

# Nine Genders Campfire Talk: The importance of ceremony in research

**Event:** Canada Pavilion at AIDS 2020:  
Virtual

**Date:** Monday July 06, 2020

**Presenters:** Michael Parsons & Marni  
Amirault

**Session moderator:** Sasha  
Kondrashov



# The Teaching ...

The Nine Genders teaching came through the offering of tobacco. As we were sitting by a sacred fire, like the one in the slide before this one, a young man was giving me cigarettes and through these offerings the ancestors answered him using my voice.

I said: it seems to me that you are two spirited and he replied, but I like sex with women. I said that doesn't matter—two spirits is a gender not a sexual orientation. (While this last statement is true for me it is not a true statement for all people—some consider two spirits a sexual orientation). Then I continued: your liking of frilly doilies and drapes and flowers on tables feeds your female spirit and that is why you like those things. If a man was born with a female spirit (not two spirited) they may feel as if a woman was living inside of them and as a result feel more comfortable living dressed in female clothing. The same for a woman who was born with a male spirit—they may feel more comfortable dressed in male clothing and feel as if a man was living inside of them. These people may not feel that their spirits are congruent with their physical bodies, but this is the way the Creator made them. Then, of course, when a male person is born with a male spirit, or a female is born with a female spirit, they would feel congruent with body and spirit.

A person born with two spirits would be congruent with an intersexed body and of course, an intersexed person could also be born with either a male or female spirit. The intersexed person may feel very differently, depending how they are spirited. Also—two spirits is defined in many ways. As well as multi spirited, there is room for all within the teachings. Now we need to explore where this teaching leads us as human beings.

Donde Nogama (All My Relations)



# Land Acknowledgment

- Acknowledging the unceded land of the Indigenous Peoples of Yelamu in San Francisco and Huichin in Oakland, California in the USA. We also acknowledge the Ramaytush Ohlone and the Confederated Villages of the Lisjan Ohlone Peoples, neighbored by the Muwekma Ohlone, Costanoan-Esselen, Rumsen and Mutsun Ohlone.
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- Acknowledge the estimated 476 million indigenous peoples living in approximately 90 countries around the world, representing around 5,000 different Indigenous cultures.

# Michael

- I am a traditional 2 spirits man living with AIDS since 1997, was first diagnosed HIV+ in 1986. In 1987 I met a medicine man in Tumbes Peru who took the HIV from me and was re-infected in 1991 when a condom broke.
- In 1996 the ancestors started chasing me across Canada, when I arrived in Nova Scotia my Mother informed me her father had Indigenous ancestry and when my father arrived, he informed me that his family were first generation Jackatars. I am jackatar with Biotic decent on my father side.
- My (maternal) Grandmother was born in St Anne's slums in Nottingham England just after the turn of the past centaury, she was born an English peasant.
- I was adopted by a Cree Elder as his son after my father sent me away to find a place to die because he did not want to be embarrassed within his church by having his son die on welfare of AIDS in Nova Scotia. This is who I am.





Marni



# Sasha Kondrashov

- Sasha loves teaching and has fifteen years of extensive teaching experience in Canada. He has designed more than 20 unique Social Work and Family Social Sciences undergraduate and graduate degree courses and taught at the University of Manitoba, Dalhousie University, the University of Northern British Columbia, Wilfred Laurier University, and Thompson Rivers University (TRU). Dr. Kondrashov is an assistant professor at TRU Faculty of Education and Social Work.



intersexed with 2 spirits	female with a female spirit	male with a male spirit
intersexed with a male spirit	female with a male spirit	male with a female spirit
intersexed with a female spirit	female with 2 spirits	male with 2 spirits

**Research Team** of 11 gender-diverse, Indigenous and allied community members and researchers

The **PURPOSE** of this project is to share the (re)vived concept called the nine genders and build momentum to learn how to integrate this concept in future research.

**Project goal:** The goal of the proposed project is to explore the concept of Nine (9) Genders and the impact of gender on wellness for First Nations, Inuit and Métis (Indigenous) Peoples in Canada.

# Project Objectives

- To **increase understanding of the Nine Genders teachings** as they relate to research with Indigenous Peoples by bringing together experts on gender (people with lived experience and/or academic expertise), Elders, and other stakeholders.
- To **expand the uptake of the Nine Genders and the role this concept plays in wellness** for Indigenous people in Canada through the development of a CIHR operating grant.
- To **build the capacity of an Indigenous undergraduate** interested in HIV Community-Based Research.
- To **discover techniques** that gender diverse Indigenous people use to create balance when they are spirited differently than their physical bodies.



