

## Person of Two Spirits — Arnauciq

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### ARNAURCIQSAQLLUNI. – HE HAS FEMININE WAYS.

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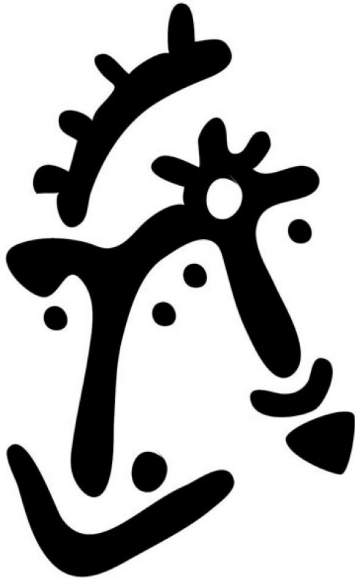


Image: Petroglyph from Cape Alitak, Kodiak Island.

Many societies recognize a difference between biological and social gender. Most people are born physiologically male or female. Yet, people live and experience gender in different ways, and concepts of gender vary greatly between cultures. Throughout history, and across the globe, societies have acknowledged three, four, or even more genders. Many cultures define gender beyond the biological dichotomy, accepting a broad range of identities.

Native American societies commonly celebrate people of two spirits. Such people may be seen as a combination of masculine and feminine characteristics or as gender-neutral. They may also hold special or esteemed roles in their communities.

Explorers recorded the presence of cross-gendered people in Alaska Native societies. Historic sources indicate that parents could give a girl a boy's name, or a boy a girl's name when a child of a particular sex was desired. Or if the child appeared to better fit a different gender role, parents could raise the child in the traditions associated with that gender—with the skills, clothing, tattoos, and social roles. Transgendered individuals were valued members of their communities who could marry and become cultural specialists like shamans.

The Alutiiq word for a two-spirit or transgendered man, *arnauciq*, translates as “a male who is sort of female.” *Arnauciq* sometimes accompanied hunting trips to perform women's tasks, as women were forbidden to hunt or use hunting speech. The term for employing such a companion is *arnaucirluni* – to provide oneself with a take-along woman.