandings of time and kinship. Trans*historicities, then, must be flexible enough to account for Indigenous (and particularly Two-Spirit) ways of knowing and being as equally valid methods of approaching the past.

To explore what one possibility of an Indigenous trans*historical approach might look like, I have developed the term *trans*temporal kinship* to refer to the ability of transgender and Two-Spirit Indigenous people to establish kin relations across time, with both ancestors and descendants. This trans*temporal kinship, determined not by non-Indigenous scholars but by the language usage of Indigenous people themselves, is deeply rooted in Ojibwe and Cree worldviews. The term *seven generations* is common in grassroots Indigenous communities today, used to refer to an ethics that requires us to think about our impacts and responsibilities in seven-generation increments. This is reflected in the meaning of the Ojibwe word *aanikoobijigan* and the Plains Cree word *âniskotâpân*, both of which refer to great-grandparents as well as great-grandchildren, with seven generations represented between the two. These two words also refer to ancestors more broadly. Using *seven generations* and *aanikoobijigan/âniskotâpân* as a framework, it is possible to use Indigenous systems of kinships to reconceptualize what it would mean to claim Two-Spirit people as ancestors. As a form of trans*historical thinking, using the concept of trans*temporal kinship is one way to reformulate notions of what it means to claim transgender ancestors and descendants. This article 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.

The form of heteropatriarchy that settler colonialism has generated in the Americas has devastated Two-Spirit people for centuries. From murder and massacre during the early periods of colonization, to abuse from church and government officials in boarding and residential schools, to the enormous rates of violence against Two-Spirits in today's world, the atrocities committed by agents of settler colonialism have long targeted Two-Spirit people because of their race, indigeneity, gender, and sexuality. Two-Spirit people inherit this intergenerational trauma as well as the abuse they face in their own lives. Despite this, however, they have continued to survive and assert unique identities and roles within their communities over a great period of time. I argue that by analyzing language used for Two-Spirit people, we can trace this survival.

This article is a survey of gender variance in Ojibwe and Plains Cree communities at the lexical level, that is, an overview of words that might refer to people today known as "transgender," "third gender," "gender variant," or "Two-Spirit." Throughout this article, I use the term *Two-Spirit* to refer to Indigenous people who fall outside the accepted boundaries of modern white or "Western" gender and sexuality, both past and present. When referring to modern Two-Spirit people, this includes those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer, as well as people who fit the first definition but do not identify with one of those terms. While the details of Two-Spirit identification are complex, I refer in modern-day contexts specifically to cisgender and transgender Two-Spirit people, while recognizing that these terms may not fully capture the intricacies of individual Two-Spirit people's understandings of their own gender and sexuality. I also reference the term *berdache*, a word referring to people anthropologists have theorized as a third gender in Indigenous communities, but which the Two-Spirit community has rejected because of its etymological origins as a word for a male sexual slave (Herdt 1997). I use this term only when indicating the views of nineteenth-century non-Indigenous recorders or of twentieth-century anthropologists, both of whom used the word to refer to Two-Spirit people.

The term *Two-Spirit*, which was formally adopted at the 1990 Native American/First Nations Gay and Lesbian Conference in Winnipeg, is frequently cited as being a translation of the Ojibwe phrase *niizh manitoag*, sometimes spelled *niizh manidoowag* (Anguksuar 1997). The latter is clearly inaccurate: although -*wag* is indeed a common plural ending in Ojibwe, the correct plural of *manidoo* is *manidoog*. Furthermore, *manidoog* generally refers to external spirits, rather than the spirit or soul of a person, for which the word is *ojichaagwan* (*Ojibwe People's Dictionary* 2017d, 2017e). The use of *manidoowag* suggests that someone who was only partially familiar with the language may have attempted to retranslate *Two-Spirit* into Ojibwe. Two-Spirit scholar Alexandria Wilson, on the other hand, remembers *Two-Spirit* being given to a Cree lesbian in a dream (2007). Further research may be necessary to determine the exact origins of *Two-Spirit*. Regardless, today the term is dear to many Indigenous people. In addition to being a word to refer to modern identities, *Two-Spirit* was also intended to be a replacement for the derogatory term *berdache*. Two-Spirit people attending the 1990 conference were acutely aware of anthropological work being done to "discover" historical "berdaches," and they were intent on talking back to scholars doing such work without considering or involving modern Two-Spirit people. In one of the key texts in the field of queer Indigenous studies—which has developed as another way for Two-Spirit people to talk back to scholarship about their lives and histories—the editors of the anthology *Queer Indigenous Studies* write, "As a critique of anthropological writing based in colonial and western notions of gender and sexuality, the category of Two-Spirit creates a distinct link between the histories of diversity and Indigenous GLBTQ2 people today" (Driskill et al. 2011: 11). I contend here that Indigenous language terminology for Two-Spirit people are the roots of the link between past and present as asserted by *Two-Spirit*, regardless of whether that term is of ancient or modern origin.

