

# The Sovereign Erotic

42ND AMERICAN INDIAN WORKSHOP

12TH-17TH JULY, 2021

EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY CYPRUS



Organiser: James Mackay



## A note on the conference format

In the last two years, many of us have become far more accustomed to online conferences than we were before. The pandemic has pushed even major national and international scholarly associations into meeting on Zoom, at the same time as scholars have been forced without warning into teaching using distance learning technologies. While recognizing that this has been an unwelcome change for many, I believe that this week's conference (just as with last year's AIW) shows that there are more things to be gained than lost in the move online.

Most importantly, we've reduced the CO<sub>2</sub> cost of this conference. An international conference inevitably involves flights from all over the world, and it's no longer justifiable to assuage our consciences by paying for ([often highly suspicious](#)) carbon offset programs. Destroying the atmosphere to go somewhere to talk about Indigenous issues seems particularly hypocritical, and when [the research suggests](#) that a move online can reduce the carbon footprint of these events by around 90% the question of how to make online work becomes particularly urgent. Cyprus, the host country for this year's AIW, is [a climate change hotspot](#) where temperatures are predicted to rise by much more than the global average unless world carbon emissions are reduced to zero, so this is a matter of particular urgency here.

The change also helps to democratize academia. Online conferences allow for delegates to attend from all over the world, including graduate students and independent scholars who [do not have funding for international travel](#). They also widen access opportunities for [scholars who find mobility difficult](#) for reasons such as disability and [childcare](#), and for researchers who have work commitments that would not allow them to take an entire week off for academic travel. Although those of you who've met me will be aware that I enjoy a beer at conference, it should also be recognized that the [social element of many conferences](#) is actively alienating to [people who do not wish to drink](#) for reasons of addiction, religious belief, pregnancy or personal preference.

For all these reasons, and although I'll miss the free holidays, I believe that both academia and the planet will be improved by a permanent move online.

What worries many, I know, is the loss of those casual connections made in the inter-panel coffee sessions, the chance encounters with others working on the same topic, the random chats that blossom into co-writing projects. For that reason, we're instigating a couple of changes that should help some of those connections bloom. First of all, we'll be using breakout rooms to create smaller conversation groups during panels, enabling people to chat together on specified topics. Secondly, the chat function will be on all the time to allow for private text-based conversations. Lastly, the Zoom room will remain open after the final session each day, and everyone is invited to join us there. If you would like me to set up a private breakout room for you and a few invited colleagues at that time, just let me know. I also love introducing people, so if there's someone you'd like to be in contact with, just let me know.

- **James Mackay (j.mackay@euc.ac.cy)**

## The American Indian Workshop

<https://www.american-indian-workshop.org/>

The American Indian Workshop (AIW) was founded in 1980 and has become the most important European scholarly platform for researchers concerned with topics related to the Native Peoples of North America. The AIW also includes scholars from all over the world.



The goal of the AIW is to provide a platform for established academics and young scholars to share their expertise and experiences as well as to benefit from one another's critical engagement. The meetings are [hosted each year](#) by a European academic institution. The domain of Native American Studies is enriched by scholars from such diverse disciplines as history, literature, anthropology, ethnology, art history, gender studies, museology, ethnomusicology, religion, law, linguistics, political science, cultural studies, philosophy, Canadian and American Studies, Native American Studies, Métis and Inuit Studies, and performance studies as well as communication and media studies. The AIW has become the most innovative venue in Europe for all involved with the scholarly pursuit of Native American and Inuit studies as well as being the place where Native American scholars and performers are honored and find a welcome reception.

The official [AIW internet site](#) and mailing list were set up by Renate Bartl in 2011. Renate Bartl is also responsible for general administration, finances, inquiry management and the official AIW LinkedIn site. Markus Lindner manages the official [AIW Facebook site](#).

Due to the rapidly growing membership and interest in the AIW, an AIW organizing committee was formed at the 2011 business meeting. The members of the organizing committee may make decisions and act on behalf of the group. The committee is composed of a number of standing members and alternating organizers of the previous, current and future AIW meetings.

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## Transmotion

Transmotion is a biannual journal inspired by the work of the Anishinaabe polymath Gerald Vizenor. The journal was created in 2015 and has published two issues a year since then. We publish new scholarship focused on theoretical, experimental, postmodernist, and avant-garde writing produced by Native American and First Nations authors, as well as book reviews on relevant work in Vizenor Studies and Indigenous Studies.



Our forthcoming Summer 2021 edition is a special issue edited by Kai Minosh Pyle and Danne Jobin, focusing on “Transgender, Two-Spirit and Nonbinary Indigenous Literatures.”

The broad use of Vizenor-created theoretical terms in many different academic fields (e.g. law, literature, anthropology, sociology, museum studies, etc.) highlights the fact that Vizenor Studies represents a significant interdisciplinary conversation within the broader field of Indigenous Studies. As such, the editors of Transmotion will look for submissions that do any of the following:

- Continue Vizenor’s project of bringing together traditional indigenous knowledges and Asian or European continental philosophy
- Explore the inter-relation of image and text, art and literature, in Vizenor’s work
- Contribute to recent developing conversations in contemporary Native American art and literature, in relation to questions of sovereignty, visibility, and ethics.
- Offer innovative, surprising, unexpected and creative critique of American Indian literatures or other creative arts
- Emphasize experimental, theoretical, and avant-garde Native North American work

The journal also accepts creative or hybrid work, particularly from Indigenous creators.

Transmotion is hosted by the University of Kent and produced in collaboration with European University Cyprus, California State University San Bernardino and the University of Georgia, under a Creative Commons license. All articles are double-blind peer reviewed and the journal is fully and permanently open-access, with no fees charged to either authors or readers.

Selected proceedings from the 42<sup>nd</sup> AIW will be published as a special issue of the journal.

*Editors: David Carlson, James Mackay, David Stirrup, Theodore C. Van Alst and Bryn Skibo-Birney*  
*Editorial Assistants: Miriam Brown-Spiers, Renata Ryan Burchfield, Matt Kliewer, Jake Barrett-Mills*

<https://journals.kent.ac.uk/index.php/transmotion/index>

# Conference Programme

Note: all times are given as Eastern European Summer Time (i.e. Cyprus time). If joining from a different time zone, make sure to convert the time - [timeanddate.com](http://timeanddate.com) has a convenient tool for this).

