

Facilitating Sexual and Gender Minority (SGM) Indigenous Youth to Grow into Resilience
through Cultural Intersections

Educational Psychology 597/697

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Introduction

On December 11, 2011 the United Nations (UN) High Commissioner for Human Rights in Geneva, Navi Pillay, discussed the first United Nations (UN) report on the human rights of sexual and gender minority populations (SGM) revealing how they are murdered and are victims of hate crimes (para. 4). Many SGM people suffer discrimination in the workforce, “health care and education sectors because of their sexual orientation or gender identity” (Pillay, 2011, para. 5). Pillay claimed that “Governments have too often overlooked violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity involving a high degree of cruelty and brutality” (Pillay, 2011, para. 9-13). Such is the case of Fred Martinez Jr., a two spirit Navajo youth slain at the age of 16. He was beaten so badly that his mother Paula Mitchell could barely recognize him (Mitchell, 2002, para.5). The loss of Fred Martinez Jr.’s identity reflects the loss of identity that many SGM youth experience when they are bullied and beaten. For the purposes of this paper the term “two spirit” is defined as:

A term that reflects traditional First Nations gender diversity, which includes the fluid nature of sexual and gender identity and its interconnectedness with spirituality and traditional worldviews (Walters, Evans-Campbell, Simoni, Ronquillo, & Bhuyan, 2006). The term represents their distinct experiences and culture as First Nations, the loss of respected traditions through the impacts of colonization and the unique way that culture and gender are tied together.

(Lehavot, Walters, & Simoni, 2009; Walters et al., 2006, as cited in First Nations Centre, 2012, p. 2)

The place where the two discriminations of racism and homophobia intersect has proven to be extremely dangerous for SGM populations (Lang, 1998, p. 22). That is why I believe that these

brutal killings call for Indigenous education that challenges the Western epistemologies of a binary world-view that the North American colonizers and missionaries dictated as, “good over evil, man over woman, Christianity over Tradition, white over brown, rich over poor, “man” over nature and gender 'conformity' over gender variance, were preached and instituted with both the bible and the gun” (Meyer-Cook & Labelle, 2008, pp. 32-33). The cultural intersections of Indigenous two spirit people can enlighten Western society about the sacred roles that two spirit people played in helping traditional aboriginal communities. This can de-stigmatize the negative stereotypes society imposes upon SGM youth, and thus help to expand safe spaces for them to grow into resilience. This paper explores how transgender youth can grow into resilience through the mixture of cultural intersections (concept of Métissage) on the history of Two Spirit (TS) people, Navajo culture, and the Alaskan Two Spirit Braided Resiliency Framework, which can help transgender youth to develop their own conception of gender beautifully.

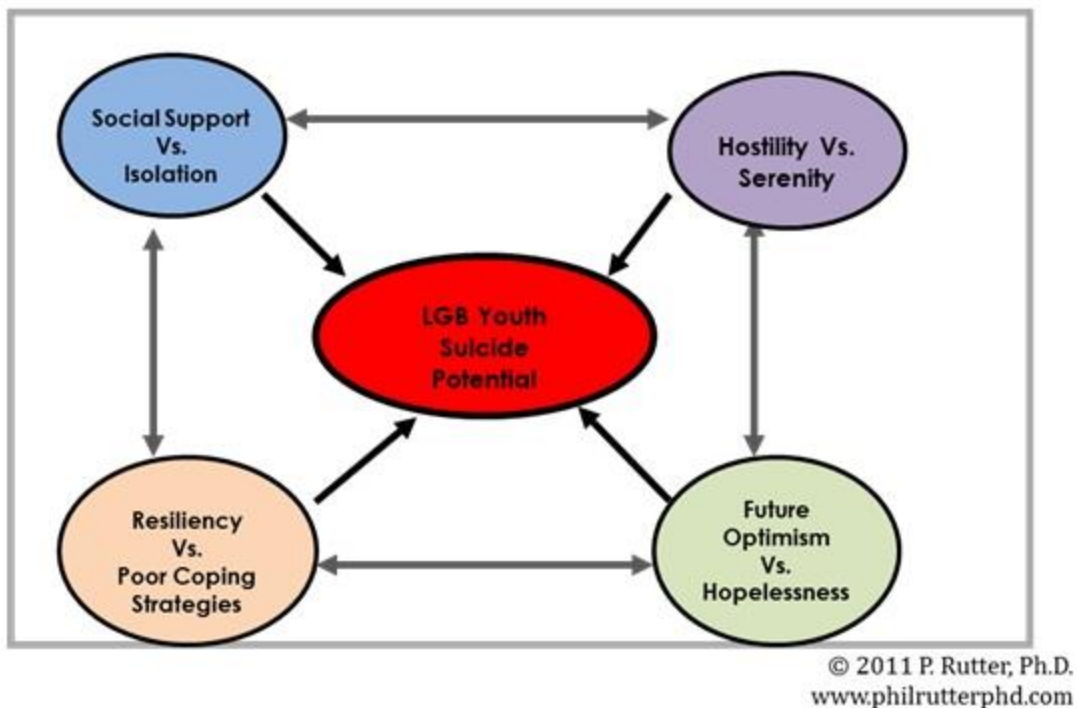
First, Western research on the risk factors and protective factors of SGM youth will be examined. Second, the concept of Métissage will be explained in the context of the Canadian Indian Residential School Crisis (IRS). Third, the history of Two Spirit (TS) people and Navajo culture will be explored. Fourth, the two spirit of concept of circularity will be braided into Maenette Benham AhNee-Benham’s educational leadership model. This circulates as an Indigenous ecological macro-system circulating resiliency through youths’ meso-systems into their micro-systems (Masten, 2015, p. 220). Fifth, the Alaskan Two Spirit Braided Resiliency Framework will braid the strands of this research together enabling transgender youth to develop their own conception of gender beautifully. Implications for future practice in public institutions will be provided in an effort to meet these challenges to promote the best practices possible for helping two spirit and Indigenous transgender youth grow into resilience.

Western Research on SGM Youth

A study in Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario revealed that 28% of transgender and Two Spirit people had attempted suicide at least once (Taylor, 2006). Suicide resilience in SGM populations has been investigated and integrated into a Cumulative Factor Model (CFM) by Rutter (2008). He developed the CFM, in which both risk and protective factors were taken into account when examining suicidal ideation and attempts in SGM youth. Rutter proposed that the examination of the intersection of certain protective factors (social support, suicide resilience, and optimism) and known risk factors for SGM youth suicide (mental health problems, substance abuse, and sexual orientation victimization) may lead to improved suicide assessments and interventions for SGM youth. Dr. Philip A. Rutter (2011) examines suicide protective and risk factors for SGM youth through an updated Cumulative Factor Model (CFM) based on their risks and protection. This CFM can help counselors and professionals assess and decide upon the most effective interventions for SGM youth as indicated in the following Figure 1 diagram:

Figure #1: Dr. Philip A. Rutter's Updated (2011) Cumulative Factor Model (CFM)

The Cumulative Factor Model...



Taken from: Philip A. Rutter, Ph.D., (2011). Faculty Widener University, Private Practice/Consulting Counseling Psychologist. Retrieved From: http://notafraidofyourpain.com/?page_id=429.