As the field of queer Indigenous studies has become more and more prominent in the past decade, several writers have invoked calls by Indigenous studies scholars such as Craig Womack and other Indigenous literary nationalists to investigate tribally specific histories and knowledges; the introduction to *Queer Indigenous Studies* itself spends significant space recalling this scholarly genealogy. Most notably, Qwo-Li Driskill has extensively written on the topic of Cherokee Two-Spirit people both past and present in *Asegi Stories*. This book is framed around the concept of *asegi*, which Driskill states translates as “strange” and is understood by some Cherokees to be similar to the English word *queer* (2016: 6). Driskill uses the notion of *asegi* to read various moments in Cherokee history through a queer lens, in the process demonstrating how language can be a framework for analyzing Indigenous pasts. Another excellent example of tribally specific work around Two-Spirit language is Saylesh Wesley’s article “Twin-Spirited Woman: Sts’iyóye Smestíyexw Slhá:li,” which recounts how Wesley’s relationship with her grandmother led to the coining of a new Stó:lō word for Two-Spirit woman, which her grandmother explained can be interpreted as “‘two-spirited woman,’ or ‘twin-soul woman,’ or ‘same spirit as a woman’” (2014: 343).

These groundbreaking works have guided me in choosing to examine tribally specific linguistic concepts as a way to shed light on Two-Spirit relationships with ancestral and descendant figures. I have chosen to examine Ojibwe and Plains Cree words alongside one another for several reasons. They are both part of the same language family, Algonquian, and have many linguistic similarities. In addition, Ojibwe and Cree people have a long history of connections and kinships with each other. Many bands on the Canadian prairies have both Plains Cree and Saulteaux (Plains Ojibwe) members, and many people are of mixed Cree and Ojibwe ancestry. The final reason for my choice to consider both is simply that both Cree and Ojibwe are my ancestral languages, and this project originated in my attempts to find words that have been used for Two-Spirit people in my own communities.

To accomplish this project, I examined 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 assisting the conversion of Indigenous people to Christianity and to white “civilized” ways of life more broadly. Captivity narratives were often used as a way 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 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 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.

Among the earliest written records of Ojibwe and Cree are nineteenth-century documents such as travel accounts and missionary dictionaries. While white travelers had written about the presence of "berdaches" in many Indigenous communities before this, the first appearance of a specific word for such people in Ojibwe occurs in John Tanner's 1830 captivity narrative. Tanner was an American living in Kentucky when at age nine he was captured by Ojibwe men and taken to live among the Ojibwe people in the Great Lakes and Red River regions, primarily in what is today Minnesota and Manitoba. He was sold to and adopted by an Odawa woman, Netnokwa, who thereafter raised him in the Ojibwe and Odawa cultures he was surrounded by. In 1827, he met Edwin James, who served as his amanuensis in writing his captivity narrative (Sayre 2017).

In the narrative, Tanner describes an encounter with a particular Ojibwe individual named Ozaawindib (Ozaw-wen-dib in his orthography). Ozaawindib, Tanner writes, "was one of those who make themselves women, and are called women by the Indians. There are several of this sort among most, if not all the Indian tribes. They are commonly called A-go-kwa, a word which is expressive of their condition" (1830: 105). This word, *a-go-kwa*, is the first record of an Ojibwe name for the type of person Tanner describes. The ending of the word, in modern spelling "kwe," is the ending signifying "woman," but the meaning of the rest of the word is still debated by linguists, Tanner's comment that it is "expressive of their condition" notwithstanding.