## Monday 12th July

Conference opening and welcome (4:30 pm)

### Session 1 – Eco-Erotics (5pm)

5pm Eastern European Summer Time

Chair: Matt Kliewer (University of Georgia)

**Ho’esta Mo’e’hahne (University of California, Los Angeles)**

- **Queer Indigenous Ecologies, Sensations, and Nourishing Foodways**

The queer Kumeyaay poet Tommy Pico’s 2019 collection, *Feed*, expands the powerful ecological concerns articulated in his previous works by weaving together queer mediations on consumption, sustenance, Indigenous foodways, colonialism and the complexities of romantic partnering. The collection takes shape through a poetic walking tour of the High Line Park in New York City with a former lover. Centering Indigenous food sovereignty and relationships to other-than-human lives, *Feed* articulates contemporary queer deconstructions of the Indigenous experiences of deprivation and nourishment as they are shaped by historic and ongoing settler colonialism. Pico speaks to the ways that U.S. and Spanish colonialism destroyed his people’s Indigenous food practices. In the face of such ecological, biological, and epistemic violence, Pico creates and shares new food practices and memories with his friends in the urbanized spaces of California and New York. Pico’s food practices offer new sensuous, queer, and communal enactments of Indigenous foodways that nourish Pico’s body and mind in the aftermath of the colonial assaults on Kumeyaay ecologies. Additionally, moving through the occupied yet flourishing spaces of New York City’s High Line Park—in the historically queer, non-Native neighborhood of Chelsea—Pico elaborates loving connections to the plant species that colonists have planted in the park. The park was built on the ruins of a railway that previously brought shipments of food to the city and Pico’s reflections on the plant relatives living there offer decolonial visions of an Indigenous ecology which queers urbanized space and settler hierarchies of life. Taken together, Pico’s orientation towards plant lives, food practices, the Lenape homelands of New York City, and Kumeyaay homelands of Southern California importantly represents the erotic through affective, embodied sensations. In *Feed*, the erotic becomes a form of relation that is intimately connected to queer socialities, Indigenous ecologies, decolonial food practices.

**Julia Siepak (Nicolaus Copernicus University)**

- **'space left unbodied': The Poetics of Space and the Sovereign (Eco)Erotic in Arielle Twist's *Disintegrate/Dissociate***

The cartographic representation of appropriated North American territories proved an important strategy in claiming the right to Indigenous lands by settlers in the colonial times. The desire to map ownership, often for the purposes of extraction, required to erase First Nations communities from their homelands and inscribe settler colonial structures reflecting those of the Old World. Indigenous literary tradition, in turn, creates maps that contest the normative settler colonial cartographies. This paper explores the imaginative mappings emerging from the poetry of a Nehiyaw Two-Spirit writer and sex educator, Arielle Twist. In her debut volume of poetry, *Disintegrate/Dissociate* (2019), Twist projects complex intersections between land, nature, and queerness, emphasizing the symbiosis between the human and the non-human. Twist's poems map precarious geographies of queer bodies that alike land arise as conquered spaces. These embodied geographies expose interlocking forms of oppression experienced by Two-Spirit persons and the environment at the hands of settler colonial Canada. The strong sense of uprootedness and longing for home permeates Twist's poetry and defines the spatial poetics of the volume. Hence, the paper addresses the ways in which her poetry homes bodies and landscapes, transgressing settler colonial impositions. I will base my reading of *Disintegrate/Dissociate* on the concept of *sovereign erotic* coined by Qwo-Li Driskill (2004), stressing its power to bridge the struggle for individual and collective sovereignties. Yet my analysis will, further, propose another implication that arises from Twist's debut volume, namely queer Indigenous erotic's potential to unsettle land and the environment. Therefore, the paper constitutes an attempt to read *Disintegrate/Dissociate* as a map transgressing and transforming settler normativity and enacting Indigenous ecologies.

## **Session 2: "Her Eyes Are My Home" – an audience with Chrystos**

Keynote address

7pm-8pm Eastern European Summer Time

Introduction: Renate Burchfield (University of Colorado)

## Session 3 – Reclamations of the Erotic

8:30pm Eastern European Summer Time

Chair: Bryn Skibo-Birney (University of Geneva)

### Barbara Schellhammer (Munich School of Philosophy)

- **Reading *Split Tooth*: A spiritual journey entering a world of abuse, natural powers, affectionate friendship and bodily sensations**

Reading Tanya Tagaq's (2019) *Split Tooth* affected me on a very profound level. I used to live in Canada and spent time in Indigenous communities, especially in the Arctic. As social worker and researcher dealing with juvenile sex offenders, I witnessed the heavy burden of abuse and alcohol as well as suicidal thoughts in midst of a spiritual reality sparked by a natural environment that doesn't allow for compromise. Being a woman coming from a very different place, the story of a young girl growing up in Nunavut seemed to be full of ambiguities which drew me in its intense tension – it was upsetting and off-putting as well as fascinating and arousing at the same time. The longing for power and yet the lack thereof shows in the brutality of rape a lot of Indigenous children experience. They grow into a culture of violence, neglect and meaninglessness induced by cultural loss. Yet, the spiritual power of life and death is immense. The ecstatic expression of bodily desires explodes in Tagaq's work that resists a linear storyline as it deviates in poetic episodes. Contrary to Western traditions, it becomes utterly perceptible that we are not the opposite of nature, we *are* nature – we depend on it and we cannot resist it. This particularly shows in the erotic description of the Northern Lights penetrating the young girl's body resulting in a mysterious pregnancy. What interests me is what *Split Tooth* does with me and why I experience that way – in terms of my own bodily reactions as well as with regards of the transformative power Tagaq's spiritual story holds for intercultural philosophy with Indigenous traditions.

### Cécile Heim (University of Lausanne)

- **Invoking Deer Woman: The Indigenous Feminist Politics of Storytelling in Franci Washburn's *Elsie's Business***

This paper examines the ways in which Franci Washburn's (Lakota and Anishinaabe) representation of violence against Indigenous women in her first novel, *Elsie's Business*, reinforces Lakota sovereignty. *Elsie's Business* underlines the ways in which gender violence and motherhood coerce women into the maintenance of hetero-patriarchal capitalism. To resist this violence, Washburn deploys contemporary versions of Deer Woman and Anukite. By featuring these Lakota figures in a novel that discusses violence against Indigenous women in the contemporary United States, Washburn adapts these figures' meanings to the contemporary context and issues. Furthermore, she also enables an understanding of the

ways in which settler colonization and its capitalist regime creates and perpetuates the kind of violence faced by Indigenous women today. In broader terms, *Elsie's Business* extends the temporality of analysis of violence against Indigenous women to the beginnings of European colonization and embeds this violence in the contemporary context in a way that enhances the connections between violence, capitalism, and feminist relations.

If the racial and feminist relations explored in *Elsie's Business* seem trapped in, and dictated by, the colonial-capitalist regime, storytelling returns sovereignty to the novel's protagonist, Elsie. Storytelling, then, becomes an act of sovereignty. Because Elsie is neither the narrator nor is the narrative perspective ever focalized on her, she is not fixed in writing which enables her to escape all (narrative) grasp. This character's potential for movement, transformation, and transmotion thus enables her to remain sovereign. Thanks to the novel's narrative structure, Elsie's non-fixedness allows her to remain truly sovereign and operating (in) transmotion. While the first half of this presentation therefore explores the representation of violence against Indigenous women in this novel, the second half analyzes the ways in which the narrative act of telling stories about violence against Indigenous women can create and consolidate Indigenous self-determination.

