

# *Arnauciq, Nukallpia'uciq* – TWO-SPIRIT PERSON

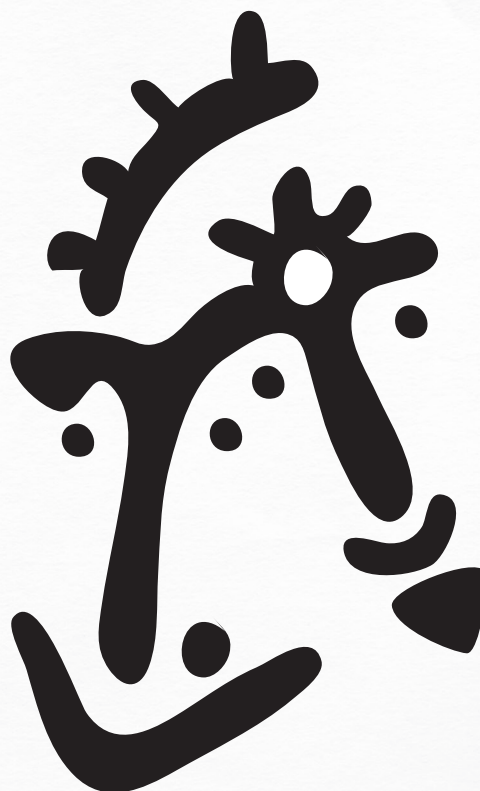
Many societies recognize a difference between biological and social gender. Most people are born physiologically male or female. Yet people live and experience gender in different ways, and concepts of gender vary greatly between cultures. Throughout history, and across the globe, societies have acknowledged 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 transgendered 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. In ancestral Alutiiq/Sugpiaq communities, shamans sought out two-spirit and transgender individuals to train as apprentices. Their expression of both masculine and feminine characteristics indicated a special relationship with the spiritual realm.

Two-spirit people were also desirable partners. Explorers note that transgender wives were favored by chiefs, who were regarded as lucky if they had a two-spirit person as a spouse.

Today, two-spirit and transgender people continue to be valued members of Alutiiq communities. There are two recognized Alutiiq words for this role. *Arnauciq*, which translates as “transgender woman,” and *nukallpia'uciq* for “transgender man.”



*Petroglyph from Cape Alitak, Kodiak Island.*