

# BAAITS

Newsletter of the Bay Area American Indian Two-Spirits - San Francisco, CA

<http://www.geo.to/bayarea2spirits>  
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Update Information: [415] 561-9756  
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Bay Area American Indian Two-Spirits (BAAITS) is a community-based volunteer organization committed to offering culturally relevant activities for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgendered (GLBT) individuals of Native American Indian ancestry and their friends. Many Native American tribes believed that many of those who we would now identify as GLBT possessed and manifested both a male and female spirit. This was thought to make them Two-Spirited and sacred. BAAITS is committed to restoring and recovering the role of Two-Spirited people within the American Indian community by creating forums for the spiritual, cultural and artistic expression of said people.

## WHAT DOES "TWO-SPIRIT" MEAN?

Before the invasion of Europeans to North America the indigenous people of this land believed that all persons had their gift. There has been documentation which recognized third and fourth genders in many tribes.

"The term 'berdache' surfaced in the Americas as early as the 1700's. Anthropologists used this term when describing an individual of one gender who identified with the opposite gender. This may have been through work roles, clothing or same-sex relations. To most tribes Two-Spirits were much more than the word 'berdache' implies."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Hoorec, Will, *Changing Ones: Third and Fourth Genders in Native North America*. St. Martin's Press, NY 1998

The best time to tell a story is when you have an audience. So, now that I have your attention I shall tell you mine. Many moons ago, there was a beautiful young woman expecting a child. This child was to be a special child. Sent from the Creator, this child would bring a new medicine to the many tribes and nations. There was an elder woman, close to the mother, who carried good medicine handed down to her from generations of holy women. This elder knew the birth of this child was not yet known. Now, in the Spirit realm, two spirits were eagerly awaiting to jump into a new born baby. High above, they circled back and forth waiting for a child to be born through. At the same moment, the two spirits jumped into the tiny baby about to be born, not realizing that they were jumping into the same little baby. In the moment when the young woman sat in the middle of the miracle of miracles, giving birth, she cried out as her handsome baby boy entered into his new life. It was at this very moment that the two spirits entered simultaneously. The holy woman aided closely in the birthing process, and saw the two spirits enter the baby boy.

Now, about these spirits: one was of a masculine nature and the other of a feminine nature. Both were to work together 'til their calling back to Creator. What a pot of stew this would be for the child!!! What a path the child would follow in years to come! Little did the child know that through his medicine, he would help all people come to a better understanding of their inner natures. However, the holy woman now saw his path and knew it was her responsibility to help the child be strong in following his calling to the people. She would help him with his feminine spirit. She knew of a holy man with good medicine to help the child with his masculine spirit.

The two spirits wanted to face the tasks set before the boy. Many trials and difficulties would be dealt with through his lifetime. The holy woman told the new mother what had transpired during the birth of her child. This event had never occurred before to the people. For this reason, the mother named her child Two-Spirit. Nowadays, there are many walking the land with this good medicine, but Two-Spirit was the first. Two-Spirit's mentors saw to it that he had the many lessons necessary to grow in a good way to help the people of all tribes and nations. Two-Spirit grew up carrying this strong medicine though he did not yet know its purpose.

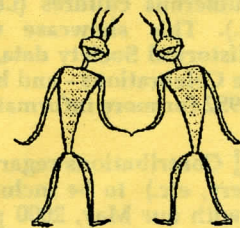
The time came for Two-Spirit to go on hanblecheya (vision quest). Because of his nature, it was decided he must sit for 7 days and nights and bring his many questions before Creator. Most who go on vision quest sit for 4 days, but the circumstances were such that the holy woman wanted Two-Spirit to sit for 7. The young man wanted to know why he was two-spirited and what was his purpose for being dual-spirited. So many times he had wished to be as other men, and it weighed heavy that he was not the same. Going on hanblecheya he would now sit and wait for Creator to explain his purpose and give him a focus to follow. Two-Spirit grew very weak after 6 suns rising and setting without a vision. On the 7th day, Creator spoke. Creator told him that many with two spirits would be following. They would seek his guidance. He would help to open a path for all that would follow. Now he knew his path. It was his destiny to open his heart to the many that would come and live among the tribes and the nations. The people would need to understand the medicine. They would need to know how much good two-spirited people have to offer the nation.