Since many SGM youth are still kicked out of their homes, become homeless and experience school stress, truancy and academic failure another CFM model was created by Rutter (Rutter & Leech, 2006). Dr. Rutter's improvements include two groups which serve as protective factors for SGM youth. One is the Youth Service Organizations or YSO's and the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Educators Network (GLSEN). The YSO enhances community and family acceptance of

SGM youth while connecting them to mental health or educational coping strategies. GLSEN has improved school environments over the past five years with the increased presence of gay straight alliances (GSA), networking sites and supports for youth and parents. Their GSAs are a powerful agent of change. The converse of hopelessness would be future optimism, and these can be addressed through using the survey exploring the suicide protective factors-the Suicide Resiliency Inventory (Osman et. al., 2004) (refer to appendix). These surveys are more comprehensive when they are combined with a personal interview. The centre circle of Rutter's diagram can also be seen as the micro-system of the SGM youth ecological system (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, as cited in Masten, 2015, p. 220). Positive gender sensitive Aboriginal lifetime mentors can decrease the youth's suicide potential through developing reasons for living.

I think it would benefit two spirit and Indigenous transgender youth to braid Rutter's and Osman's model with Thomas L. Crofoot Graham's Reasons for Living (RFL) Relational Worldview model. A relational worldview considers a balance between forces often identified as spirit, context, mind, and body (Cross, 1998). Using RFL in suicide assessments allows practitioners to assess where youth may be out of balance in one or more of the four traditional areas: spirit, context, mind, and body as indicated in the following Figure 2 diagram:

Figure 2 Reasons for Living (RFL) in Relation to Cross (1998) Relational Worldview

64

Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare

Figure 1

Reasons for Living in Relation to Cross (1998) Relational Worldview

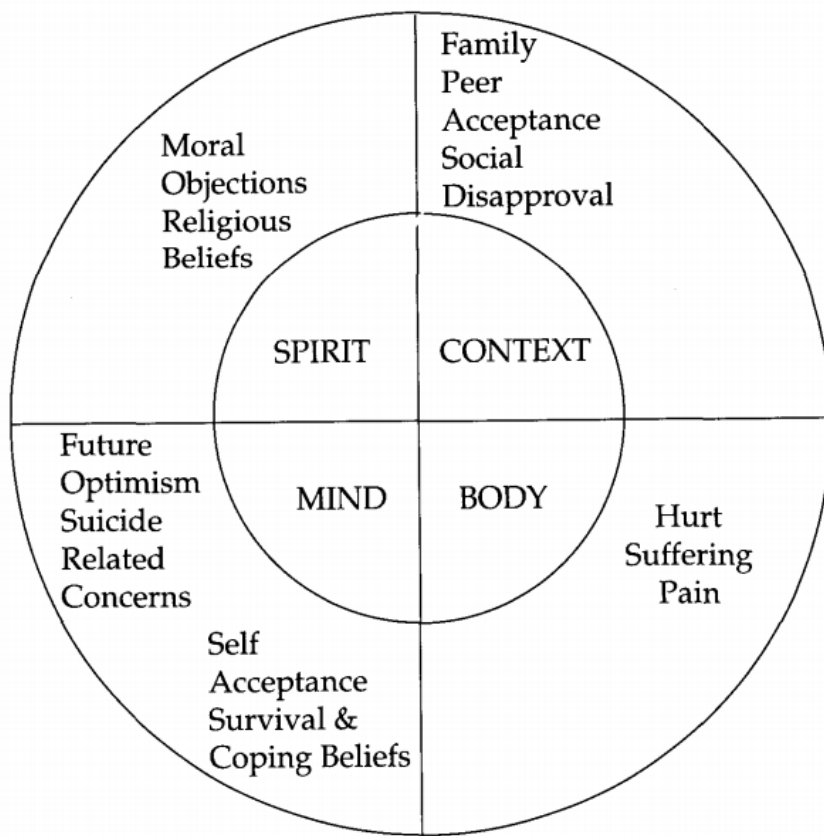


Figure 2. Graham, C. T. (2002). Using reasons for living to connect to American Indian healing traditions: Symposium on Native American wellness (English). *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare*, 29(1), 64.

Graham's medicine wheel encourages SGM youth to map their protective and risk factors within the four quadrants of the concentric circles to develop coping strategies. SGM Youth who lack supportive families require lifetime mentors and Two Spirit support groups to develop their strengths. The Two Spirit Society of Edmonton is an excellent resource for Indigenous SGM youth. Since the rates of SGM youth suicide attempts are three times higher than their heterosexual peers, current intervention strategies may be inadequate in sustaining their resilience (Rutter, 2008, p. 85). The suicide attempt rates among Indigenous SGM youth are higher. There is also a need to educate and connect caring professionals working in education, social work, psychology, and health, including mental and sexual health to:

Address the lack of knowledge clinicians and other caring professionals have about SGM youth health issues and to address the unequal health status of SGM youth associated with social factors (like family, school, and street violence) and medical factors (like lack of youth knowledge of sexually transmitted infections and clinician misunderstanding, bias, and even homo/bi/transphobia).

(Dysart-Gale, 2010; Grace, 2008a; Hatzenbuehler, 2011; Hirsch et al., 2010; Weber & Poster, 2010, Bernal & Coolhart, 2012, as cited in Grace, 2015, p. 212)

The journeys of SGM Indigenous youth are much more difficult in isolated First Nations communities where band council members are indoctrinated into the Christian belief that sexual and gender minorities are sinning against the church and God. Growing up as a genderqueer child, Jack Saddleback faced bullying and discrimination at school and in his community. He was diagnosed with severe depression at the age of 14 and struggled for years to reach a stage of recovery. He eventually came out as transgender at the age of 18 after his battle with suicidal thoughts and depression. With the help of conventional therapy in conjunction with traditional Cree ceremonies that place a holistic lens on recovery, he was able to overcome his depression.

As an executive member of the University of Saskatchewan Students' Union, Jack works within student governance to promote mental health among undergrad students. Along with mental health activism, he advocates for gender and sexual diversity issues, two-spirit issues, and HIV and AIDS. Jack Saddleback was raised on the Samson Cree Nation in Maskwacis, Alberta. He shares how a Medicine Man was praying for him:

My ears are quite attuned to trans-negative things. He [said] 'the natural attraction between a man and a woman, the lost path.' He thought that there was something wrong with me.... that there were two spirits and one was making me think that I was a man. I [realized] that he is trying to exorcise me, [then I] realized how much colonization had permeated its way into First Nations cultures and traditions. They (colonizers) have taught homophobia and transphobia, to our First Nations cultures. Now, my medicine man our cultural leader is transphobic.... We need to get our two-spirit people to get back into our circle and to love themselves.... we are losing them by the day.

(Malone, 2014, News Talk 650 CKOM)

Jack Saddleback's in-depth analysis of how colonization has indoctrinated Indigenous Elders with transphobia reflects the lives of many two spirit and transgender youth in Canada. Two spirit youth and Indigenous transgender youth have a higher mortality rate and suicide rate than straight non-aboriginal youth (Wilson, 2007. p.4 as cited in, Rousell, & Genovese, 2011, p. 39).

"Suicide is a very real and very prevalent problem within both Native American and queer communities. Couple the two together and it's amazing any Native American queers survive their adolescence" (Slivers, cited in Meyer-Cook & Labelle, 2004, p. 39). A comparative analysis of Aboriginal & non-aboriginal families in a 1998 Canadian study of child-maltreatment cases found that more aboriginal families lived below the poverty line standards requiring poverty-reduction measures (Blackstock, as cited in White, Wyn, & Albanese 2009, p. 197). The correlation with social marginalization, discrimination, economic exclusion and criminalization is important to note to understand why 25% of the arrested youth in Alberta and Saskatchewan

were Aboriginal, 33% were sentenced to custody and 21% were put on probation (2011, p. 102, Albanese, White & Wyn). When these racial and economic prejudices intersect with the social prejudices experienced by SGM people, it creates a dangerous space for two spirit and transgender youth. These alarming statistics reveal the need for professionals to carefully consider Dr. Dwayne Donald's conceptual framework of Indigenous Métissage.