The story that Tanner tells about this *a-go-kwa* Ozaawindib is how she (the pronoun that Tanner uses) repeatedly sought his hand in marriage, which he found bothersome and even disturbing. The people around him, meanwhile, seemed to find this pursuit humorous and encouraged it. It is unclear what motivated Tanner to include this story in his narrative, and even more so, to what extent the reactions to these events can be ascribed to Ojibwe cultural norms, to his own mixed-culture background, or to an appeal to the sensibilities of his American audience. However, the ultimate effect of this story is to reinforce the image of Indigenous people as savages, who tolerate and even encourage such "disgusting" gender-variant behavior in the eyes of white Americans.

Several decades later, further northwest in Plains Cree territory, two missionaries published dictionaries of the Cree language. 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" (Watkins 1865: 195). 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, *ayekkwe, wok* (wok being the plural ending), meaning "mâle coupé, eviratus; v. g., ayekkwe-watim, cheval, ou chien coupé; ayekkwe-mustus, taureau coupé. Aussi, on appelle ainsi celui qui n'est ni mâle ni femelle, ou plutôt: qui utrumque sexum habent, Hermaphrodite" (1874: 326). 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, like the *a-go-kwa*, took on a womanly or womanlike role in their society. Yet dictionaries compiled by white missionaries do not record this meaning.

There are several possible reasons for this absence that we can speculate on, each of which has its own interesting implications. One possibility is that missionaries simply did not see "berdaches" 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 "berdache" figures among Indigenous people, especially plains groups—even Tanner, who would have interacted with Plains Cree groups in his travels in the Red River region, notes that "most" Indigenous groups had such figures. 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/ayekkwe* they saw to all be hermaphrodites, as they would not have been privy to the precise details of the bodies of every *ayākwāo/ayekkwe*. Alternatively, perhaps the missionaries fully understood the presence of "berdaches" 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 *ayekkwe* 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 primary source for the presence of Two-Spirit individuals among Plains Cree people, besides these dictionaries, is David Mandelbaum's ethnographic account, *The Plains Cree* (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 by 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 *piecuwiskwew*, 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" (167).

*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 (Morgensen 2011). 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" (1979: xv–xvi). 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" (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 entirely men). 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 (4). 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. Particularly among those who had learned English, 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 *piecuwiskwew* 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.

I move now from archival sources to oral tradition recorded in present-day texts, as well as oral tradition that I have received from elders myself. During an Ojibwe immersion session, I have heard Leech Lake elders use the term *ayekwe* for Two-Spirit people (pers. comm., February 25, 2017). While the elders did not give a specific definition of this term at the time, Charles J. Lippert, editor of the *Freelang Ojibwe* online dictionary, has speculated that this may be the correct spelling and pronunciation of John Tanner's *a-go-kwa*. It is notably similar in pronunciation to the Cree *ayākwāo/ayekkwe/a·yahkwew*. Unfortunately, beyond determining that the ending *kwe* likely derives from the word for woman, no one has yet come up with a clear definition for the first part of the word. Regardless, if it is the case that *ayekwe* is related to either *a-go-kwa* or *ayākwāo/ayekkwe/a·yahkwew*, the fact that elders born in the early twentieth century recall it in 2017 is a testament to an incredible survival of the word.

The word *ayākwāo/ayekkwe/a·yahkwew*, which from here I will spell in the standard modern Plains Cree orthography as *âyahkwêw*, 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 *âyahkwêw*, which speakers suggested meant "a man dressed/living/accepted as a woman," or possibly "a 'third' gender of sorts, applied to women and men" (Vowel 2012b). 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. In a comment on March 28, 2012, one person responded to a request for such words with a 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 *âyahkwêw* (Lin J. Oak, comment on Vowel 2012a). On a similar post on November 3, 2016, this term came up again, spelled as *hy kwew,* which another commenter deemed “offensive” and “from a different time” (Gerald M. Auger, comment on Hester 2016). Yet another person cited the phrase *âyahkwêwatim* as meaning a castrated dog, indicating that the meaning of castration that missionaries recorded in the 1800s has also survived (Mel Calaheson, comment on Hester 2016). Several users then chastised that individual, noting that *âyahkwêwatim* was an insult that should not be passed on (Gerald M. Auger, comment on Hester 2016). 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.

