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# STOLEN SPACES, STOLEN GENERATIONS: SPACE-TIME RECLAMATION BY TWIN-SPIRIT KUMEYAAY ACTIVIST, (LAHUNT) KAREN VIGNEAULT

## *Espacios robados, generaciones robadas: recuperación del espacio-tiempo por la activista Kumeyaay de dos espíritus, (LaHunt) Karen Vigneault*

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**ABSTRACT**

This paper explores Indigenous understandings of space and time, as represented through Kumeyaay spirituality/cosmology, which contradict the philosophical and ideological meanings in Western ontologies. It offers a non-modern telling of (LaHunt) Karen Vigneault's life (1958-2019), a Kumeyaay Two-Spirit historian and activist, through Indigenous philosophy, feminist, queer and decolonial theory, historical documents, interviews, and online resources. It tells different "stories" stemming from Vigneault's life scaling the space of her lived body to the sacredness of the Kuuchamaa mountain and Kumeyaay lands (stolen spaces), her activism for spiritual and cultural reclamation, such as Two-Spirit identity, and the reunification of forcibly separated Indigenous families internationally (stolen generations). This paper analyzes how settler colonization in the United States has affected space-time realties and disrespected the localities, environment, sacred lands, spirits, and bodies of the Kumeyaay people who have inhabited the San Diego region of Southern California for over 10,000 years. It explores how individuals like Vigneault have dedicated their lives to healing the fissures and spirits of local people and lands reuniting space and time through the reclamation of places, histories, languages, traditions, identities, and separated peoples.

**Key words:** Indigenous philosophy, decolonial theory, two-spirit, Kumeyaay, space and time.

**RESUMEN**

Este artículo explora las comprensiones indígenas del espacio y el tiempo, representados a través de la espiritualidad/cosmología Kumeyaay, que contradicen los significados filosóficos e ideológicos de las ontologías occidentales. Ofrece un relato no moderno de la vida de (LaHunt) Karen Vigneault (1958-2019), historiadora y activista de los Dos Espíritus Kumeyaay, a través de la filosofía indígena, la teoría feminista, *queer* y decolonial, documentos históricos, entrevistas y recursos en línea. Cuenta diferentes «historias» que se derivan de la vida de Vigneault escalando el espacio de su cuerpo vivido hasta la sacralidad de la montaña Kuuchamaa y las tierras Kumeyaay (espacios robados), su activismo por la recuperación espiritual y cultural, como la identidad de los Dos Espíritus, y la reunificación de familias indígenas separadas por la fuerza a nivel internacional (generaciones robadas). Este artículo analiza cómo la colonización de los colonos en los Estados Unidos ha afectado las realidades del espacio-tiempo y ha faltado el respeto a las localidades, el medio ambiente, las tierras sagradas, los espíritus y los cuerpos del pueblo Kumeyaay que ha habitado la región de San Diego en el sur de California durante más de 10 000 años. Explora cómo individuos como Vigneault han dedicado sus vidas a sanar las fisuras y los espíritus de las personas y tierras locales, reuniendo el espacio y el tiempo a través de la recuperación de lugares, historias, idiomas, tradiciones, identidades y pueblos separados.

**Palabras clave**: filosofía indígena, teoría decolonial, dos espíritus, Kumeyaay, espacio y tiempo.

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# 1. Introduction

*An imagining of radical, decolonial Indigenous GLBTQ2 critiques demands centering Indigenous frameworks and experiences as sites inspiring theory and practice (Driskill, 2011, p. 19).*

Indigenous worldviews of cyclical space and time allow for the reconstitution of new and old patterns of possibilities and a contestation of colonial authority over knowledge systems that have damaged Indigenous peoples globally. This paper specifically considers the activism and knowledge formation of Kumeyaay peoples of San Diego and Baja California and their intersections in one story and life: (LaHunt)[2] Karen Vigneault (1958-2019). Decolonial theorist Mignolo (2013) suggests a breakage with linear conceptualizations of Western knowledge by eliminating the imperialistic term "pre-modern" and replacing it with "non-modern" "which implies delinking and border thinking …[to] build just and equitable futures beyond the logic of coloniality that is constitutive of the rhetoric of modernity" (p. 144). This paper excavates, extrapolates, and re-members a non-modern telling of (LaHunt) Karen Vigneault's life (1958-2019), a Kumeyaay Twin-Spirit[3] historian and activist, through Indigenous philosophy, feminist, queer, and decolonial theory, historical documents, interviews, and online resources to explore how her life and work healed sacred parts of her tribal heritage and space/time fissures. In Kumeyaay spiritual beliefs, when a person forgets or chooses not to live their life righteously, their soul, when their body dies, releases into a space of nothingness in the center of the Earth: it no longer exists and does not transcend from the Earthly plane of existence (Miskwish, 2016). Vigneault's work resists the emptiness created through destructive actions of settler-colonialism and reunifies social spaces and traditions for Kumeyaay people and reclaims the respected role of Two-Spirit people.