Indigenous Métissage

Dr. Dwayne Donald poignantly reveals his struggles with the binaries imposed through colonization as he states:

I have been led to believe that I cannot live my life as though I am both an Aboriginal person and the grandson of European settlers. As a citizen and aspiring academic, there has been considerable pressure to choose sides, to choose a life inside or outside the walls of the fort (Donald 2009a). We need more complex understandings of human relationality that traverse deeply learned divides of the past and present by demonstrating that perceived civilizational frontiers are actually permeable and that perspectives on history, memory, and experience are connected and inter-referential. The challenge is to find a way to hold these understandings in tension without the need to resolve, assimilate, or incorporate.

(Donald, 2012, p. 534)

Just as Dr. Donald should not be required to choose between an Aboriginal identity or a European identity, transgender youth should not be forced to choose either a male or female gender identity (unless they choose to). Métissage, offers a textual way to honour this tension (Hasebe-Ludt, Chambers, and Leggo 2009, 8). HasebeLudt, Chambers, and Leggo identify the spirit and intent of métissage as such:

Métissage [is] a counter-narrative to the grand narrative for writing and surviving in the interval between different cultures and languages in colonial contexts; merging and blurring identities... We braid strands of place and space, memory and history, ancestry

and (mixed) race, language and literacy, familiar and strange, with strands of tradition, ambiguity, becoming, (re)creation, and renewal into a métissage.

(2009, 9, as cited in Donald, 2012, p. 534)

Braiding the memory of Canada prior to colonization requires us to consider the impacts of ethnocide in relation to the Canadian Indian Residential School Crisis (IRS). Children were removed from their families and were forced to forget their Indigenous languages to learn English. There was a poor quality of instruction based on corporal punishment for speaking their mother tongue. This inhibited children's ability to communicate fluently with their families in their Indigenous language and inhibited children's ability to communicate in English. These learners are identified by language specialists as English as a Second Dialect (ESD) learners. This means that children are not fluent in their mother tongue, nor are they fluent in English. As a result, these children could not tell their parents that they were being abused, malnourished and neglected in the IRS. The infinity symbol on the Metis flag stands for the joining of cultures and the existence of a people forever (Murray & Flamand, 2003, p. 20). I think the infinity symbol also reflects the survival of the IRS students. The infinity of joining cultures and peoples also reflects the joining of male and female genders in infinite ways to include transgender youth in Gay and Straight Alliances (GSA).

The History of Two-Spirit People

Prior to colonization some Indigenous communities held rites of passage ceremonies to decide whether a child felt connected to a unique combination of gender roles. For example, some tribes placed a basket and bow in the middle of a circle. If a male child moved towards the basket first, he usually chose to be a two-spirit man engaging in feminine duties (Lang, 1998, p.15). If a female child moved towards the bow first, she usually chose to be a two-spirit woman

warrior (Lang, 1998, p.19). In others, a phenomenal dream or vision was often regarded as a signal. Two spirit people were highly respected because their traits were considered as abilities for accomplishing special spiritual duties. Anthropologist James Thayer claimed that they were “said to possess supernatural powers for healing (Cheyenne, Arapaho, Plains Cree) or for naming (Dakota)” and would often hold a ceremonial role as shamans or prophets” (Lovejoy, 2008, p. 59, as cited in Marvel, 2012, para. 2).

European contact had a significant impact on Aboriginal people and their descendants. The reservation system and the residential school system starting in the late 1880’s in Canada (and in the United States) were the biggest tools used to assimilate and influence aboriginal people which led to their ethnocide (Jacobs, Thomas & Lang, 1997, p. 5). Montreal activists Fiona Meyer-Cook and Diane Labelle examine the inception of: “the Europeans encounter[ing] *a Peoples who thought in more circular ways*, who valued the inter-relationships of all living things, who celebrated and marked the 'in between times' of nature [...], they were unable to comprehend the value in such ways of being" (emphasis added, Meyer-Cook & Labelle, 2004, pp. 32-33). The colonizers and missionaries wanted to separate the men and the women in decision-making and disrupt the natural harmony between the land and the Peoples. They tried to replace aboriginal values and customs with Western values that outlawed aboriginal epistemologies and cultural practices. Many generations of aboriginal children were forced to live in the Canadian Residential Schools. They were beaten for speaking their mother tongue, and for “expressing their Indian-ness" (Berkhofer, 1978; Ing, 1991; York, 1990, as cited in Wilson, 1996, p. 306). When the aboriginal children returned to their parents in the summer, they struggled with the conflicting rules between their parents and their school teachers.

Many aboriginal cultures had social roles for men and women that were clearly defined. This meant that a woman might not hunt regularly for large game as men do, but she could hunt to feed her family if they needed food. Thus, “female warriors were generally women who strove for masculine (social roles) without giving up their role in gender status” (Lang, 1998, p. 303). Each culture had a specific word or designation for those who crossed gender roles or who held special status in their communities. A few examples are “agokwe-nini in Ojibwe, maroni noho in Paiute” and hwame among the Mohave (Lang, 1998, p. 303). Certain spiritual roles were acknowledged in some cultures that were more complex to accommodate the crossing of gender roles (Lang, 1998, p. 304). There were certain living arrangements in which a Tolowa woman would purchase a wife and live with her men (Lang, 1998, p. 273). Sometimes a female shaman who exhibited congruent tendencies revealed that some same-sex partnerships were not always given a reclassification of gender status (Lang, 1998, p. 273). This shaman continued with her occupation, which in Tolowa society was mainly open to women and women who dressed as men (Lang, 1998, p. 274).

Aboriginal women were the keystone of every aboriginal culture doing most of the labour for survival (getting water, snaring smaller game, storing food, growing food, gathering food, curing hides, making clothes, carrying loads while moving, raising children, etc.), so a man’s community status relied upon his wife (Jacobs, Thomas & Lang, 1997, p. 265). This permitted a productive way of life for women who did not want to marry men. They could become warriors and hunters and provide for their own family if they wanted, because they could do most of the work (Jacobs, Thomas & Lang, 1997, p. 269). “In traditional cultures the ‘stay at home mom’ would have been a very cold and hungry woman” (Lavell-Harvard, Meemee and Corbiere

Lavell, 2006, p. 5). Two spirit women in the past changed their gender roles at a young age and had a ceremony at puberty to celebrate this sacred rite of passage. They did the work of females and were accepted by their relatives and community as women (Lavell-Harvard and Corbiere Lavell, 2006, p. 15). Some of them may have gained special status in terms of their matrilineal lineages (Lavell-Harvard and Corbiere Lavell, 2006, p. 13).

Two spirit women were respected and had healthy family lives with partners. Whewha of the Zuni people is famous in her lifetime and in modern times (Williams, 1986, p. 87). She continues to gain fame leaving a legacy of a life lived as a woman and a role model. Osh-Tisch is another famous Two Spirit Transgender Woman who was Crow and lived in the 1800's (Williams, 1986, p. 89). She was a famous artisan and trader who is a great role model for two spirit and transgender youth.



