

## Transgender Women

Transgender women in the past would have changed their gender roles at a young age and had a ceremony at puberty to make it official. They would have simply done the work of females and been accepted by their relatives and community as women. After that, they would not necessarily have had special status, because they would have been considered a woman and that was that. Some cultures had accorded special status due to economic factors, such as land ownership going through the matrilineal lines. All in all, transgender women were accorded respect and had healthy family lives with partners.

There are many examples of Two Spirit Transgender Women of the past because the male anthropologists were interested in them. Whewha of the Zuni people is both famous in her lifetime, and in modern times as 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. She was a famous artisan and trader.



4. Whewha of the Zuni people.

Transgender women today have a difficult road to follow because most Aboriginal people have forgotten our cultural histories due to residential schools. They experience homophobia and transphobia in their families and communities. There are a few who are understood and protected by their families. As more and more Aboriginal people learn our histories, Transgender Women will take their place in our communities and live as they are meant to among us with dignity and respect.



5. Osh-Tisch of the Crow People

## Transgender Men

Many of the examples of Two Spirit 'warrior women' and 'men-women' would fit into this label today. They 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. It would have been 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 providers and hard working women who managed their lives and materials.

Trans men today have the opportunity to change their gender through surgical and/or hormonal therapy. It is clear now when men and women can do most jobs equally well, that gender identity is deeper than activity or clothing. And that warrior women of the past felt more than just a need to hunt. They must have wanted to be seen as men and lived as men on every level as well, because Trans men today need to change more than just their roles. They want to change how others perceive their gender. As in the case of the Klamath man-woman who took on the traditional mourning rites when his wife died.

## A Sexual Spectrum

*Our understandings of gender identity and sexual orientation have become limited in the English language. The following diagram illustrates how complex and diverse identity could be:*

*Neuter (Male Essence)*

*Asexual (Biological Male)*

*Common Male (Heterosexual)*

*Bi-sexual (Biological Male)*

*Homosexual (Biological Male)*

*Inter-sex (Predominantly Male Genitalia)*

*Transitional Inter-sex (Natural or Medical)*

*Inter-sex (Predominantly Female Genitalia)*

*Homosexual (Biological Female)*

*Bi-sexual (Biological Female)*

*Common Female (Heterosexual)*

*Asexual (Biological Female)*

*Neuter (Female Essence)*

*(Tony Nobis)*

*In this diagram it is amazing to wonder that heterosexual people can be seen as the only way, when there are so many more possibilities and realities.*



*I was definitely going around saying I was gay, and she said, now that you are coming out, in your community, they call it two spirited. And I really still don't have that one down pat. But I'm enjoying it, now that I know that there is another expression in our life, instead of using the term gay. I like gay, but I'd rather be two spirited anytime, you know....It's something that should be thought of as a gift. A gift to have two spirits in your body...should really be honoured.*

*~ Night Butterfly Woman*