This was his vision. This was his medicine. This was his path. In the many years that followed, Two-Spirit was able to do much good for all the tribes. He was able to teach them of the new medicine. He brought to the people an understanding of the joining of masculine and feminine medicine, which exists in all of us. His lessons brought a balance to the inward self in the people (the 7th DIRECTION). He taught the people what to look for in children who might carry the medicine.

Today, there are many carrying this good medicine. The walk among all the tribes and nations. They carry healing medicine to all the people. Their purpose is to share joy and love with all the tribes. Their purpose is to do Creator's work in a good way.

Aho Mitakuye Oyasin

- Sean Christian



## CALLING FOR INFORMATION !!!

If you would like to share an item in the newsletter, be it a poem, event, celebration, history, **WHATEVER!** - please feel free to submit it. If it is not included in the next issue, please rest assured

that it will be considered for inclusion at a later date.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

April: 21 - 23: 14th Annual ASU Spring Competition Pow-Wow, Tempe, AZ (480) 965-5224

27 - 29: Gathering of Nations Pow-Wow, U of NM Arena, Albuquerque, NM

27 - B.A.A.I.T-S Potluck & Film Night  
7:30 pm at Family Service Agency  
1010 Gough Street at Eddy, 5th Floor, SF

29: 14th Annual UC-Berkeley Pow-Wow  
[510] 642-6613

May: 5 - 31: Cultural Showing of Arts  
Mission Cultural Center  
24th & Mission; 6:30 PM to 10 PM  
NOTE: Our own Morningstar Vancencil will have items on display!!!

5, 6, 7 - 20th Annual DeAnza College Pow-Wow & Arts & Film Festival, Cupertino, CA Dance & drum contests, Open Gourd Dancing, a Babies in Cradleboard Contest and Potato & Switch Dances Social Contests [408] 864-5448

6: American Indian & World Cultures Festival, San Juan Bautista [831] 623-2379

13 - 14: 29th Annual Stanford Pow-Wow, "Uniting Native Peoples for All Generations." Eucalyptus Grove, Stanford, CA (650) 723-4078

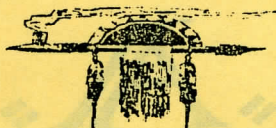
June 24 & 25 - Gay Pride Celebration

July: 25 thru August 6: 4th Annual International Wenakuo Traditional Spiritual Retreat, Boulder, CO (for more info contact David Young at wenakuo@juno.com or 303-939-9021)

NOTE: For an update of events not in the newsletter, or to check on the location, etc of the next meeting or potluck, please call our contact line at (415) 561-9756

**WANTED!!!** Donations of Native Artifacts, especially those which are connected to Two-Spirit, are currently being sought by Morningstar for inclusion in the Historical Society Showcase featuring items from numerous cultures (i.e. Latino, Afro-American, Leather, etc.). This showcase will become a permanent part of the Historical Society data, and will be on display during Gay Pride Celebrations - and beyond. Contact Morningstar at [415] 621-4952 for more information.

**ALSO WANTED!!!** Contributions regarding our Native heritage (beadwork, pottery, etc.) to be included in our next raffle to be held along with our May, 2000 potluck. Contact Sabrina Wolf [510] 773-0371 or Richard Boyd [415] 864-6847 for more information.



## Native American 10 Commandments

The Earth is our Mother: care for her.  
Honor all your relations.

Open your heart and soul to the Great Spirit.  
All life is sacred; treat all beings with respect.  
Take from the Earth what is needed and nothing more.  
Do what needs to be done for the good of all.  
Give constant thanks to Great Spirit for each new day.  
Speak the truth; but only of good in others.  
Follow the rhythms of nature; rise and retire with the sun.  
Enjoy life's journey, but leave no tracks.