Whewha of the Zuni people (Williams, 1986, p.4) Osch-Tisch of the Crow People (Williams, 1986, p.5)

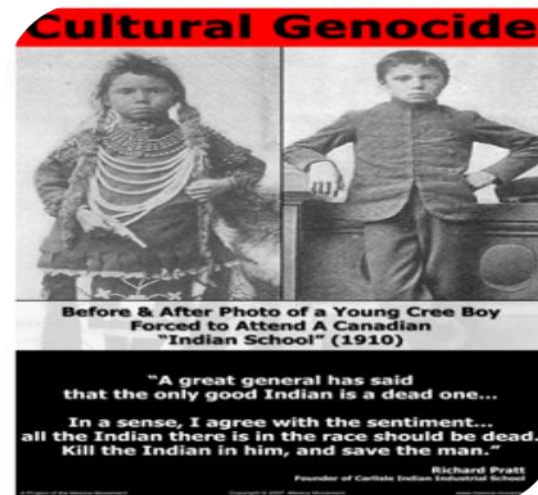
Williams, Walter L. (1986). *The Spirit and the Flesh Sexual Diversity in American Indian Culture*. Beacon Press. Boston.

Many two spirit ‘warrior women’ and ‘men-women’ crossed gender and/or social roles to gain social status with men as warriors and chiefs, to be able to hunt and trap and to have a wife or wives, and/or to use their skills in the male fields to support family and community (Williams, 1986, p. 105). It was easier for the warrior women who were skilled at warring and hunting to change roles successfully. The survival of each community or family group relied both on male providers and hard working women who managed their lives and materials (Williams, 1986, p. 111).



Montana Gay Man's Task Force. (2011). *A Round Dance at a Montana Gay Man's Task Force Retreat*. Retrieved From: <http://www.mtgayhealth.org/retreats/>.

The presence of Two Spirit people threatened the colonizers' knowledge systems. The colonizers strived to assimilate them through forcing them to live in residential schools and to follow the Catholic Religion (Pruden, & Hoskins, 2011, para. 2). If any of the two spirit people ran away from the residential schools, the colonizers hunted for them with dogs and punished them through whipping them with a leather strap (Pruden, & Hoskins, 2011, para. 3). The Residential school missionaries followed the philosophy of "kill the indian, save the man" (Pratt, 2011, para.1) as indicated in the picture below:



Pratt, R.H. (2011). Kill the Indian, and Save the Man: *Capt. Richard H. Pratt on the Education of Native Americans*. Retrieved From: <http://socrates.bmcc.cuny.edu/bfriedheim/pratt.htm>

Colonialism consistently shaped the opportunities of Aboriginal people in relation to residential interventions, exclusions, land claims (land grabbing), and political control of harvesting the land, fish and wildlife. Since 1876, the Indian Act controlled the lives of Aboriginal People (Meyer-Cook & Labelle, 2008, p. 45). Some First Nation communities who respected two spirit people safeguarded them (Pruden, & Hoskins, 2011, para. 3). Other First Nation communities who feared homophobic prejudices camouflaged two spirit people by replacing their mixed gender clothes, with hetero-normative clothes. These nations also renounced their traditions of custom honouring Two Spirit people (Pruden, & Hoskins, 2011, para. 4). Before the late twentieth century, the term berdache was widely used by anthropologists as a generic term to indicate "two-spirit" individuals; however, this term has become considered increasingly outdated and considered offensive (Meyer-Cook & Labelle, 2008, p. 35). Berdache literally meant a two spirit male who only served as a prostitute which desecrated the spiritual contributions two spirit people gave to the community.

The two spirit people worked in gender roles as crafts-people, shamans, medicine-givers, mediators, and/or social workers (Pruden, & Hoskins, 2011, para. 14). In many aboriginal communities, men and women spoke distinct styles of speech and diverse dialects. Two spirit people could speak in masculine and feminine ways. They negotiated marriages, divorces, settled arguments, and mediated conflict resolutions between the sexes because they were able to see things from male and female perspectives (Lang, 1998, p. 9). Their skills in mediation included communicating between the visible (physical) and nonvisible (spiritual) worlds. Many Two Spirit people were great visionaries, dreamers, shamans, or medicine givers. In some traditions, a war party could not be dispatched until their two-spirit person consulted the spirits of the unseen world and then gave their blessings (Pruden, & Hoskins, 2011, para. 13).

It was a tradition to give gifts during ceremonies to those who encompass the “spirit” of the community through their generosity. Two Spirit people were respected and honored with gifts when they attended gatherings. They shared the gifts with the community as humanitarians (Pruden, & Hoskins, 2011, para. 19). When a family had problems with parenting their children, the two spirit person would intervene and assume the responsibility as the sole guardian. “This unique role of social worker was specific to Two Spirit people, for they had an excess of material wealth as a result of the gifts they received” (Lang, 1998, p. 11). This legacy can improve the self-concept of two spirit and Indigenous transgender youth.

The Epistemologies of Two Spirit People and the Conceptual Framework of Circularity

When an Aboriginal person enters into a two spirit identity, it is a journey along a circular path. They are born into a circle of family, community, living creatures and the land (Wilson, 2007. p.4 as cited in, Rousell, & Genovese, 2011, p.9). If they encounter racism,

homophobia, sexism or other oppressive behaviors, their balance may be disturbed and they may lose their place in the circle. However, they can still find guidance in their traditions, histories, memories and collective experiences of this world (Wilson, 2007. p. 4, as cited in, Rousell, & Genovese, 2011, p.11). The traditions of the two spirit identity enables them to circle back to where they belong and reclaim, reinvent and redefine their beginnings, roots, communities, support systems and their collective and individual identities. With that promise, they can reach their highest potential (Wilson, 2007, as cited in, Rousell, & Genovese, 2011, p.11). The diagram of the concentric circles indicates how coming into the two spirit circle of healing can replace discrimination with reclaiming one's self, racism is replaced with reinventing one's self, homophobia is replaced with re-defining one's roots and community and self-oppression is replaced with self-expression. Coming into the circle of two spirit identity is coming home to one's inner identity as illustrated in the following Figure 3 diagram:

Figure 3 Two Spirit Circularity



Adapted from: Genovese, M., Rousell, D., & the Two Spirit Circle of Edmonton Society. (2011). *Safe and Caring Schools for Two Spirit Youth: A Guide for Teachers and Students*. Retrieved from: <http://www1.sacsc.ca/sacsc-information-booklets/>.