On her blog, Vowel (2012b) also recorded several other terms for Two-Spirit people that did not make it into written historical records. For “a man who dresses as a woman” and “a woman who dresses as a man,” she includes the phrases *napêw iskwêwisêhot* and *iskwêw ka napêwayat*, as well as the terms *napêhkân* and *iskwêhkân*, which she writes have the meaning of “literally ‘fake man[/woman],’ but without negative connotations.” These words are derived from the words *napêw* (man) and *iskwêw* (woman), plus the ending *-hkân*, which she states to mean “fake,” but it may also be translated as something along the lines of “another kind”; adding *-hkân* to the word for a traditional chief creates the word for a modern band chief, and the ending is also related to the endings used on the words for step-parents or step-siblings (Wolfart 1979: 82). The final word she includes is *înahpîkasoht*, “a woman dressed/living/accepted as a man” or possibly “someone who fights everyone to prove they are the toughest.” This is likely to be the northern or Métis Cree pronunciation of the word *ê-napêhkâsot* (northern and some Métis dialects replace *ê* with *î*), which combines the word *napêw*, meaning “man,” and the ending *-hkâso*, meaning “pretend, appear to be, act like,” and thus can be translated as “someone who acts like a man, appears to be a man, pretends to be a man.” The range of words that Vowel has collected from Cree speakers suggests that there was and is great variation in the words used for Two-Spirit people. It would take a more in-depth study to determine the precise reasons for these variations, but we can speculate on some possibilities. Regional or community differences are a strong possibility. There may also simply have been multiple words for different kinds of people—Two-Spirit people in the past, just like in the present, are not necessarily identical to one another. An *iskwêw ka napêwayat* may not be or have been the same as a *napêhkân* or an *înahpîkasoht*, even though all three might look similar to modern white or Western-cultured eyes.

The final phrase from oral tradition that I wish to discuss is *niizhin ojijaak*, literally meaning "two spirits." This phrase is found in Ojibwe-Cree Two-Spirit elder Ma-Nee Chacaby's autobiography, *A Two-Spirit Journey*. In the book, she recalls that her grandmother, who was born in the 1860s before white settlement of the prairies, told her, "Little girl, you have *niizhin ojijaak* (two spirits) living inside you" (Chacaby 2016: 64). Chacaby interprets this as referring to her sexual and romantic preference for other girls and women, which she largely ignored until later in her life. Interestingly, Chacaby notes that her grandmother was a Plains Cree woman who spoke to her in Cree while raising Chacaby. One might expect to find the phrase in Cree, rather than in Ojibwe as the book shows it. In fact, a discussion on August 21, 2014, on the "Nêhiyawêwin (Cree) Word/Phrase of the Day" Facebook group reveals mixed opinions on whether the concept of being "Two-Spirited" could be literally translated into Cree. Some argued that interpreting this concept literally was completely foreign to Plains Cree culture. However, one woman very vehemently claimed that her grandmother, born in 1870, had used the term *kâ-nîsâcahkôwêcik*, literally, "one who has two spirits," to refer to such people (Anne Crane, comment on Wayne T. Jackson 2014). Regardless of this debate, Ma-Nee Chacaby, who is fluent in Ojibwe as well as Cree, certainly uses the term *niizhin ojijaak* when speaking Ojibwe today (pers. comm., February 25, 2017).

While in the fields of queer and transgender studies debates have raged over the extent to which historical figures who might have been "like us" can be claimed as queer and transgender ancestors, within Indigenous circles both academic and nonacademic, this has largely been a nondebate. One effect of the emergence of Indigenous studies has been a request that researchers studying Indigenous histories recognize the continuities between past and present Indigenous communities—that the people they are writing about are somebody's ancestors. Though non-Indigenous scholars have sometimes written about historical figures in a way that implies a defined break between past "berdaches" and modern Two-Spirit people (through phrases like "the last 'true' winkte who fully functioned in a traditional Two-Spirit gender role are said to have lived in the 1930s" [Lang 1997: 108], for example), the reality is much more complex. Using Indigenous languages as a guide shows how words like *winkte* (a Lakota word for Two-Spirit people) and *âyahkwêw* have been continually applied to individuals both before and after the supposed "end of the berdache." This suggests that even though modern Two-Spirit people may not be identical to historical Two-Spirits, both Two-Spirit and non-Two-Spirit Indigenous people nonetheless recognize a continuity, a kinship, between the two.

