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Gay Native American Indians Before and After the Conquest



Keywords:

- Native American/American
- Homosexuality/Lesbian/Queer/Gay/LGBT
- Sexual Preferences/Same Sex Partnerships
- Spanish Conquest
- Western Colonialism
- Christianity/Spiritual

Description

As the United States continues to embrace homosexuals, American Indians continue to forbid it. America is the antagonist and this accusation is not unfounded. With colonization came Christianity and with that came the forbiddance of homosexuality in American Indian tribes.

Key Points

- Homosexual Relations continue to struggle within American Tribes as a result of America's own policies and judgments.
- They remain a minority that has societal interactions that are selectively known outside of the American Indian communities.
- The poor image of homosexuals was not always the norm in Indian Tribes.
- From spiritual appointments with meaningful roles to outcasts among peers and family.
- Western Colonization is considered the perpetrator that caused the exile a long-standing tradition.

Issue Brief

The "Two-Spirited" American Indians once recognized as "visionaries, healers, medicine peoples, nannies of orphans and care givers," are now invisible to tribes of their own and remain displaced by Western Christianity (Laframboise and Anhorn). Their quests to gain economic superiority, geographical advantage and religious purity ended the sacred place belief of the "Two-Spirited." The sexually uninhibited beliefs of American Indians were shamed and deemed barbaric and at god's mercy if they did not stop immediately (Hans Stadden P18).

I explore how this impacted gay beliefs and new realities of member's that are experiencing disownment and disgust from their own tribes. My contention was that present decisions and judgments of homosexuality are free from such colonialist antagonistic impositions. After completing my research I believe that colonialism did demonize "Two Spirited" rituals and they remain engrained in decisions of tribal communities and the inclusion, or disownment of young homosexuals today.

Beginning in the fifteenth century American and Spanish Colonialism ran rampant through Native lands and disrupted indigenous, long-standing traditions. It was the free and overt sexual relationships of Indian people and their belief that man and woman could be present in one being, that the West considered barbaric to Christians and their god. The Westerners offered the choice of spiritualized customs and the likelihood of death or an assured placement in the "New World." Indians quickly abandoned the "Two-Faced" or

homosexuals as the we label them.

In contention of these barbaric labels, Paula Allen believes that "tribal civilizations (like all others) function in entire gestalts... based on the life-enhancing interconnectedness of all things... [, and] that gayness..." has a positive and spiritual meaning within tribes (P110). She continued her critique by blaming contemporary American History for perpetuating the advents of patriarchy of Indians having no 'tribal consciousness' or ability to control homosexuality. I agree with Allen and go further to say that the message left for future "Two-Spirited" generations was that homosexuality was no longer a ritual or an accepted action and to assure that this was history this story has been given little to no attention in elementary, middle or college classrooms.

Adding to the defense, Gabriel Duncan at a LGBT meeting coordinated by American Indian Two Spirits (BAAITs) described the animosity and hurt that many gay people feel as a result of Westernization. He expressed concern for himself and friends that "being gay in our tribes today... is to the American Indian what the Indian is to the American - invisible" (Allen P106, PNS 2). Recalling a Navajo member, Wesley Thomas' comment that "Homophobia was taught to us as a component of Western education," and the healthy sexuality among the tribes, the elders and friends was unacceptable, and implored "an entirely new set of taboos" that "did not correspond to our own models" (Pacific News Service P2). But the "Two-Faced" place in the tribes was now a distant memory. The "Two-Spirit" remains desecrated and tainted by the Western colonialism.

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