Circularity

Coming Out

- Discrimination
- Racism
- Homophobia
- Self-Oppression

Coming In

- Reclaim
- Reinvent
- Redefine Our Root & Communities
- Self-Expression

Coming Home

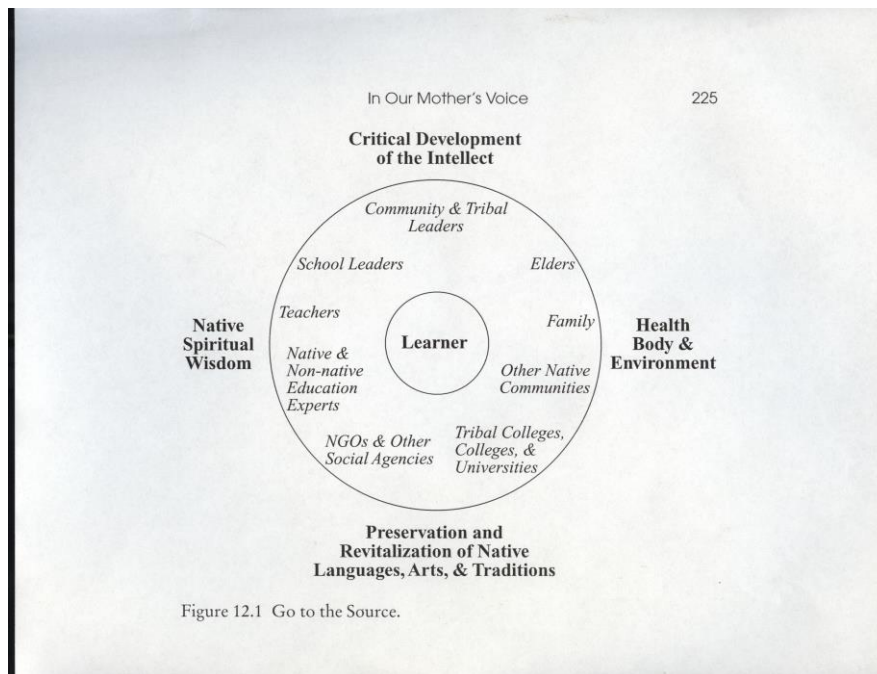
Home-Coming

The concentric circles where two spirit people reclaim their identity within their communities, their families and their hearts is also reflected in Maenette Benham AhNee-Benham's educational leadership model Figure 4: Go to the Source (2003, p. 225). The principles of AhNee-Benham's model involve:

- (a) Native spiritual wisdom, which is guided by the hearts of our grandmothers and grandfathers;
- (b) Critical development of the intellect, which intersects native ways of seeing and doing with modern ways of seeing and doing;
- (c) Promotion of a healthy body and a healthy environment;
- (d) Preservation and revitalization of native languages, arts and traditions (p. 231).
- (e) At the core of this model is the student/learner who connects us to both our past and our future.

(2003, p. 231)

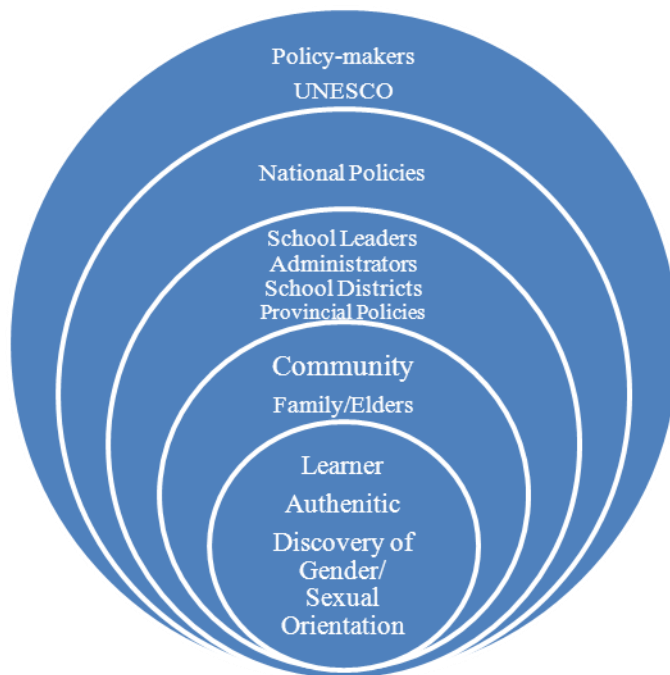
Figure 4: Maenette Benham AhNee-Benham's Model Go to the Source



Taken from: AhNee-Benham, M. (2003). In our mother's voice: A Native woman's knowing of leadership. Go to the Source (p. 225, Figure 12.) In Young, M. & Skrls, L. (Eds.) *Reconsidering Feminist Research in Educational Leadership*. (223-246). Albany NY: SUNY Press. (CP).

I adapted AhNee-Benham's diagram in Figure 5 below in the concentric circles to include how Indigenous mentors and support networks can circulate from youths' micro-system through their meso-systems and macro-systems (Masten, 2015, p. 220). The authentic self-discovery of a SGM learner or student who becomes aware of his/her gender identity and sexual orientation in a gentle environment with Elders, family and educators who have learned about the benefits of two spirit traditions.

Figure 5 Adaption of AhNee-Benham's model (Figure 4) Go to the Source



Adapted from AhNee-Benham, M. (2003). In our mother's voice: A Native woman's knowing of leadership. In Young, M. & Skrls, L. (Eds.) *Reconsidering Feminist Research in Educational Leadership*. (223-246). Albany NY: SUNY Press. (CP).

The Elders' teachings of two spirit traditions should become part of the community's policy throughout the scopes of school districts (professional development), provincial Alberta learning standards, Alberta Health Care (AHC), the national Canadian Western Protocol Framework, Health Canada the global United Nations Education and Scientific Organization (UNESCO) and the World Health Organization (WHO). Gay Straight Alliances (GSA) are now being created between non-aboriginal SGM youth and two spirit people. Alliances of two spirit people from around the world continue to gather and welcome SGM people into their circle of life to diminish the number of homicides, and suicides within the SGM communities (Pruden & Hoskins, 2011, para.27).

Challenging the Western Conceptual Framework of Two Binary Genders

If missionaries and colonizers found a two spirit man dressed as a woman, they would cut his hair and dress him in men's clothes in order to confine him in the colonized space of Westernized masculinity or manhood. (Lang, 1998, p. 116). The colonized spaces of the English language and English grammar rules confine gender in the binary spaces of him/her, she/he, boy/girl and man/woman. Aboriginal languages do not use genderized pronouns. English is a very limited language that does not provide very many options. Indigenous languages, like Mi'kmaq, focus on verbs (actions) rather than nouns (people, places or things), so the gender of a person is not as important as their actions (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2001, p. 215). Over 130 terms originated from Indigenous, languages of North America define people who historically did not fit into the typical binary gender categories of male or female (Roscoe, 1987, as cited in Meyercook & Labelle 2003, p. 32).

These are the translated terms with some slight variances:

<u>IndigenousTribe &Term</u>	<u>English Translation</u>	<u>Meaning</u>
Anishinaabe: <i>Okitcitakwe</i>	warrior woman	warrior woman
<i>Ogokwe</i>	Warrior man	Warrior man
Blackfeet: <i>Sakwo'ma pi aki-kwan</i>	man-woman	boy-girl or man-woman
Blackfoot Two-Spirit female: <i>Natoyi</i>	sacred woman	sacred woman
Tlingit: <i>Gaxtan</i>	man-woman	boy-girl or man-woman
Cree: <i>Aayahkwew</i>	man-woman	boy-girl or man-woman
Inuit: <i>Aranu'tiq</i>	man-woman	boy-girl or man-woman
Osage male: <i>Mixu'ga</i>	moon instructed	moon instructed
Dakota: <i>Winkte</i>	double woman	double woman
Dine/Navaho: <i>Nadle</i>	Two Spirit man	weaver transformed," or "that which changes," or "he who transforms."

(Meyercook & Labelle, 2003, p. 32)

The term two-spirit or two-spirited was suggested in Minnesota in 1988 and identified in Winnipeg in 1990, at a Native American/First Nation gay and lesbian conference (Meyercook & Labelle, 2003, p. 31). It is a general term used in order to give an innovative classification of Aboriginal people with other sexual minorities and “to reawaken the spiritual nature of the role these people are meant to play in their communities” (Meyercook & Labelle, 2003, p. 31). Prior to European contact, the Navajo identified females as the first gender with the Navajo female name Asdzaan because they are a matrilineal society. The males are the second gender with the Navajo male name Hastin (Nibley, 2009). Feminine males are the two spirit third gender with the Navajo

name Nadleeh which means that they were born with a penis and desire to be feminine (Jacobs, Thomas, & Lang, 1997). Nadleeh also means transformer and weaver in Navajo which reflects the braided resiliency framework. Masculine females are the two spirit fourth gender with the Navajo name Dilbaa which means that they were born with a vagina and desire to be masculine (Nibley, 2009). The masculine and feminine must be kept in balance to maintain health.