At the same time, Two-Spirit people have not entirely escaped the question of *who* gets to claim *which* ancestors. Until recently, almost all scholars writing about historical Two-Spirits have referred to them in English with pronouns deemed to match their "biological sex," rather than with pronouns in accord with their actual roles in society. While it is difficult to decide which pronouns to use to describe any historical figure who did not leave behind precise instructions, the difficulties are heightened when considering individuals who often did not even speak English and may have had vastly different gender systems in their languages. Ojibwe and Cree, for instance, refer to male or female gender only in a few specific words referring to humans and animals, and forms of speech are mostly gender nonspecific, with the exception of some exclamations. It is notable, however, that early studies of Two-Spirit history were considered studies of "homosexuality" (Morgensen 2011: 56). Both scholars and Two-Spirit activists imagined the "berdache" as a form of sexual variation that happened to emerge as a gender variation within its cultural context.

In recent years, as transgender Indigenous people have become more visible and vocal, some have contested the way that historical Two-Spirits have been claimed exclusively by cisgender gay and lesbian people, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous. Anishinaabe/Métis author Gwendolywn Benaway writes in a recent essay that "the phrase 2 Spirit is almost always applied to gay or lesbian Indigenous writers." In a claim to ancestral connection to Two-Spirit ancestors, she states that "[trans women] are the invisible descendants of the 2 Spirit women I only know through historical photographs" (2017: 126). While Benaway is careful to note that she does not mean to say that cisgender queer Indigenous people cannot claim the term *Two-Spirit*, there is nonetheless a problem when transgender Two-Spirit people are made invisible. So long as modern transgender people are oppressed within Indigenous communities and forgotten in discussions of Two-Spirit inheritance, movements for the reclamation of Two-Spirit places of belonging in Indigenous communities will remain incomplete.

In the context of Indigenous language and cultural revitalization, recovering Two-Spirit history is crucial. It is not just an exercise in finding ancestral figures who were "like us," though that is itself a worthwhile cause. In communities where language loss has been significant—which is nearly every Indigenous community in the twenty-first century—looking to Two-Spirit history offers the possibility of finding words and roles for ourselves that make us legible within the context of our own cultures and shows the continuity of our presence within our communities. As linguistic and cultural revitalization becomes ever more influential among Indigenous people, it is essential that Two-Spirit people not be left behind. While in recent years the argument that queerness and transness are colonial inventions has declined in the face of increased awareness of historical Two-Spirits, without ways to talk about Two-Spirit people in our languages we may nonetheless end up being excluded from cultural revitalization. Ceremonial activities that divide participants into strict male and female categories based on their physical characteristics, for example, can be extremely difficult for Two-Spirit people to navigate, especially for those who identify as transgender. I have personally been forced to abstain from ceremony and other cultural events because of the insistence that all people assigned female at birth wear skirts and all who are assigned male wear pants, with no space left for those of us who fall through the cracks of such a division. While there are often deeply rooted cultural logics behind these gendered divisions, they still perpetuate a system that excludes many Two-Spirit people. On the other hand, in some cases Two-Spirit people, such as DeLesslin "Roo" George-Warren, a Catawba activist profiled by NBC News (Brammer 2017), have become very active in language and cultural revitalization for this exact reason: to create (or *re*-create) space for Two-Spirit people within their culture. Either way, Two-Spirit history is a critical part of any project of Indigenous revitalization and decolonization.

While the field of transgender studies has become critical of non-Indigenous claims to Two-Spirit historical figures as legitimators of modern non-Indigenous transgender identity, it continues to discuss historical Two-Spirits as separate from living ones. As this article has shown, linguistic analyses can help demonstrate that such a division is artificial, constructed by non-Indigenous scholars in ignorance of Indigenous realities. It would be foolish, of course, to ignore the shifts in Two-Spirit identities over time, particularly those due to the impacts of settler colonialism and settler heteropatriarchy on Two-Spirit and other Indigenous people, but recognizing the continuities between historical and modern Two-Spirit people does not require us to do so. Instead, it allows us to see kinship among Two-Spirits across time.

What I am suggesting in the concept of trans*temporal kinship may look similar to ideas developed within non-Indigenous queer and transgender studies. For example, Carolyn Dinshaw writes that in her book on Medieval English sexuality, she "focused on the possibility of touching across time, collapsing time through affective contact between marginalized people now and then," and "suggested that with such queer historical touches we could form communities across time" (Dinshaw et al. 2007: 178). Trans*temporal kinship and the framework of seven generations, *aanikoobijigan*, and *âniskotâpân*, however, are firmly rooted in and intertwined with Plains Cree and Ojibwe worldviews and experiences. 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? These trans*historical questions may serve as a useful guide for Indigenous people as we continue to reclaim and create new places for ourselves within our communities.

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