[2] *LaHunt* is a word in the Kumeyaay language to be used before a person's name that has crossed over as to not call them back to this world.
[3] Vigneault preferred the term "Twin-Spirit" to the term "Two-Spirit" to signify her membership in the LGBTQ2S+ indigenous community as the word "twin" carries a special connection to sacred unity. This paper uses both terms.

While our world teeters on the brink of ecological collapse, little is done to atone for the deeply rooted problems caused by settler-colonialism. This paper demonstrates how Kumeyaay concepts of space-time can provide valuable ways to think about symbiotic and harmonious relationships between humans, the Earth, and the cosmos. Even though settler-colonialism destroyed much knowledge of the Kumeyaay spiritual traditions, many Kumeyaay peoples, like Vigneault, protected this sacred knowledge within their communities so they could reclaim these traditions within their hearts and spirits. This paper tells different "stories" stemming from Vigneault's life flowing in and out of time. It scales diverse spaces that originate from her lived experience: i.e., the sacredness of Kumeyaay lands, such as the Kuuchamaa mountain, the (neo)colonial policies of a government and a university, spiritual/cultural reclamation of Kumeyaay practices and histories, and the reunification of Two-Spirit identity and forcibly separated Indigenous families internationally. The local/global/cosmic in this space-time compression represent collective "memories" united through geopolitical realities within a single life. For most Indigenous peoples, space-time has always functioned simultaneously "on the basis of its manifestation of energy and personality, which can be explained as spiritual activity," yet processes of settler-colonialism have suppressed and destroyed this knowledge "as primitive and superstitious" (Deloria, 2012, p. 49). This project follows the ripples from Vigneault's life that demonstrate how queer Indigenous futurity can reveal "visions of what decolonial relationships and futures might look like when they are formed through a radical Indigenous politics of refusal in the face of U.S. empire" (Mo'E'Hahne, 2021, p. 254).

## 2. Justification

As a young graduate student, I had the privilege of working with (LaHunt) Karen Vigneault in her induction into the San Diego Women's Hall of Fame in 2008. While not Indigenous myself, I developed a strong kinship with Vigneault as a lesbian and a feminist and with similar spiritual beliefs. Since she crossed over in 2019, I have wanted to write a tribute to this Kumeyaay, Twin-Spirit historian and activist. As her work so potently demonstrated, too many stories of Indigenous people are erased, never recorded,

sometimes never known. Yet Vigneault's work offers a path towards healing by remembering and mourning an unfair past, a past I benefit from as a white settler. Starting with Vigneault's life and connecting it to complex realities that conflate space-time for Indigenous peoples in Baja California/San Diego provides a unique position to investigate the reclamation of lands, people, the environment, and spiritual practices to begin healing the realities of colonization, borders, "boarding schools" where children were stolen from their families, violence and addiction, and the attempted destruction of a people. Thus, I offer these words with honor to all Kumeyaay, First Nation, and Indigenous peoples and the many untold stories that may resonate with them, including the untold stories here in Costa Rica and Central America.

## 3. Objective

By starting with the space of (LaHunt) Karen Vigneault's life and moving into other space-times where activism, history, humanity, local and global realities conflate, this paper analyzes how settler-colonization in the United States has disrespected the localities, the environment, spirits, and bodies of the Kumeyaay people. It explores how this destruction affected space-time realities for Kumeyaay peoples and how individuals like Vigneault dedicated their lives to healing the spirit of the people and the lands, from the stolen and polluted Kumeyaay lands to the stolen generations of Indigenous children placed in "boarding schools" and/or adopted into non-Indigenous families. It presents Kumeyaay worldviews of time-space that can help heal these cultural ruptures. As Vigneault dedicated her life to reclaiming space-time histories of the Kumeyaay, Indigenous, and Two-Spirit people, this paper honors her memory by sharing one assemblage of her life and activism.