Traditional two spirit Navajo people strive to balance their masculine and feminine qualities.

Two-spirit recognizes gender as a continuum and includes identity, sexual orientation and social roles (National Association of Friendship Centres [NAFC], 2008, as cited in First Nations Centre, 2012, p. 2). Keeping this balance reflects the circularity in Aboriginal languages.

The history of the English language is linear, while the history of Aboriginal languages is circular (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2001, p. 211). Challenging these binaries requires challenging their presence in language as indicated in the following diagram Figure 7:

Figure 7 Comparison of Embedded Meanings in English and Navajo Languages

Comparison of English and Dineh/Navajo Thinking Systems

English	Dineh/Navajo
Eurocentric, dualistic thinking system	affirmative, holistic thinking system
language developed for commerce	sacred language of wholeness
used to sustain hierarchy and patriarchy	used within natural order context
concepts are considered to stand alone	everything is interconnected
power over	power with
win/lose	win/win
dualistic thinking results in conflict, violence, pathology and disease	co-creative solutions, peacemaking & use of creative imagination for collective survival

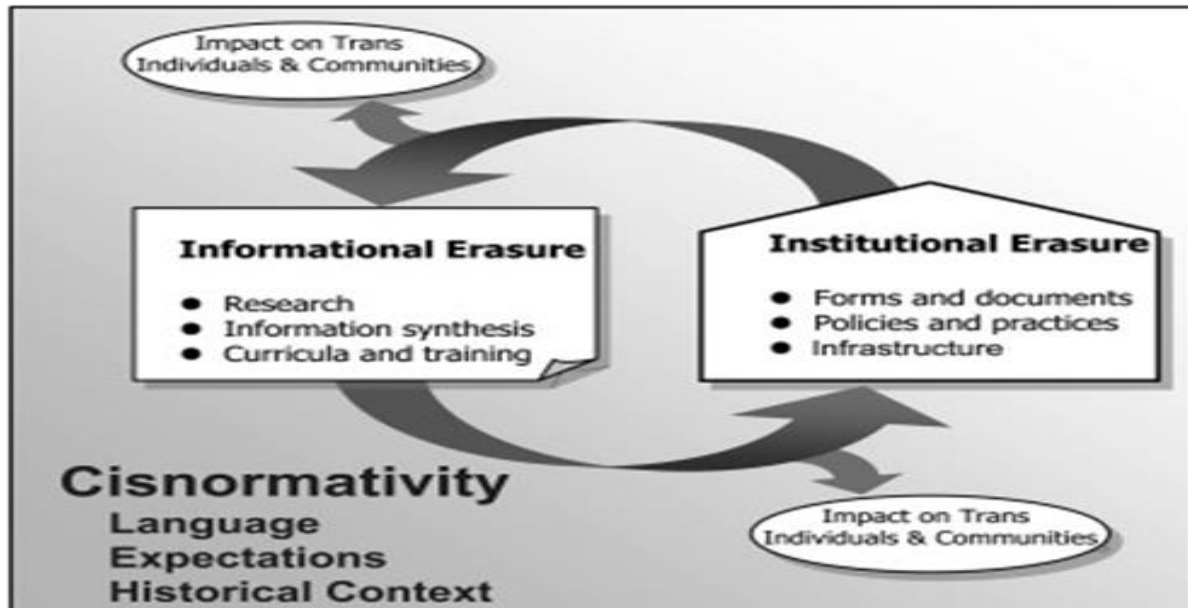
Taken from: Davis, P.A. (2011). Hozhooji — Living the Loving Way. (Eds.) Hiltner, C. & Pino, K. *Ma'at Magazine*. Retrieved From: http://spiritofmaat.com/jul11/loving_way.html.

In addition to hetero-normative values embedded within the English language, gender inclusive names and acronyms are not quite “inclusive enough or sufficient in the SGM language games [along the] contested terrain [pioneering the] complexities of sexual and gender differences, subjectivities, and positionalities” (Schulman, 2013, as cited in Grace, 2015, p. 48). It is beneficial for two spirit and indigenous transgender youth to replace the Western view of gender with the lens of the Dineh/Navajo language.

This reflects the cultural reciprocity through reconceptualising: “the gender landscape [as] changing, with gender being increasingly conceived as something spectral or multidimensional that cannot be contained by the male/female binary” (Grace, 2015, p. 45). Challenging these binaries requires challenging their presence in language.

Unfortunately, some two spirit people do not believe that the term “two spirit” should include all non-aboriginal sexual minorities because historically and traditionally the term “two spirit” reflects certain gender roles that only the two spirit person fulfilled in the aboriginal communities as spiritual advisors, family counsellors and mentors for troubled youth (Meyercook & Labelle, 2003, p. 31). That is why the term two spirit was considered to involve special gender roles and not just sexual orientation. Unfortunately, the term “Two Spirit” neglects the gender identity needs of many transgender youth and critics claim it reinforces the binaries between male and female genders. Refer to the following Figure 5: the impact of informational and institutional erasure of trans people within cisnormative systems:

Figure 5: The Impact of Informational and Institutional Erasure of Trans people within Cis-normative Systems



Bauer, G. R., Hammond, R., Travers, R., Kaay, M., Hohenadel, K. M., & Boyce, M. (2009). Feature: "I Don't Think This Is Theoretical; This Is Our Lives": How Erasure Impacts Health Care for Transgender People. *Journal of the Association of Nurses in AIDS Care*, 20(Transgender Health and HIV Care), 348-361. doi:10.1016/j.jana.2009.07.004

Transgendered people experience cissexism, which is the assumption that everyone should look, behave and identify as a stereotypical feminine woman or a stereotypical masculine man (Ristock, Zoccole, & Passante, 2010). Healthcare professionals, social workers, correction officers, educators, administrators and policy-makers often facilitate information erasure through heteronormative practices within hospitals, treatment centres, prisons, and schools. Indigenous transgender youth and two spirit youth may be mistreated by homophobic health care professionals who could discourage them from obtaining affordable condoms and prophylactics. This in turn could increase their chances of contracting a sexually transmitted disease. Aids (Autoimmune deficiency syndrome) has been labelled in the media as the gay plague and their

death sentence for being homosexual. This has been disproven by Health Canada statistics and students must be educated to realize that anyone engaging in unprotected sexual intercourse has an equal risk of contracting a sexually transmitted disease regardless of their sexual orientation. Dr. Josephine M. MacIntosh claims that “If the pandemic [aids] is to be halted, the overarching epidemic of stigma and discrimination that obstructs prevention, care, and treatment for those infected and affected by HIV must be challenged publicly and politically, because *we are them*” (Gilmore & Somerville, 1994, as cited in 2007, para. 59). Dr. J.M. Thom reports from his 2007 study on *Leading an Extraordinary Life: Wise Practices for an HIV Prevention Campaign with Two-Spirit Men* that:

32.3% of two spirit men’s’ [relatives] felt Reserve communities would ignore [their relative] living with HIV/AIDS (PHA) while 12.7% felt [their relative] would be told to leave the community. In 1996, the *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* found that many [two spirit males] felt they could not return home due to stigma on themselves and their family, or that their community would not accept them. In 1998, [many two spirit men] were denied housing by Band officials or driven out by members of the community.