### **Tanja Grubnic (Western University Ontario)**

- **Social Media and Sovereignty: Tenille Campbell's #IndianLovePoems**

While emerging research on social media platforms has demonstrated how algorithms homogenize feeds, delimit visibility, and monetize users, there is also evidence to suggest that platforms have provided a particularly hospitable environment for young, minoritized, or emerging writers to establish themselves in a space that can be healing, supportive, and accepting. It is clear that we need more nuance when discussing how social media platforms have affected the literary ecosystem. This paper explores the extent to which Instagram has offered Dene/Métis poet and photographer Tenille Campbell (from English River First Nation, Saskatoon) a space for "reclaiming Indigenous body, heart and sexuality" (Deerchild). Initially emerging as a series of social media posts, *#IndianLovePoems* is a collection of erotic poems that rejects settler-colonial discourses of Indigenous women "as passive objects of male exploitation and violence" (Akiwzjie-Damm). Writing erotica, however, has been considered a risky endeavour for Indigenous authors who remain marginalized in their nation-states (Andrews). But Instagram provides a virtual space outside of the realm of national borders: it enables the free flow of texts, ideas, and genres across the platform to a diverse audience around the globe. This paper questions if Instagram provides Campbell greater autonomy to define herself as an Indigenous author and to circumvent the Canadian publishing industry, which has been critiqued in recent years. Alicia Elliot famously declared that "CanLit is a raging dumpster fire" due to its long-standing yet un confronted issues related to racism, sexism, tokenism, and more. Addressing tensions of relationality between the categories of Canadian literature ("CanLit") and Indigenous literature in Canada, this paper explores if and how virtual spaces afford Campbell sovereignty to define herself as an Indigenous author, resisting reductive categories like



"CanLit" that often tokenize Indigenous voices as a symbol of the nation's diversity and reconciliation efforts.

## Tuesday 13th July

### Session 1 – Queering Genres

5pm Eastern European Summer Time  
Chair: Renata Burchfield (University of Colorado)

#### Channette Romero (University of Georgia)

- **Sacred Erotics in Two-Spirit and Queer Indigenous Futurism**

In our excitement to understand the perimeters of the growing Indigenous Futurist movement, one aspect continues to remain under-examined—two-spirit (2S) and queer Indigenous futurism. While my paper will celebrate Indigenous Studies' valuable efforts to draw wider attention to futurism, it also warns that such work must not be made at the expense of downplaying 2S/queer-centered narratives, especially narratives of the erotic. Drawing upon Grace Dillon's concept of biskaabiiyang ("returning to ourselves") and Indigenous queer theory by Daniel Heath Justice, Qwo-Li Driskill, and Mark Rifkin, my paper will examine literary works by Joshua Whitehead, Darcie Little Badger, and Billy-Ray Belcourt. In particular, I interrogate the function of erotics in their futurist narratives. In these works, non-heteronormative acts of pleasure are portrayed as ceremony, as sacred practices that return Indigenous 2S/queer folx back to themselves and their network of intimate and spiritual relationships, relations that are central to maintaining tribal personhood. In the face of settler colonialism's gendered violence which has historically and presently led to death for 2S/queer folx, these works instead prompt readers to recognize and return to our responsibilities to care for all within our world. Replacing settler colonialism's death-logic with ethical relations based on pleasure, 2S/queer futurism encourages readers to imagine more pleasurable, life-affirming futures instead. These texts urge readers to build new worlds and futures based not on settler colonial hierarchies, but on relationships of radical care. They tease and taunt readers, asking whether we are brave enough to leave behind our familiar, even if horrific, current world for an unknown future where we are held ethically accountable for not only our actions, but for building and sustaining a world for all living things. They urge us to return to and attend our relationships—our relations with human and non-human others, our spirits, and our bodies. 2S/queer futurism's sacred erotics challenge readers with potential pleasure, no less, to do their part in building worlds more life-giving for 2S/queer folx and all who have suffered under settler colonialism.

## Bethany Webster-Parmentier (Europa-Universität Flensburg)

- **Romancing the Wolf: Demonsterizing the Erotic in *Empire of Wild***

In paranormal romances centered around werewolves, sexual desire and violence are heavily coded in opposing gendered terms: “male lycanthropy finds expression primarily in the murderous hunger for flesh and blood, while for female werewolves, the opposite is true: lycanthropy is essentially a release for sexual hunger” (de Coudray 114). Thus, the repressed male “beast within” is his violent nature whilst the repressed female “beast” is her sexual appetite. Rosalind Sibielski has argued that werewolf narratives since the beginning of the new millennium continue to perpetuate this scheme, thereby reinforcing “hegemonic constructions of sexual difference” (117). In the case of male shapeshifters: “the hero is initially attracted to the heroine because of his desire to kill her, and instinctive, integral violence that he must learn to control as he seeks to win her love” (McMahon-Coleman and Weaver 57). Cherie Dimaline’s 2019 novel *Empire of Wild* upends the conventions of supernatural romance such as those outlined above. It does so not by minimizing themes and tropes that have been used to objectify and sexualize Indigenous peoples (perhaps most recently in the *Twilight* saga), but by centering the novel around the (erotic) connection between Joan and Victor – one which, rather than threatening to tear the two apart, or serving to force Joan to choose between a life without the person she loves or a life in which she lives under constant threat of violence, provides the path to rescuing Victor. Bringing theories of lycanthropy into dialogue with theories of female monstrosity, this paper aims to delineate *Empire of Wild*’s recalibration of Indigenous sexuality as a “sovereign erotic,” liberating its Métis characters from the violent and constricting generic conventions of werewolf narratives.

## Ashley Morford (Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts)

- **Cyberspace as a (Sovereignly Erotic) Indigenous Territory in Joshua Whitehead’s *full-metal indigiqueer***

As the Indigenous territories of so-called North America are currently occupied by colonial nation-states, so too is cyberspace currently occupied by colonial regimes. Computer systems are built from and follow colonial frameworks, while mainstream conceptualizations of cyberspace view the Internet through colonial epistemes (Duarte; Noble). But Indigenous people are crafting the Internet as a space of/for Indigenous life, love, and truth. I believe that, just as the lands and waters in so-called North America are Indigenous, so too is cyberspace an Indigenous territory. Joshua Whitehead’s poetry collection *full-metal indigiqueer* (2017) demonstrates this idea. Through virtual reality sequences, software installations, and coding, *full-metal indigiqueer* portrays a digital world created by the two-spirit Oji-Cree protagonist Zoa. I analyse the world of *full-metal indigiqueer* as a digital Indigenous environment that reveals what a decolonial digital otherwise might look like. I particularly argue that the cyberspace of *fullmetal indigiqueer* is sovereignly erotic. Driskill et al (2011) explain that, for two-spirit and Indigiqueer people, “the process of reclaiming,

reinventing, and reimagining our lives [...] is a central mode of resistance” and of practicing sovereign eroticism (Driskill et al 3-4). It is critical, then, that Whitehead’s re-building of the Internet is led by the two-spirit character Zoa. I reflect on *full-metal indigiqueer*’s digital territory as a queer normative territory, where queerness is not “other” but is normal (Wilson qtd by Simpson 123). I also demonstrate how the cyberspace that Zoa creates is an eco-erotic space where digital and land blend. Aligned with this blending, eco-erotic experiences are sovereign erotic moments of intimacy and kinship shared between human-land and human-water relations (Nelson 252). I hope my reflection on *full-metal indigiqueer* can spark conversation around the potentials and limitations of the Internet as a space/place of sovereign eroticism, and around protecting Indigenous knowledges, truths, and life online.

