Queer Settler Colonialism, Anti-Racism, and Two-Spirit Critique

Two-Spirit activists have worked within Two-Spirit movements and within their nations to decolonize gender and sexuality among Native people. In the process, Two-Spirit activists have demanded antiracist and anticolonial activism in queer / trans movements. In white settler states, queer / trans movements form under conditions of white-supremacist settler colonialism; but only rarely do they target those conditions for critique. Anti-racism by people of color does challenge racism and many forms of colonialism in queer / trans politics. But what happens if racism on stolen land is understood to derive from the ongoing settler colonization of Native nations: a power that conditions all politics on that land, including antiracism?

This talk revisits how Two-Spirit activists have formed and led coalitions with queer / trans people of color that model the responsibility of queer / trans movements to challenge settler colonialism. Such alliances brought queer / trans people of color to critique their own capacity to act as settlers or to reinforce the colonization of Native peoples. Moreover, these histories indicate that for white people in settler states to become agents of antiracism, they must first come to grips with their status as white settlers. These lessons proceed from Two-Spirit and allied activists of color who made challenging settler colonialism a central axis of queer / trans work.

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