



GLBT
Historical
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museum & archives

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New Exhibition Highlights Bay Area American Indian LGBTQ Organizing

San Francisco -- A new exhibition opening January 31 at the GLBT Historical Society Museum celebrates the 20th anniversary of Bay Area American Indian Two Spirits, an organization committed to activism and service for the Two-Spirit and ally communities of the San Francisco Bay Area.

"**Two-Spirit Voices: Returning to the Circle**" focuses on four main themes: LGBTQ and Two-Spirit pride, the annual Two-Spirit Powwow organized by BAAITS, indigenous medicine and responses to HIV/AIDS, and Two-Spirit meaning within indigenous communities. BAAITS members Roger Kuhn, Amelia Vigil and Ruth Villaseñor have curated the show in collaboration with the GLBT Historical Society.

"This exhibition emphasizes positive approaches to resistance to the current political climate in the United States, reminding visitors that Two-Spirit people are still here and still queer," Kuhn notes. "In particular, the displays honor the work Two-Spirit people do for native and non-native communities, including standing strong for environmental and social justice."

Drawing on materials such as regalia and textiles, medicines and herbs, and photography and video on loan from community members, as well as materials recently donated to the GLBT Historical Society, the exhibition highlights the resiliency of Two-Spirit people in Northern California.

"Two-Spirit Voices" opens Friday, January 31, at the GLBT History Museum, 4127 18th St., San Francisco, with a public reception set for 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. The curators will offer introductory remarks, and light refreshments will be served. Admission is \$5.00; free for members of the GLBT Historical Society. Tickets are available online at <https://bit.ly/2C3kRfW>.

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About the Term 'Two Spirit'

According to the curators, Two Spirit is translated from the Northern Algonquin word *niizh manitoag*. The word is used by some American Indian/First Nation communities to signify gender and sexual orientation variance. The term Two Spirit gained popularity in the 1990s after indigenous community leaders offered it as a counterpoint to colonial terminology used by anthropologists and academics to signify practices of nonbinary gender and sexual orientation among the Native peoples of North America. Contemporary American society commonly identifies Two-Spirit people as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender.

About the Curators

Roger Kuhn is a member of the Poarch Band of Creek Indians. He is a psychotherapist in San Francisco. His work is informed by social and sexual justice perspectives. A former chair of BAAITS, he is completing a PhD in human sexuality with a focus on decolonizing sexuality.

Amelia Vigil is a Two-Spirit and Latinx performance artist, poet and rock climber. Her indigenous heritage is Picuris Pueblo from her father and Purepecha from her mother. She serves as the events and communications manager for Outward Bound California, a nonprofit that promotes outdoor education. A graduate of Mills College in Oakland, Calif., she has been involved with Bay Area American Indian Two Spirits since 2013, joined the board of directors in 2015 and is currently chair of BAAITS.

Ruth Villaseñor is a Chiricahua-Apache Mexican woman who identifies as Two Spirit. She has been a member of BAAITS for 19 years. A filmmaker and activist, she was recognized by KQED Public Television in 2003 as a Bay Area Local Hero. Villaseñor co-owns Paws & Claws, a natural pet-food store in Oakland, Calif. She serves on the board of BAAITS.

About BAAITS

Founded in 1998, **Bay Area American Indian Two Spirits (BAAITS)** exists to restore and recover the role of Two-Spirit people within the American Indian/First Nations community by creating a forum for Two-Spirit spiritual, cultural and artistic expression.

BAAITS creates opportunities for Two-Spirit people to socialize, share, network and explore their rich heritage in a safe environment. To that end, the organization is committed to offering culturally relevant activities for LGBTQ individuals of Native American ancestry and their families and friends.

For more information, visit the BAAITS website at www.baaits.org.