## Session 2 - Andrea Carlson in conversation with David Stirrup (University of Kent)

Plenary session

7pm-8pm Eastern European Summer Time

Andrea Carlson’s art can be viewed at [www.mikinaak.com](http://www.mikinaak.com)

## Session 3 – Visual cultures

8:30pm Eastern European Summer Time

Session moderator: Shelley Saggar (University of Kent)

### Denise Low (Baker University)

- **Erotic Presence in Ledger Art**

Northern Cheyenne ledger art created by Fort Robinson Breakout survivors and others show images that suggest pre-reservation erotics through courtship, dances, and embraces within the enclosure of a blanket--including a rare occasion of apparent intercourse. Ramon Powers and I have recently authored [\*Northern Cheyenne Ledger Art by Fort Robinson Breakout Survivors\*](#). Gender indicators occur in most images of this collection of four ledger-art booklets created in 1879 by, probably, Wild Hog, Porcupine, and Strong Left Hand. Clothing signage clarifies men’s and women’s roles as they court, hunt, fight battles, and parade. The motif of people’s courtship and pairing is paralleled by images of female animals and their young: elk, bison, and turkeys. In this and other Cheyenne ledger art, women have a variety of war-related roles, somewhat signaled by dress, which indicate a range of gender fluidity. Tipis parallel women’s dresses and other female imagery, and they occur most often with representations of women. Intergender individuals occur, as illustrated in *Arrow’s Elk Society Ledger* (Morning Star Gallery, 1999). This presentation gives an overview of this genre and its advantages as a primary source for pre-reservation and early reservation traditions, unadulterated by settler editing and/or censure. My imperfect understanding of the ledger art is a given; nonetheless, the legacy of ledger art and winter counts, the highly connotative

glyphic literacy of Indigenous Americans, suggests the critical place of erotics in ceremonial, spiritual, social, and survival activities of Cheyenne and allied Lakota groups.

### **Aurélie Journée-Duez (EHES, LAS)**

- **Indigenous Women and Queer Artists facing their image: For an intersectional and decolonial History of Contemporary Native Arts in the US and Canada (1969-2019).**

Through artistic and political images, Indigenous Women and Queer artists take part in actual resistance movements against extractivist projects they fight at the frontline, since the *#NoDAPL movement* (2016-2017). These creations work on an analogy made between the violation of their rights, the exploitation of their lands and territories, and the feminicides perpetuated. Based upon an iconographic corpus made of almost 20 artworks, through the 70s till now, and individual interviews with women and queer artists and militants from the US and Canada, this paper aims to show how these images try to set up new epistemologies in an intersectional, decolonial and anticapitalist perspective. These practices are part of a process of reaffirmation of Indigenous Peoples inherent rights, guaranteed by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007). In the late 1960s, the *Indians of All Tribes* lead a movement of social protests to get their rights to sovereignty and self-determination recognized. *The American Indian Movement* (AIM) with *Women of All Red Nations* (WARN) take over these political, social, and cultural issues. Together, Indigenous women and men start a process of emancipation that has been blocked by assimilationist US governmental policies. In Canada, collective movements also rise in the 80s and 90s, with the highest points during the Restigouche events (1984) and the Oka Crisis (1990). These major events inspire a whole generation of young Indigenous artists and women in particular, who study mostly at the *Institute of the American Indian Arts* in Santa Fe, New-Mexico. Thanks to their education, they develop transdisciplinary artistic practices between art and ethnography that highlight the porosity and the flakiness of the borders that have been created in all the sectors by the mainstream society against groups regarded as minorities. To do so, the "photographique" (Krauss, 1990) – that refers to the photographic practice, technics and image – become a strategic technical and technological tool of reappropriation and reaffirmation of their identities and representation. Thanks to this medium, these women and queer artists question the ways they have been presented, and *re-represent* themselves in the context of critical practices of the stereotypes that they have been facing for several centuries of cultural appropriation. It enables them to rethink their identities, the relationships to their bodies, their sexualities and genders, in terms of paradigms specific to their own spiritualities. Finally, they bring us to reflect upon decolonial feminism and Indigenous eco-sexuality.

Deanne Grant (Fort Lewis College)

- **Erotic Art as A Material Cultural Representation of Indigenous Decolonial Sexuality**

This paper theorizes the importance of Indigenous erotic art as a sexual imagining and analyzes the uses of Indigenous erotic art as the material representation of an Indigenous decolonial sexuality in the *Native American Body of Art* exhibit. I draw from key themes of Indigenous feminisms, including the need to re-write, re-construct, and re-imagine Native womanhood in a manner that challenges colonial constructions of what it means to be a Native woman and how matrilineal Indigenous histories challenge gendered colonialism to frame my theoretical contribution of an Indigenous decolonial sexuality for Native women. I argue that Native peoples can imagine alternative decolonial sexual realities by drawing from Indigenous self-representations, traditions, and histories represented in art by showing Indigenous representations of matrilineality and Native women's traditional influence in society. Indigenous erotic art offers the material for imaginings about the body, motherhood, and sexuality from the perspective of Native artists. I reference Indigenous erotic art as the material for imaginings that promote a future where Indigenous decolonial sexuality is a cultural norm in Native communities. Indigenous imaginings in Indigenous erotic art contribute to Indigenous decolonial sexuality as representations of what the erotic is, according to Indigenous perspectives. My conceptualizations of the erotic as a useful form of self-expression and power draws from Africana lesbian woman Audre Lorde.

## Wednesday 14th July

### **Session 1 – Roundtable Honouring the Literary, Political, and Erotic Work of Chrystos**

5pm Eastern European Summer Time

Participants: Patrizia Zanella (University of Geneva)  
Laura De Vos (University of Washington)  
Kai Minosh Pyle (University of Minnesota)  
Jas Morgan (Ryerson University)

Respondent: Chrystos

### **Session 2 – AIW Business Meeting**

7pm-8pm Eastern European Summer Time

Session moderator: AIW committee

Presentations for AIW meetings 2022-2025.

Also on the agenda: the formation of an AIW Journal; AIW ongoing online events; AIW Museums initiative; AIW Bibliography Databank; Finances.

## Session 3 – Theorizing the Erotic

8:30pm Eastern European Summer Time

Chair: David J. Carlson (California State University, San Bernardino)

### Scott Andrews (California State University, Northridge)

- **Jouissance: Jouissance, Survivance, and Native Eroticism**

In this presentation I discuss *jouissance*, which is a combination of jouissance and survivance (which itself frequently is understood as a kind of portmanteau, a combination of survivance and resistance). I use jouissance to describe Native pleasure as an act of resistance to colonization. The primary example for discussion will be Billy-Ray Belcourt's 2020 collection of autobiographical creative non-fiction, *A History of My Brief Body*. In that book he states that with joy Native people can "breach the haze of suffering." He says his book is intended to "keep brown queer joy in the world... a world-to-come imbued with brown queer possibility." If time permits, I will discuss examples of Native eroticism as empowerment and transgression from *Johnny Appleseed* by Joshua Whitehead and *Indian Love Poems* by Tenille Campbell. The word jouissance has sexual connotations, and those connotations apply to Belcourt's book since it discusses queer eroticism as an act of resistance – as @BillyRayB he recently tweeted "I identify as a transgressive act of joy." In the presentation I briefly review the histories of the words jouissance (as applied to literary and cultural studies by Helen Cixous) and survivance (as applied to American Indian Studies by Gerald Vizenor). Jouissance exemplifies the power identified by Audre Lorde in "Uses of the Erotic": "In touch with the erotic, I become less willing to accept powerlessness, or those other supplied states of being which are not native to me, such as resignation, despair, self-effacement, depression, self-denial."