(Thoms, 2007, p. 23)

This reveals a need for education and health professionals to provide two spirit people with safe environments for them to seek support and assistance. Two spirit people and SGM communities deserve respect and dignity when accessing health services for Aids and other sexually transmitted diseases. Educators and school administrators need to provide a safe and caring environment to assist Indigenous transgender and two spirit students in accessing health services without embarrassment or shame. Many health professionals may pathologize two spirit people due to the sexual abuse that occurred in the Residential Schools perpetrated by the male Catholic priests who victimized young Aboriginal boys. Although this may be the case with some IRS survivors, it is not the case with all two spirit people. Viewing two spirit people through the lens

of sexual abuse does not provide a positive legacy for them. Reducing two spirit identity to a mental disorder classified in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV) is a severe injustice that neglects the benefits of two spirit identity.

Jack Drescher, a member of the American Psychiatric Association (APA) subcommittee who worked on changing the diagnostic term “Gender Identity Disorder” to “Gender Dysphoria” claimed that: “We know there is a whole community of people out there who are not seeking medical attention and live between the two binary categories. We wanted to send the message that the therapist’s job isn’t to pathologize” (Beredjick, 2012, para. 3). The new term implies a temporary mental state rather than a chronic disorder, a change which may help to remove the stigma transgender people face by being labeled “disordered” (2012, para. 4). I think that it is important to note that homosexuality was diagnosed in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-III) as an illness until “1973, and behaviors related to homosexuality were not entirely removed until 1987” (Beredjick, 2012, para. 5). This reflects the binary epistemology of the Western worldview that there can only be two genders which are male and female which are considered normal and healthy. However, many two spirit organizations welcome non-aboriginal SGM minorities in their activities in an effort to provide them with support and health resources. It is my hope that the legacy of two spirit people will enlighten people to become more accepting of transgender youth enabling them to grow into resilience.

Current Challenges that Indigenous Transgender and Two Spirit Youth Face Today

The current challenges two spirit and Indigenous transgender youth face today are shaped by the inter-generational abuse suffered from many IRS survivors, the homophobia of some mainstream religions and cultures and access to healthcare to prevent sexually transmitted

diseases. Although some school districts and post-secondary institutions may have anti-bullying policies SGM populations still face the following challenges:

- 60% homophobia in their communities
- 60% do not know where to access social services agencies
- 73% do not know how to protect themselves from abuse (O'Brien-Teengs, 2008, p. 20).

Many two spirit women do not feel welcome at social services agencies as a result of racism and sexism (O'Brien-Teengs, 2008, p. 20). In a study in Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario that included 73 transgendered and two-spirited people (20 of whom identified as Aboriginal), 28 per cent of study participants reported having attempted suicide at least once "because of the way [they were] treated with regards to [their] sex/gender identity" (Taylor, 2006, p. 38, as cited in Thoms, 2007, p.76). A large American study conducted in four major cities included approximately 86 gay or bisexual Native American men in a total sample of 2881 homosexually oriented men. Thirty per cent of the Native American participants had attempted suicide compared with approximately 11 per cent of all other participants (Paul et.al., 2002, as cited in Thoms, 2007, p.78). Although there is protection in First Nations communities from the racism of the mainstream world, some two-spirited people may be sent away from the reserve or may feel they need to move away to find acceptance for their sexual orientation and gender identity, because of homophobia and transphobia in First Nations communities (Ristock, Zoccole, & Passante, 2010).

Two spirit and transgender First Nations people experience oppression and exclusion from three areas: their aboriginal community because they are two-spirited, SGM communities because they are aboriginal and mainstream communities because they are aboriginal and two spirit (Brotman et al., 2002, p. 10). That is why educators and school administrators must take a

proactive and preventative approach to homophobic bullying of aboriginal students and students from other racial minorities. Two-spirit and Indigenous transgender women who face sexism in jobs and sports that are traditionally male in Western cultures world face a third type of discrimination because they are aboriginal, female and lesbian (Lehavot et al., 2009). They can find healing and support through the Braided Resiliency Framework of American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN) Two Spirit women.

Braided Resiliency Framework

American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN) Two Spirit people and Aboriginal sexual minorities (SGM) suffer from higher rates of addictions and mental illnesses than populations who are hetero-sexual and Caucasian (Elm & Lewis, et.al., 2016, p. 357). Many of these health problems are caused by the Intergenerational Indian Residential School Syndrome (IRSS) from their families' and ancestors' forced attendance at Indian Boarding Schools similar to the IRS schools in Canada.

Indigenous resilience research reveals how AIAN youth formulate cultural resilience as a multilevel healing model of sweat lodge ceremonies, and tribal social capital to cope with mental illnesses. Professionals must learn the sociocultural history of IRSS, family and tribal connections to be trauma informed when helping Two Spirit women in navigating sustainable healthy home environments. Two spirit women's resilience is revealed through braiding the mind, body, and spirit in the following framework:

1. Individual Resilience Mind: Cognitive transformative behavior changes or re-evaluation of self-concept by reconciling present, past, and environmental contexts. Developing coping skills to reclaim gender identity for holistic health (Elm & Lewis et.al., 2016, p. 358).

2. Collective Resilience – Body Indigenous reciprocity with valuing one's community and caring for one another through generosity. Collective reciprocity is integral in healthy embodied transformations. Indigenous relational worldviews value interdependency between people, their community, ancestors and future generations (p. 358).

3. Cultural Resilience – Spirit

Cultural resilience (Spirit) is thought of as Indigenous cultural norms, practices, and values that form a matrix for strength and resourcefulness. Indigenous worldview perspectives on spiritual connectedness, ancestral knowledge, and culture for wellness development and sustainability. Their research examined the braids by "un-braid[ing]" (p. 359) the strands within the women's narratives to demonstrate each type of resilience across intersectionalities.

(Elm & Lewis et.al., 2016, pp. 358-359)

Multilayered intersectional abilities, processes, in an undercurrent meta-process of braiding diversity can enhance resilience in transgender youth. I think that that the Braided Resiliency Framework resonates in synchronicity with the concept of metissage as the strands can continue to braid with new cultural intersections of diversity encompassing ethnicity, disability, religion and variant gender roles. This allows the next generation of Indigenous SGM youth the freedom to grow into their own gender identities authentically.

Implications for Future Research

Professionals in child and youth care can challenge the discrimination against Indigenous transgender and two spirit youth through creating professional development opportunities to educate their staff. This can give them the skills to facilitate discussions and workshops on SGM interventions. Healthcare professionals, social workers, correction officers, educators, administrators and policy-makers should facilitate Gay Straight Alliances (GSAs) with Indigenous transgender students and two spirit communities. Together they can hold talking circles where they examine the history of gender diversity that existed in aboriginal communities

many years ago. They can also celebrate the identity and roles of Indigenous transgender youth today. This knowledge can re-frame public perceptions of two-spirit and transgender youth in a positive way.

Educators and administrators should establish a comprehensive anti-homophobia policy in their school district and their school that encompasses students, parents, staff and administrators (Genovese, Rousell, & The Two Spirit Circle of Edmonton Society, 2011, pp. 21-22). These policies must engage everyone in an ongoing commitment to create safe spaces within schools. School super-intendants should be encouraged to lobby governments for anti-homophobia policies to become part of the provincial and federal Ministries of Educations' safe schools' policies and programs as well as the safe school policies of Catholic schools. Policy-makers should encourage teachers to help students to facilitate (GSA)s in schools (Genovese, Rousell, & The Two Spirit Circle of Edmonton Society, 2011, pp. 21- 22).