About the Museum

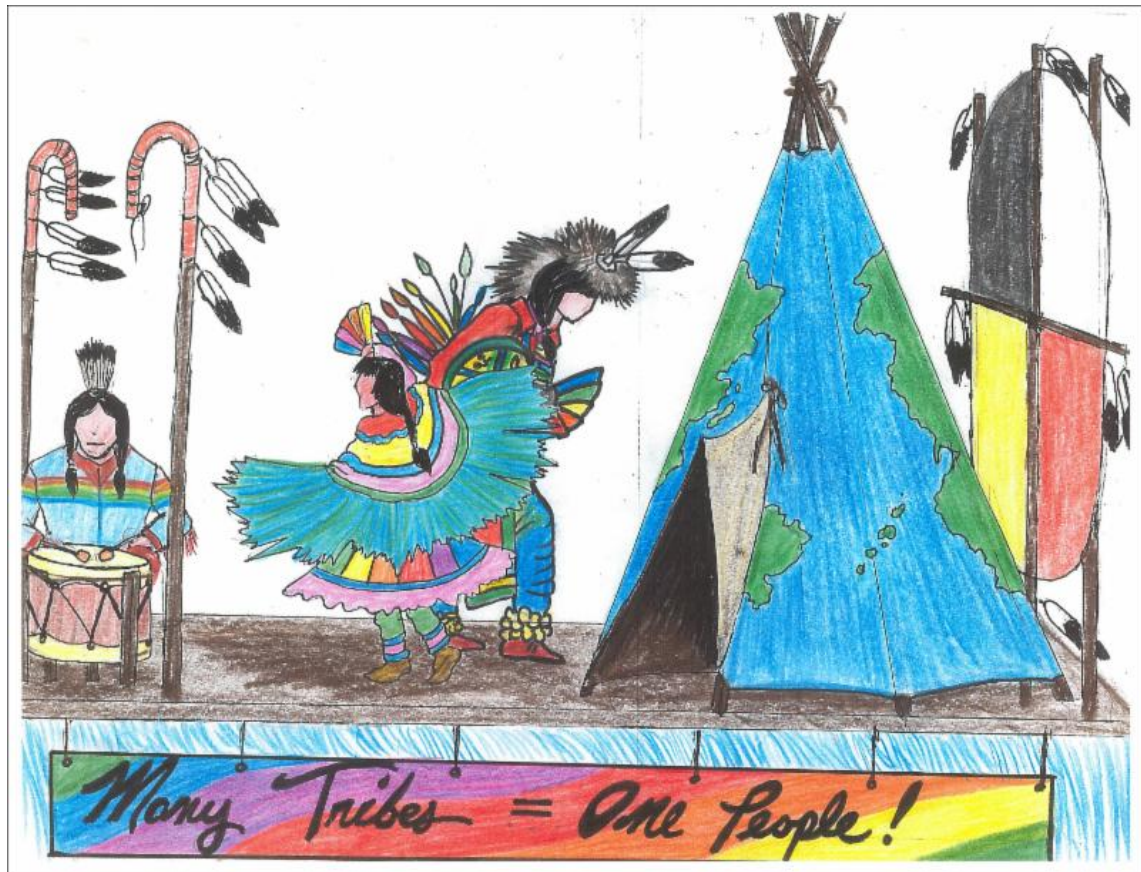
Open since January 2011, **the GLBT Historical Society Museum** (formerly known as the GLBT History Museum) is the first full-scale, stand-alone museum of its kind in the United States. Its Main Gallery features a long-term exhibition on San Francisco LGBTQ history, "Queer Past Becomes Present." Its Front Gallery and Community Gallery host changing exhibitions. The institution also sponsors forums, author talks and other programs.

The museum is a project of the GLBT Historical Society, a public history center and archives that collects, preserves and interprets the history of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people and the communities that support them. Founded in 1985, the society maintains one of the world's largest collections of LGBTQ historical materials.

For more information, visit the GLBT Historical Society website at www.glbthistory.org.

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Conceptual drawing for the Bay Area American Indian Two Spirits contingent in the San Francisco Pride Parade (2002); on loan from BAAITS. Used with permission; all rights reserved.



Three buttons and one name badge related to Two-Spirit and American Indian Organizing. Art and Artifacts Collection, GLBT Historical Society (San Francisco). Randy Burns cofounded the groundbreaking organization Gay American Indians in 1975.



Participants in the 12th Annual International Two-Spirit Gathering in Saratoga, Calif. (1999). Standing left to right: Joey Criddle, Albert Sanders, Sidney Mooring and Jerrica One Feather. Seated: Victor Bains. Photographer unknown. On loan from Bay Area American Indian Two Spirits. Used with permission; all rights reserved.



Curators Roger Kuhn and Ruth Villaseñor working on exhibition preparation in the reading room of the GLBT Historical Society archives. Photo: Mark Sawchuk.



Members of Bay Area American Indian Two Spirits form a drum circle at the GLBT Historical Society Museum. Photo: Gerard Koskovich.

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