### Ionah Scully (Syracuse University)

- **Love Notes with the Land: Two Spirit Stories of Other-than-Human Relationships**

As a Two Spirit scholar of the Michel First Nation (Cree-Métis), this author examines self in relationship to place, ancestors, and relatives today to define their Two Spirit identity and to engage in a re-education of desire that has been disrupted by colonization. Land, in the American imaginary, has been rendered a gendered place, one that is simultaneously wild and virgin, a feminized space to be conquered vis-à-vis cis-heteronormative whiteness. This creates not only a separation between Native people and the lands to which we belong, it also serves as the foundation for sexual and gender violence and the education of Native peoples' desires—particularly those who were perceived by colonialism as gender and/or sexually diverse. As Native people, however, land has always been a space for us to exercise and practice desire. In our reclamation work, stories are re-emerging of our deep relationality with the land, yet there is still a dearth of Two Spirit narrations of these

relationships. This presentation describes findings from these stories that interrupt discursive tropes of the “noble savage,” an archetype of a Native person who is peacefully in co-existence with the land. Instead, these stories re-imagine and re-member our erotic affinity to the land and other-than-human beings particularly as we heal from colonization’s re-education of our desire toward either assimilation (cis-heteronormativity) or annihilation (through gender and sexual violence). Describing the Indigenous research methodologies used including *miskasowin*, an Indigenized autoethnography as defined by Nehiyaw (Cree) and this author’s scholarly work, this author will share some of these stories as well as key take-aways for informing new ways of thinking about relationships to the land; intersections between ecological, racial, and gender justice; and informing a Two Spirit understanding of land pedagogy.

**José Ventura Alegría Hernández (Amsterdam University)**

- **ars erotica and scientia sexualis in “Tatterborn”**

This paper takes as its basis the Foucauldian dichotomy between *ars erotica* and *scientia sexualis* in order to analyse the sexual dimension inherent in the portrayal of colonisation in Daniel H. Justice’s short story “Tatterborn”. Thus, I will show how different modes of understanding sexuality played a major role in the processes of colonisation of the Americas and how they are replicated in Justice’s World of Oz. Particular attention will be paid to the great anxiety that settler-colonisers felt at being faced with modes of masculinity that did not strongly follow European notions of gender, such as in the case of two-spirited individuals, and how these led to violent outbursts on the side of the colonisers in an attempt to assert their heteronormative masculinity. Lastly, there will be an exploration of the different modes in which settler-colonial discourses have permeated Indigenous communities and have led to the naturalisation of heteronormative and settler-colonial masculine behaviours that did not originally exist in many of these societies.

**Thursday 15th July**

## **Session 1 – “History as Prelude”: The Legacy of Steve Russell (Roundtable)**

5pm Eastern European Summer Time

Participants: John D. Berry (University of California, Berkely (ret’d))  
David Carlson (California State University, San Bernardino)  
Thomas Donald Jacobs (Ghent University) (moderator)  
Franci Taylor (University of Utah)

Good places to start for an introduction to Russell’s work: [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#).

## Session 2 – “Eroticism as a Series of Offerings” Shaawano Chad Uran

7pm-8pm Eastern European Summer Time  
Keynote Address

## Session 3 – Pornographies

8:30pm Eastern European Summer Time  
Chair: Matt Kliewer (University of Georgia)

Participants:

Geary Hobson (emeritus professor, University of Oklahoma) – Skins in Skin Flicks  
Jade Le Grice (University of Auckland) – Māori cultures and Western pornographies  
James Mackay (European University Cyprus) – Native American Representation in Settler Pornography

## Friday 16th July

## Session 1 – Joy in the World

5pm Eastern European Summer Time  
Chair: Ashley Caranto Morford (Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts)

**Chelsea Fritz (University of Alberta)**

- **“Visions of Lust and Love and Pleasure”: Reading Sex-Positivity and the Erotic Self in Campbell’s #IndianLovePoems**

Kateri Akiwenzie-Damm highlights the utter lack of sexual and erotic representation in past Indigenous writing, but this paper examines a noticeable increase of sexual themes in present-day Indigenous texts where young authors explore topics of sex, sexualities, and the erotic. With a specific analysis of Tenille K. Campbell’s 2017 collection, *#IndianLovePoems*, my research highlights this text as a shining example of the anti-colonial sentiment to be found in literature about hook ups, break ups, and everything in between. At first glance, Campbell’s stories of sex and passion may not fit perfectly into the assumed Indigenous literary canon, but through a study of the erotic and Campbell’s celebration of Indigenous sex-positivity, it is clear that *#IndianLovePoems* functions just as mightily as a proponent of kinship, sovereignty, and anti-colonialism as any other popular work published before. This paper is grounded in the scholarship of such theorists as Qwo-Li Driskell, Daniel Heath Justice, Drew Hayden Taylor, and Kateri Akiwenzie-Damm as I explore the past and present



of Indigenous erotica. By analyzing Campbell's use of lusty language, sex positivity, an invocation of the past, and the use of ancestral Indigenous languages, I argue that writing of the erotic is not a one-off trend, but rather an important theme being embraced by young, Indigenous writers unafraid to pursue the topic of Indian love in all its forms. As an Indigenous graduate student, I approach the work of Campbell and her contemporaries with a level of respect and relatability, for *#IndianLovePoems* and others in its genre supply a new level of representation, aptly capturing the nuances of life and love as young Indigenous Peoples.

### **June Scudeler (Simon Fraser University)**

- **"You Can't Be an NDN in Today's World:" Tommy Pico's Queer NDN Epic Poems**

From the Viejas Indian reservation of the Kumeyaay Nation, Tommy Pico's *Nature Poem* (2017) won the 2018 Whiting Award, the committee calling it a "contemporary epic." At first glance, calling Pico's poetry epic may seem like an odd choice as it's a genre of heroic deeds and way of a way of claiming land for settler colonialism. How do Pico's queer Kumeyaay poems fit within the epic tradition? He not only queers the epic but also Indigenizes it to reflect contemporary urban Indigenous experiences, carving a space in contemporary American society for himself as a queer NDN. Pico blends internet speak with the travels of a young, hip queer Kumeyaay man through New York, book tours, relationships, and Kumeyaay history. By walking the edges between settler colonialism and Kumeyaay ways of knowing—encompassing epistemologies, histories, stories, languages, spirituality, legal systems, and artistic practices—Pico shakes up the epic genre. Using Kumeyaay bird songs—epic songs of how the Kumeyaay came to be—as a guide, Pico is the hero of his own journey by not only counteracting erasure of Indigenous peoples in America but insisting that his own bird song is as important as western epics. He is "givin U NDN joy NDN laughter NDN freedom My body was built for singing" in the face of genocidal erasure.