Educators and school administrators must continuously evaluate and safeguard that youth services and programs are sensitive to meeting the needs of two spirit and Indigenous transgender students and connecting them to the appropriate Aboriginal support services with Elders who are educated in two spirit history. Two spirit people and transgender youth were stigmatized as carriers of the AIDS and HIV virus which exacerbated their fear of seeking health services, which in turn exacerbated the spread of sexually transmitted diseases (Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, 2003; McGrath, 1992; PANOS Institute, 1990; WHO, 2003, as cited in MacIntosh, 2007, para. 53). However, Gay Straight Alliances (GSAs) with two spirit organizations can develop public awareness and empathy through research, legislation and community level action that challenges the “epidemic of stigma and discrimination and decrease[s] the extent of the HIV epidemic in Canada” (MacIntosh, 2007, para. 55).

In addition to accessible health services, school administrators should secure educational symposiums and conventions on SGM concerns to raise staff attentiveness in handling controversies and conflicts. This can help all staff members to be responsive to SGM students' situations. It is the responsibility of educators and school administrators to provide students with accessible and correct resources on two spirit people, history, epistemologies and traditional gatherings. Comprehensive curriculum and library resources should be provided through print and electronic mediums (Genovese, Rousell, & The Two Spirit Circle of Edmonton Society, 2011, p. 21). In order to decolonize the school curriculum Alex Wilson from the Harvard Faculty of Education claims that:

Whenever possible, we need to ensure that two-spirit youth have access to the history and unwritten knowledge of their community, and that it is available to them in a culturally congruous way. Educators can also easily access written texts by important Indigenous leaders, such as Beatrice Medicine (1983), Terry Tafoya (1989, 1990), Chrystos (1988, 1991, 1993), Connie Fife (1992, 1993), and Beth Brant (1985, 1988, 1991, 1993, 1995).

(Wilson, 1996, p. 315)

Educators and school administrators should form partnerships with two spirit Elders and two spirit organizations because they are living libraries who can provide oral storytelling and oral traditions to students. Students should be provided with conflict resolution skills to help them to endure the tensions of prejudice and homophobia through practicing life skills training that challenges discrimination and prevents high risk behaviours (Genovese, Rousell, & The Two Spirit Circle of Edmonton Society, 2011, pp. 21- 22). Two Spirit people are a sacred part of the fabric of this land; therefore, education professionals must strengthen their collective voices

through comprehensive books, resources, digital stories, and narrative inquiry of two Spirit organizations.

Conclusion

Professionals, psychologists, educators, school administrators and policy-makers can make informed decisions by examining two spirit history and epistemologies through the context of the IRS and the two spirit concept of circularity. The conceptual framework of circularity will flow into the theoretical framework of Maenette Benham AhNee-Benham's model forming concentric circles of support in an ecological meso-system to help Indigenous transgender youth to endure the current challenges of transphobia, discrimination, and alienation (2003, p. 225).

The tragedy of Fred Martinez does not need to be the self-fulfilling prophecy of SGM youth. Instead his precious soul can be the life force igniting social change by inspiring us to honour all SGM people. For in honouring others we honour ourselves. Fred Martinez's Navajo two spirit name *Nadle* means "weaver transformed," or "that which changes," or "he who transforms" (Meyercook & Labelle, 2003, p. 32). These sacred language meanings echo the need for the transformative education required to transform the hate against SGM people into love and acceptance. We can transform the dangerous intersections of racism and transphobia into restorative circles of reconciliation and recovery.

The two spirit theory of circularity, braided with the Navajo culture and the Braided Resiliency Framework can include all SGM populations into circles of support, love and belonging. These circles can include traditional talking circles, year-round cultural activities

consisting of traditional dancing, drumming, aboriginal arts and crafts, and fry-bread making classes. Traditional sweat lodges and ceremonies can help Indigenous SGM people see themselves through renewed eyes and welcoming hearts. The group acceptance within GSAs can grow self- acceptance within each individual. Aboriginal cultures are usually non-linear. Masculine and feminine are not at two ends of a line. Instead, masculine and feminine are on a circle (an important spiritual and cultural symbol) with an infinite number of points between the two with no one end or beginning symbolized with the Metis flag symbol of infinity. The journey of two spirit people allows them to nurture their masculine and feminine traits without forcing a binary choice of becoming either male or female. In Waawaate Fobister's play *Agokwe: Gay Love on the Rez*, Jake committed suicide over being bullied for being two spirit. Waawaate Fobister plays Nanabush the trickster and says: "I am Nanabush, and you can only see me if I want you to see me. I am telling you this story of why Jake died, so you can tell two friends, and they can tell two friends and so on and then we can all be one big happy family!" (2012, Marvel). Therefore, we must encourage two spirit people to share their stories so that the freedom inherent in two spirit traditions can free two spirit and Indigenous transgender youth from homophobic oppression and encourage them to take their rightful place in the circle of life.



(Nibley, 2009).

The concept of Metissage can be used as a lens to braid the history of two spirit people, Navajo culture, and the Braided Resiliency Framework, enabling transgender youth to develop their own conception of gender beautifully. This can guide research into cultural intersections of resilience for two spirit and Indigenous transgender youth influencing inclusive policies in all public institutions.

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Appendix

Suicide Resilience Inventory-25 (SRI-25)

148

*P. A. Rutter et al.***TABLE 2** Factor Structure of Suicide Resilience Inventory-25

Abbreviated items and factor	Standardized factor loadings		
	1	2	3
Factor 1: Internal Protective			
1. I like many things about myself	.80	.00	.00
2. Most of the time I am happy	.77	.00	.00
5. I like myself	.85	.00	.00
9. Most of my goals are reasonable	.51	.00	.00
11. I am satisfied	.79	.00	.00
13. I am proud of my good qualities	.78	.00	.00
19. I feel emotionally strong	.68	.00	.00
20. I am happy regardless of problems	.80	.00	.00
25. I feel cheerful	.88	.00	.00
Factor 2: Emotional Stability			
4. I can deal with rejection	.00	.74	.00
8. I can resist thoughts of suicide	.00	.80	.00
10. I can resist suicidal urges when sad	.00	.79	.00
12. I can resist suicidal thoughts when in a difficult situation	.00	.79	.00
14. I can control suicidal urges when criticized	.00	.79	.00
18. I can handle suicidal thoughts when lonely	.00	.74	.00
23. I can resist suicidal thoughts when humiliated	.00	.73	.00
24. I can resist suicidal thoughts when feeling hopeless	.00	.81	.00
Factor 3: External Protective			
3. People close would listen if I were suicidal	.00	.00	.53
6. I could openly discuss suicidal thoughts	.00	.00	.52
7. I can find someone for support	.00	.00	.64
15. I can ask for support if suicidal	.00	.00	.79
16. I can ask for support even if people are angry with me	.00	.00	.60
17. I can find help if I am suicidal	.00	.00	.83
21. If I am in trouble I can find help	.00	.00	.79
22. Close friends or family would help me if suicidal	.00	.00	.82

Rutter, P.A..., Freedenthal, S. & Osman, A. (2008) Assessing Protection from Suicidal Risk: Psychometric Properties of the Suicide Resilience Inventory, *Death Studies*, 32:2, 142-153, DOI: 10.1080/07481180701801295.