## GREAT SPIRIT PRAYER

Oh, Great Spirit, whose voice I hear in the wind,  
Whose breath gives life to all the world,  
Hear me: I need your strength and wisdom.  
Let me walk in beauty, and make my eyes ever behold the red  
and purple sunset.  
Make my hands respect the things you have made and my  
ears sharp to hear your voice.  
Make me wise so that I may understand the things you have  
taught my people.  
Help me to remain calm and strong in the face of all that  
comes towards me.  
Let me learn the lessons you have hidden in every leaf and  
rock.  
Help me seek pure thoughts and act with the intention of  
helping others.  
I seek strength, not to be greater than my brother, but to fight  
my greatest enemy:  
Myself.  
Make me always ready to come to you with clean hands and  
straight eyes.  
So when life fades, as the fading sunset, my spirit may come  
to you without shame.

## REMEMBERING OUR HERITAGE

Each issue we will include a brief synopsis of a Native American Indian tribe. We will begin with the "POMO," also called the "basket weavers."

The Pomo lived in Northern California, in the Russian River Valley. Their language was called "pomoan." Their living quarters were cone-shaped or circular houses, covered with either tule or bark. Their diet consisted of acorns, fish, deer, elk, waterfowl, roots, berries and small game.

**INTERESTING FACTS:** There were seven groups of Pomo Indians. Each group spoke a different dialect, but lived in similar ways. Each group was divided into tribelets who were headed by a chieftain. Sometimes several of the tribelets formed a larger group for special reasons. The Pomo practiced a very complicated religion. The various tribal society members dressed like gods and ghosts, and performed special dances to celebrate the ripening of crops, to welcome young boys into the adult world, and to ask for good crops and fortune from the gods. The Pomo Indians used a special plant called "tule" to weave baskets, moccasins, mats, and boots, and also to build their houses.

## NATIVE ARTISTS OF CHANGE

Breaking through the Millennium

### MUSIC

Buffy Sainte-Marie (Cree)

When Buffy Sainte-Marie's first album, *It's My Way*, was released in 1964, she became an immediate star on the folk circuit. Tracks like "Now That the Buffalo's Gone," a blistering indictment of the plight of Native people in modern America, and "Universal Soldier," which became an anthem of the growing anti-Vietnam war movement, marked her as a powerful and important new voice.

Although she was primarily known as a folk singer early in her career, her range was considerably wider. She wrote compellingly realistic love songs like "Till It's Time for You to Go," country tunes like "I'm Gonna Be a Country Girl Again" and took an early foray into electronic music with her score for "God Is Alive, Magic Is Afoot," a passage from Leonard Cohen's novel, *Beautiful Lovers*. *Changing Woman* in 1975 continued in this vein and was one of the first pop albums to make full use of studio technology with its lush synthesizer arrangements.

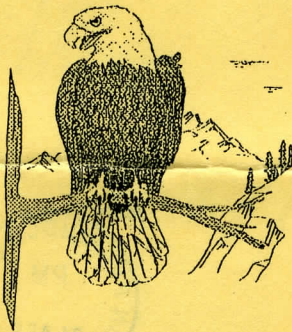
Throughout her career, Sainte-Marie has been a voice for reason and Native rights; probably the only Native artist most non-Indian people were aware of. In the early 1970s, after relocating to Hawaii, Sainte-Marie and her son, Dakota Starblanket Wolfchild, became regulars on *Sesame Street*, where she continued to sing about society's shortcomings and the joys of brotherhood.

Sainte-Marie still sings and records but has also become a painter of some note. You can view some of her work at [www.aloha.net/bsm/](http://www.aloha.net/bsm/). In 1982, she won an Oscar for "Up Where We Belong," the theme from *Officer and a Gentleman*, and she continues to write songs and soundtrack scores for films like *Jewel of the Nile* and *Starman*.

- j. Poet in Native Peoples Arts & Lifeways published in Phoenix, AZ

### THE EAGLES' NEST

The Eagles' Nest is a time, upon the request of any individual, to be utilized in the event of any need for someone to talk to. Many times that is all that is needed: the comfort and caring shoulder. Whether it is a problem or a moment to be shared privately, someone will stay with you following the meeting for this assistance. Please make requests for 'nesting' at the beginning of the meeting.



Handwritten notes and stamps are visible at the bottom of the page. There is a circular stamp on the left and a rectangular stamp on the right, both containing illegible text. The handwriting is in blue ink and appears to be a list or set of instructions.