## **Session 2 – "Searching for Two-Spirits Through Language." Kai Minosh Pyle**

Keynote address  
7pm-8pm Eastern European Summer Time

Introduction: Lisa Tatonetti

## Session 3 – Connections across time and language

8:30pm Eastern European Summer Time

Chair: Danne Jobin (University of Kent)

### Alicia Carroll (University of California, Irvine)

- **“Twins Twisted into One”: Recovering a Sovereign Erotic in *Sun Chief: The Autobiography of a Hopi Indian***

This essay engages recent scholarship in queer Indigenous feminist studies to reread and reframe *Sun Chief: The Autobiography of a Hopi Indian* (1942) and the figure of its author, Don Talayesva (1890–1976), in ways that address canonical scholars’ (mis)interpretations. Throughout *Sun Chief*, Talayesva identifies their self as “twins twisted into one,” male and female siblings who were united in their mother’s womb prior to being born. Reading *Sun Chief* as a work of Hopi literature rather than a social scientific study, I recover Talayesva’s narration of their self-conception as twins twisted into one as an expression of a sovereign erotic: a resource of spiritual power and felt knowledge rooted in their body as well as in Hopi land and community. My close readings of the text focus on examples of Talayesva’s *indiscipline*, my term for Indigenous peoples’ resistance to settler colonial disciplinary institutions and assimilation policies designed to individualize Native peoples by breaking up relational identities and ties to land, tribal communities, and Indigenous epistemologies. Settler colonialism is an inherently heteronormative structure that coerces Indigenous peoples’ conformity to heteropatriarchy, and it has led to the stifling of Indigenous erotics. Talayesva’s identity as twins was suppressed during the decade they spent in colonial schools, and it has been suppressed by critical (mis)interpretations of *Sun Chief* that label Talayesva a homosexual man. The impact of dismissing Talayesva’s claim to embody a dual subjectivity and instead foisting onto Talayesva a singular identity based on non-Hopi ideas of gender and sexual orientation denies Talayesva’s self-determination. This essay seeks to recover Talayesva’s narration of their twinned and twined identity as part of their journey to a sovereign erotic. Talayesva’s sense of being twins twisted into one constitutes an erotic wholeness that provides them with a deep resource of spiritual power and felt knowledge.

### Parin Somani (Independent Scholar)

- **Attempted cultural appropriation of the erotic self on the Indigenous peoples of North America**

The purposeful oppression of indigenous sexuality its pleasures and desires have been suppressed since decolonisation and settlement in North America. Indigenous sexual practices were targeted by colonizers by means of violence or religious conversion. The aim of this study is to understand the cultural appropriation of the erotic self on the indigenous peoples of North America . A systematic literature review is carried out, by means of a

thorough literature search using electronic and manual databases. Results have indicated that subject, content, and object appropriation are identified pertaining to indigenous art forms while, notions of religion, morality and values have been explored. The effects of media and culture on erotic indigenous self-identity, particularly through terms like 'India princesses' in visual representations like 'Pocahontas' and 'squaw' in Blondeau's 'The lonely surfer squaw'. Contradicting reality with what settler audiences wish to see resulting in 'imaginary Indianism.' Stereotypical representation affects and influences erotic self-beliefs which can be deemed as offensive cultural appropriation. There was introduction of Christian morality and biopolitical measures, contributing to health risks and a reduction in births. However, within colonial history indigenous people have been stereotyped particularly targeting sexuality, being perceived as inferior to Euro-Americans and the notion of white supremacy.

### **Malou Brouwer (University of Alberta)**

- **Crossing languages, transcending boundaries: eroticism as a connecting factor in Indigenous poetry in French and in English**

This paper explores how the erotic in Indigenous poetry in English and French creates connections across languages and boundaries. While Indigenous literatures written primarily in English and French remain separated by linguistic barriers in Turtle Island/North America, writers and scholars increasingly understand and envision the field of Indigenous literary studies as traversing and transcending geographical and linguistic boundaries. This paper maintains that the body and the erotic, through their ability to create connection, contest and transcend the colonial languages, French and English, and are, thus, a potential way to envision Indigenous literatures and the field across languages. I will study selected poems by Melissa Natanaazbaa Begay (Dine), Tiffany Midge (Hunkapapa Sioux), Chrystos (Menominee), and Natasha Kanapé Fontaine (Innu) and particularly examine the use of different languages in these poems: Indigenous languages are often used to convey the erotic and thereby challenge colonial languages and discourse. This paper explores the erotic as a universal language, overcoming linguistic boundaries between French, English, various Indigenous languages, and even Creole. The universal language of the erotic connects the Indigenous characters in the poems to the land, their communities, other Indigenous communities, and to other minorities elsewhere. By overcoming linguistic boundaries, the erotic, as it appears in these poems, creates lines of solidarity across languages. This paper, then, starts to examine the potential of an Indigenous sovereign erotics to exist and develop across languages.

Saturday 17th July

## Session 1 – Appropriations

5pm Eastern European Summer Time  
Chair: Ionah Scully (Syracuse University)

### Adam Nemmers (Lamar University)

- **Eroticism and Exoticism in Native American Sexual Stereotypes**

Through Anglo-American eyes, Native American sexuality has defied easy categorization. As they could not be considered fully oriental or occidental, and were comprised of thousands of different tribes and bands, Native Americans have been assigned sexual stereotypes as exotic as they are errant. Native men have often been figured as “savages”—predatory and lascivious—as demonstrated by the text (and subtext) of captivity narratives penned by white women from Mary Rowlandson to Mary Jemison—or as devoted, patient lovers, as the prevalence of “Indian romance” novels will attest. On the other hand, Native American women are repeatedly figured as alluring “Indian princesses” or powerless, dutiful “squaws,” as evinced by motion pictures like *Pocahontas* and productions like *The Squaw Man* and *Just Squaw*. Such pernicious stereotypes have to some extent been internalized by Native Americans and reflected in their literature, whether Tayo and his friends from *Ceremony*, who lust after the forbidden white woman, or Geraldine Coutts and other Native women from *The Round House*, who come to expect they will suffer sexual abuse from white men without justice. Lost in the popular reception of these depictions are the actual, complicated sexual dynamics within Native cultures, which involve considerations beyond Anglo systems of understanding, including two-spirit persons, matriarchism, plural marriage and polyandry, egalitarianism, and the missing link between sex, romance, and marriage. My paper will explore and expose the poverty of these binaries, roles, and stereotypes in actually describing the Indigenous Erotic, demonstrating how Native American characters and writers have begun to assert sovereignty over their own eroticism as part of the American Indian Movement and the Native American Literary Sovereignty project.

### Emerson Parker Pehl (Widener University and Montana State University-Bozeman)

- **Two Spirit Expropriation: The Decontextualization of Indigenous Sexuality, Spirituality, and Sovereignty to Validate Settler/Colonialist Gender Non-Conformity**

As queer and transgender studies attempts to “decolonize” itself, like the editors of *Transgender Studies Quarterly* proclaimed in 2014 within their special edition, titled “Decolonizing the Transgender Imaginary”, there is evidence that the homogenizing of various experiences of oppression as ‘colonization’, which fails to recognize the actual

relationship with settler colonialism, is a “settler moves to innocence”, or strategies deployed by the settler to relieve feelings of guilt and responsibility without giving up land or power or privilege (Tuck & Yang, 2012). For example, Native Two-Spirit and “gender variant” identities and experiences are frequently invoked in queer, trans, and gender theory as essentialized, historical evidence of the naturalness of multiple gendered experiences beyond the colonialist gender binary. What begins as a seemingly benign account of cultural difference between the primitive, traditionalist Indigenous and the civilized, modern Western ultimately results in a type of cultural expropriation of Indigeneity that works to benefit [white] settler/colonialists. In this paper, I will analyze the expropriation of Indigenous understandings of gender and sexuality and how it functions as essentialistic evidence of the human propensity for pluralistic genders beyond the Western colonizer’s gender binary to subsequently validate non-Native settler/colonialists’ experiences of gender non-conformity. I further argue that this validation of settler/colonialists’ gender non-conformity comes at the expense of modern Two-Spirit people whose sexuality, spirituality, and sovereignty are intentionally ignored to align with the needs of settler/colonialists.