# Nine Genders Research Methods (Sharing Circles)

This research will be conducted in ceremony. The research team will host a series of sharing circles with Canadian, American and International research participants. To participate in a Sharing Circle is to participate in ceremony. Our project is fortunate to have leadership from Mike Parsons, a Pipe Carrier who has been gifted the ways to conduct these ceremonies in a good way. Each sharing circle will begin with a pipe ceremony. This is done to invite the ancestors to participate with us and guide the work of the sharing circle. Once the pipe ceremony is completed, participants will also be invited to smudge. The participants of the sharing circles will be invited to share their perspectives on and experiences of gender with emphasis on exploring, in ceremony, the concept of Nine Genders.

# Nine Genders Research Methods (Team ceremony & workshop)

The research team will participate in a four-day, on the land ceremony that involves several components. This ceremony will take place in the location (New Brunswick, Canada) where Mike received the Nine Gender teachings.

**Day 1:** the team event will begin with a smudging ceremony, and then participate in a pipe ceremony to set the stage for sharing circles. The sharing circles will be conducted in a teepee.

**Day 2:** the research team will learn drum or basket making skills from local Elders.

**Day 3:** the team will continue the sharing circles

**Day 4:** the team will conclude the 4-day event by participating in a sweat which will be followed by a community feast.

# Current project activities:

We are in the very beginning stages of our project!

- Had one team meeting to date
- Literature review is underway
- COVID 19 has meant we have to re-envision our research plan
- Ethics Application is in development



# The Nine Genders project & ceremony

If research doesn't change you as  
a person, then you haven't done  
it right.

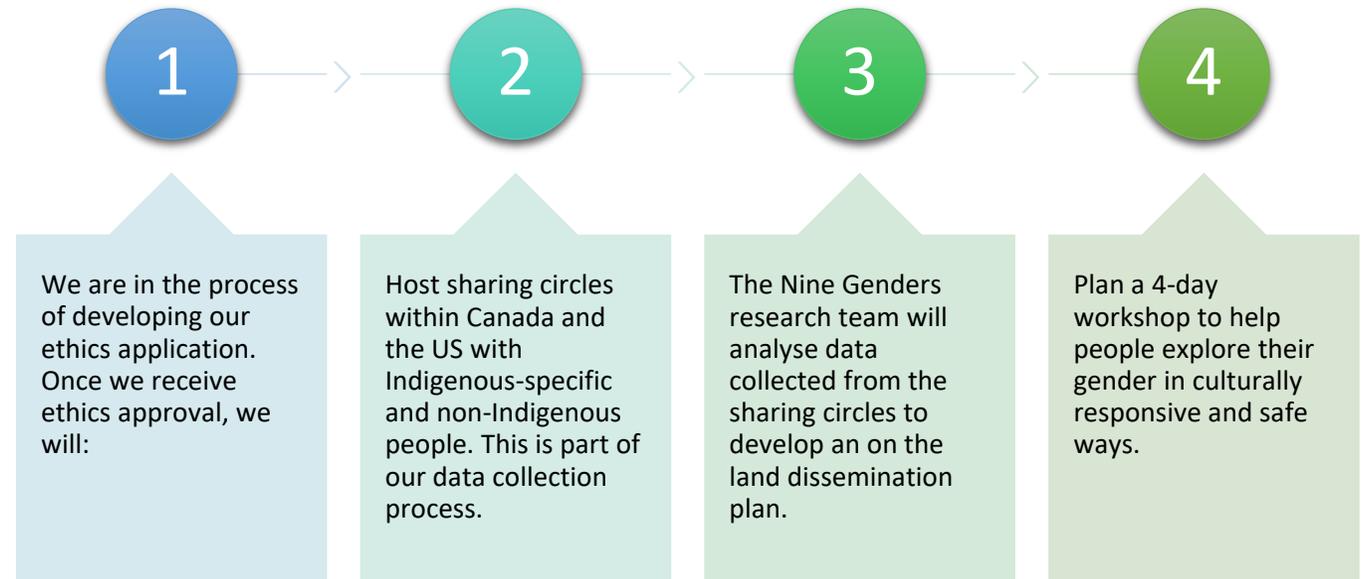
Shawn Wilson 2008





# Planning Next Steps ...

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Thank you!  
Questions  
and Contacts

**9 Genders Website:**  
[www.ninegenders.ca](http://www.ninegenders.ca)



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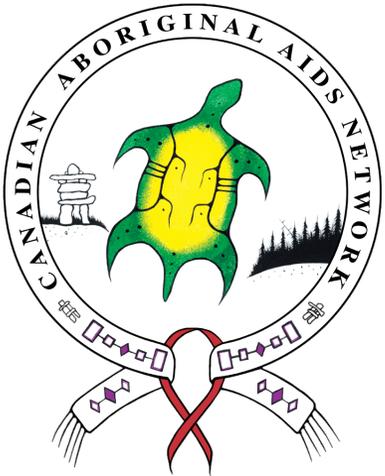
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**CIHR IRSC**

Canadian Institutes of  
Health Research

Instituts de recherche  
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- The AIDS 2020 Canadian Pavilion



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