## **Session 2 – “An Erotics of Responsibility”**

**Lisa Tatonetti**

Keynote Address

7pm-8pm Eastern European Summer Time

Introduction: James Mackay (European University Cyprus)

## **Session 3 – Performing and Documenting Sexuality**

8:30pm Eastern European Summer Time

Chair: Rebecca Macklin (University of Pennsylvania)

**Elena Cortés Farrujia (University of Barcelona)**

- **In the Name of Love: Queering Relationships in Princess Pocahontas and the Blue Spots by Monique Mojica**

*Princess Pocahontas and the Blue Spots* (1991), written by the Kuna-Rappahannock author Monique Mojica, constitutes a palimpsestic performance wherein the playwright recuperates the voices of well-known figures like Pocahontas or La Malinche, questioning the European imaginations and decolonizing their stories. The transnational polyphonic space created by Mojica allows not only to expose the long-lasting and broad impact that these European narratives have on Indigenous Women; but it also enables the configuration of a genealogical anthology of Indigenous Feminist, Queer and Two-Spirit knowledge by sewing into her comedic yet utterly angry tapestry the works of other Indigenous -mainly Queer- authors, like

Gloria Anzaldúa, Chrystos and Beth Brant, among others. This paper aims to explore the queer potential of Mojica's play by reading it as in conversation with Beth Brant's work, whose discourse provides new and unexplored insights into the performance. On the one hand, such a frame uncovers the mechanisms on display of the European romances, which have instrumentalized the name/idea of 'love' as a colonial apparatus to articulate and impose Western heteronormative models upon Indigenous communities, justifying withal European sexual relations with Indigenous women, especially rapes, by creating the stereotype of them as willing for their colonial desire. Whereas, on the other hand, by applying Brant's *A Gathering of Spirit*, Mojica's text reveals a turning towards queer kinship as an alternative to heteronormative relationships, by retrieving the erotic potential of appointed female elements, such as the moon, the water, or even oranges; as well as by gathering the multiplicity of female voices that create this Third Space for the healing of Indigenous women 'in the name of love'.

### **Kamelia Talebian Sedehi (La Sapienza University)**

- **A Chance to Testify in Sleeping Children Awake**

Elie Wiesel writes, "if someone else could have written my stories, I would not have written them" (Laub and Felman 205). The witness has the responsibility of the truth she utters. To testify before law, court, history, readers, or spectators is to take the witness stand, bound by an oath. By testifying, the witness not only narrates what she has lived, recorded, and remembered, but also she commits herself to what goes beyond the personal. She would engage history or the truth of an occurrence. The testimony cannot be narrated by another person as the witness has the legal pledge of what is saying. Therefore, Rhonda Kara Hanah's *Sleeping Children Awake* (1992) would be a proper example of appealing an oath to historical moments regarding the residential schools in Canada. *Sleeping Children Awake* is a documentary made of testimonies. Some of the Aboriginal survivors who attended residential schools in Canada were interviewed and filmed by Hanah. *Sleeping Children Awake* revives the residential school days so powerfully that it shakes up the conventional notions we have about them. The documentary explains to the spectators how culture, religion, tradition, and rituals of Aboriginal people were uprooted. It emphasizes how Aboriginal students were physically, mentally, and sexually abused at the residential schools. In this article, I seek to explore how Hanah's documentary pictures the past, involves various witnesses, and stands as a voice for the dead, who never had the chance to express themselves. I will apply Judith Herman's trauma and Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub's concepts of testimony and witnessing to Hanah's *Sleeping Children Awake*.

## Georges de Medts (Aix-Marseille Université)

- **Alternative Indigenous Narratives and Gender Constructions in Sherman Alexie's *The Business of Fancydancing* (2002) and Sydney Freeland's *Drunktown's Finest* (2014)**

Taking control of the creative process of filmmaking, Native American artists have achieved what Michelle Raheja calls "visual sovereignty" in cinema. In this article, I will examine how alternative narratives of gender update and diversify the catalog of images of Indigenous people through two films written and directed by Indigenous authors: *The Business of Fancydancing* (2002) by Sherman Alexie (Spokane/Coeur d'Alene), and *Drunktown's Finest* (2014) by Sydney Freeland (Navajo). Both films interrogate the possibility to assume a Two-Spirit identity on and off the reservation. In order to complexify the portrait of the modern Indian in his film, Alexie chooses to present his main character, Indian poet Seymour Polatkin, torn between his urban life, where he navigates in the gay community and has a White male partner, and his roots in the Spokane reservation, where his boyhood friends remain. Although accepted and never criticized by his friends for his sexual orientation, Seymour seems to consider his Indigenous heritage and his sexuality as irreconcilable. This pattern allows Alexie to participate in a larger project which is the fight against homophobia, that replicates the dominant cultural norm and penetrates Indigenous communities. Thanks to this intersectional perspective, the author implicitly reminds the audience of the tribal tradition of deep respect that has characterized relationships with Two-Spirit people for a long time. Sydney Freeland's film achieves something similar in a very different way, through the story of one of her characters, transgender woman Felixia. Living with her conservative grandparents – a medicine man and his wife, she is completely accepted by them, because the concept of third and fourth genders is part of their culture, whereas the younger generation seems not so at ease. Ultimately, Felixia learns from her grandfather about Navajo nadleehi and finds her inner balance. Therefore, in both artworks, the enactment of what Owo-Li Driskill calls "sovereign erotic" becomes a trope for Indigenous survivance.

## Conference close and reflection

## Keynote Speakers

### Chrystos

"Her words slide into our throats, feed the hungry soul, fill the lost and homeless heart. Her voice binds into wholeness our severed selves with self-esteem. It calls away from the death of invisibility, insists that we be seen and accounted to, no longer banished, no longer vanishing. She leaves her howl inside us."

– Gloria Anzaldua

"When I first picked up Chrystos' book of poetry *Not Vanishing* (1988) I couldn't put it down. Here were words that resonated in a way I hadn't before experienced, waiting in pages from the 1980s for a new generation of Indigiqueers to find and treasure. Four of Chrystos' six published books were published by Vancouver-based Press Gang Publishers (in operation from the 1970s–2002) to escape censorship in the US. I went on to read each of those books. With her lesbian erotica book *In her I am*—I didn't stop blushing for months."

– Anne Riley

"Chrystos interrogates the borders and boundaries of age, class, race, gender, sexuality, and sanity. She creates "home" and community not only by sharing her own experiences with her readers and listeners, but also by putting other's experiences of oppression into words."

– Linda Hall

"Chrystos's work is so unlike academically acceptable poetry... too openly sexual, too invested in a political agenda... Chrystos declares she writes for people who 'don't generally like poetry but I like yours,' a warning for professors and the unexamined subtexts of canonical gatekeeping."

– Victoria Brehm

"[*In her I am*] is a book you'll probably want to read in your room with the door closed. Natural beauty mingles with human beauty in lush, omnipresent metaphors: 'She speaks burgundy birds,' or 'my toes skim stars.' This is poetry of wild trysts in the car and on the stairs, wet mouths, dildos, and 'flames in my fingers,' where even making blackberry jam becomes an act of seduction. Often, the sex act becomes a way for the narrator to reclaim and rewrite history: 'We're in the grass of prairies our grandmothers rode... Flaming ride us past our rapes our pain / past years when we stumbled lost.' Such gestures are remarkable in Chrystos' writing, known for its unwillingness to erase brutal realities and its careful examination of the wounds of colonialism. Her remarkable first poetry collection, *Not Vanishing*, shouts in the face of the 'vanishing Indian' myth. Chrystos is not one to deny truths or plaster on band-aids; if any healing force is attributed to love or desire, that's because it's there."

- Melanie Bell



## Andrea Carlson

Carlson's Anishinaabe (Ojibwe), French and Scandinavian heritage provides a rich foundation for her investigations of cultural consumption, history and identity, and the intrinsic power of storytelling. For Carlson, creating a location – an actual space – in her work is important so that the viewer can gain access to her stories. Associative pieces, they allow the viewer to freely interpret Carlson's narratives, drawing from their own experiences and cultural beliefs. "A key component of creating significance is location...the illusion of space created within a work," Carlson has stated. "Many objects and animals referenced in my work are from disparate places, they have different significance to different locales, but are framed in the same piece as if a vast landscape has been folded together."

Carlson has lived and worked for most of her life in Minnesota. In the spring of 2016 she moved to Chicago but still maintains a studio in Saint Paul, Minnesota. Carlson received her MFA in Visual Studies from the Minneapolis College of Art & Design in 2005 and a BA in Studio Arts and American Indian Studies from the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis in 2003. Carlson has been the recipient of numerous grants and fellowships including those awarded by the Carolyn Foundation, the Joan Mitchell Foundation, the Minnesota State Arts Board, and the McKnight Foundation. For a longer biography and examples of her work, [click here](#).

## Shaawano Chad Uran

Shaawano Chad Uran is Associate Professor of Indigenous Studies at Bemidji State University. He received his PhD in Anthropology in 2012 from the University of Iowa, and has taught at Bowdoin College in Maine, the University of Victoria in British Columbia, The Evergreen State College in Washington, the University of Washington, and Cornell University in New York. His research areas are: Indigenous language revitalization, language and identity, American cultural studies, language ideologies, American Indian sovereignty, critical theory, Native American studies, and coloniality. He is also known for applying Indigenous critical theory to zombie films and literature. Shaawano was a recipient of the 2018 Beatrice Medicine Award for Scholarship in American Indian Studies, sponsored by the Charles Redd Center for Western Studies, for his article, "Policing Resource Extraction and Human Rights in The Land of the Dead." More of Shaawano's work, including Anishinaabe language resources and his music, can be found at <https://shaawano.com/>.

## Kai Minosh Pyle

Kai Minosh Pyle (Mekadebinesikwe) is a Two-Spirit writer, Indigenous language learner and advocate, and researcher. Born and raised in Green Bay, Wisconsin, they have ancestral ties to the Red River Métis, Sault Ste. Marie Ojibwe, and the northeast Wisconsin Polish-American community. Currently they are a doctoral student in American Studies at the University of Minnesota – Twin Cities on the occupied Dakota homelands of Bde Ota Othunwe (Minneapolis, Minnesota). They have been published as a writer of poetry, creative nonfiction, academic work, and soon, fiction. You can find their work on their website, <http://mekadebinesikwe.com>, or follow them on twitter as @mekadebinesikwe. When not writing you can find them at one of the multiple Ojibwe language tables in Minneapolis that nourishes their spirit weekly.

## Lisa Tatonetti

Lisa Tatonetti is a professor in the Department of English at Kansas State University. She is one of the co-editors of *Sovereign Erotics: A Collection of Contemporary Two-Spirit Literature* (Arizona 2011), one of the most significant texts in the rise of Two-Spirit and Queer Indigenous (2SQI) studies. Lisa is also the author of *The Queerness of Native American Literature* (Minnesota, 2014), a monograph showing how queer Native literature and Two-Spirit critiques challenge understandings of both Indigeneity and sexuality. Her most recent book, currently available for pre-order, is *Written by the Body: Gender Expansiveness and Indigenous Non-Cis Masculinities* (Minnesota 2021), which intervenes in ongoing conversations around Indigenous masculinities by centering how female, queer, and/or Two-Spirit Indigenous people take up or refute masculinity and, in the process, offer more expansive understandings of gender.

## About the cover photographs

Many thanks to Nuxalk artist Dionne Paul for permission to use these images. The following description of their creation is taken from her thesis "[Illusions for the Uninitiated](#)":

"During my first summer intensive, I was preparing for *RezErect: Native Erotica*, an exhibit at the Bill Reid Gallery exploring indigenous sensuality and sexuality from the point of view of 27 First Nations artists. During my re-search into the cultural politics of sex and sexuality for this exhibition, I came across a Nuxalk marital shaming ceremony. These ceremonial art objects associated with this rite as described in *The Bella Coola Indians*, "the deserted wife used to dance, wearing above her head representations of a penis and testicles. By means of hidden strings she was able to cause the former to become erect."

"This art object distilled all my creative energies at that time – traditional special effects, gender roles within ceremony, sexual politics and indigenous humor. I set out with courage to investigate cultural implications both past and present through my creative process of reimagining this previously unseen ceremonial art object.

"I started with the female headdress, creating a headdress with male genitalia frontlet made from cedar and adorned with ermine skins. I then designed a male headdress with a female genitalia frontlet from cedar, ermine skin, clamshell and gemstones. I am sharing this personal story relative to the use of strings and pulleys because the story reveals the shock factor of ceremonial performances. Performance shocks frightened the uninitiated audience and deterred undesirable behaviors. Some of these cultural shocks employed humor.

"While creating these headdresses, I imagined the original Nuxalk artists who would have fashioned these headdresses and the conversations about the logistics. I imagined the laughter that was generated from these conversations and through their creation as I experienced moments of laughter in my studio. I imagined the actual ceremony of the shaming and the wife walking out onto the dance floor wearing the genitalia headdress and the dancing while activating the strings attached to the phallic frontlet and the roars of laughter that would undoubtedly follow the performance. I witnessed roars of laughter at the Bill Reid Gallery when I saw visitors interacting with my headdresses by trying them on 26 and activating the strings. It was next to impossible for them to not laugh and it was a joy to watch.

"It occurred to me that the creative process of the making these ceremonial objects may have been a cathartic process for the maker and the ceremony itself a healing process for the married couple and extended family affected by the marital indiscretion. I was taught that laughter, humor and play are good medicine and perhaps this was true for these headdresses. I know I found myself in fits of laughter while activating the headdress for the first time. My husband laughed when he saw it on my head and in motion and the curators of the exhibition enjoyed burst of laughter in the video clips I sent them for pre-approval."



Front cover: Dionne Paul. Her Shaming Headdress. 2013. Cedar, ermine pelt, wood, string.  
Back Cover: Paul, Dionne. His Shaming Headdress. 2013. Cedar, ermine pelt, shell, and pearls.