## 4. Methodology

This text uses qualitative research methods employing intersectional, queer Indigenous, feminist, and decolonial methodologies. It begins with the social space of (LaHunt) Karen Vigneault's body/life,

extending into other social spaces. Feminist geographer McDowell (1999) posits that bodies are material sites with "more or less impermeable boundaries" that occupy space, but these bodies carry "a history and a geography" affecting how they are perceived (pp. 34-36). While bodies certainly have a geography and a history, in many Indigenous understandings, the body itself does not have "impermeable" boundaries as losing a limb does not end our life but losing the air, the sun, or water does and, hence, are equally part of our "body": As Whitehead (2023) (Oji-Cree) explains: "My elders tell me that when we set foot on a piece of land—again a body—we simultaneously experience the past, present and future… the land is an archive, is a library, is a genealogy—a body of land is a body of literature" (p. 89). By extending the location of the body outwardly into a web of social, historical, and geographical bodies, this paper begins with Vigneault as a site of origin and orientation. Borrowing from the queer decolonial phenomenologist Amhed (2007), "Orientation involves aligning body and space: we only know which way to turn *once we know which way we are facing*" (original emphasis, p. 7). Likewise, Mignolo (2013) expounds, "Points of origination and routes of dispersion are key concepts to trace geo-politics of knowing/sensing/believing as well as body-politics of knowing/sensing/ understanding" (p. 141). Hence some of the paths that Vigneault has trodden have led me to explore other spaces in this paper. The stories originating from Vigneault's experience use decolonial methodologies that decenter the dehumanizing aspects of Western knowledge production, the same systems responsible for the destruction and violence discussed in this project. As such, this project asks certain ethnographical questions:

> What is the relationship between our theories and those we are theorizing about? Do the subjects of our theorizing see themselves in the same way as we describe them in books, journal articles, classroom lectures, and so on? How do we bring their self-representations into our theorizing? (Acoose et al., 2008, p. 369)

Considering these questions, as a white settler-researcher, this research aspires to produce something worthy of the approval of Vigneault, Two-Spirit and Kumeyaay peoples: I first corresponded

with Vigneault's sister, Joyce, and her friend Trace Henz to ask for their feedback/permission before publishing this paper. Likewise, it centers Vigneault's research and activism presenting Indigenous knowledges that arrive from the border spaces between spaces/identities that Vigneault occupied, delinking with colonial power/knowledge structures. Gaudry & Lorenz (2018) define the term "decolonial indigenization" as a complete renovation of the academy "to fundamentally reorient knowledge production based on balancing power relations…transforming the academy into something dynamic and new" (p. 219). They write that decolonial practices lead to "indigenous resurgence" to dismantle oppressive aspects of settler-colonialism and rebuild by centering Indigenous peoples and supporting "a resurgence in Indigenous culture, politics, knowledge, and on-the-land skills" (p. 221). Thus, the life of Vigneault serves as a constellation or map rather than a comprehensive biography: it explores of the extension of a body into other spaces in the past, present, and future as "decolonial indigenization" to guide us towards new more equitable world-makings.

# 5. Conceptual framework

The following conceptual framework first explores the concepts of Indigeneity, queer Indigeneity, settler-colonialism, and decolonial Indigenization; it then compares post-modern as well as non-modern conceptions of space and time as utilized within this paper.

## 5.1. Indigeneity and Settler-Colonialism

*5.1.1. Indigeneity.* This paper utilizes Justice's conceptualization (2018) of Indigeneity to refer to a complex identity that links kinship, ancestral, spiritual, and land-based relationships within people with Native and/or tribal heritage. It "affirms the spiritual, political, territorial, linguistic, and cultural distinctions of those peoples whose connections to this hemisphere predate the arrival of intentional colonizing settlers and conscripted and enslaved populations from Europe, Africa, the Pacific, and other regions" (Justice, 2018, p. 5). Vigneault, as an Indigenous person, "remain[s] in relation to the land, the

ancestors, and the kinship networks, lifeways, and languages that originated in this hemisphere and continue in often besieged but always resilient forms" (p. 6). Indigenous is capitalized as a proper noun to assert agency and a "political status of peoplehood, rather than describing an exploitable commodity, like an "indigenous plant" or a "native mammal." (p. 5.) Yet, Indigenous identity in practical and theoretical usages remains complicated, and, thus, this paper relies heavily on consensus within Indigenous Nations and communities to remain vigilant against "national projects of mestizaje" where people with mixed Indigenous ancestry can "replace specific Indigenous identifications or land claims" as we will see in the discussion of San Diego State University (Morgensen, 2011, p. 11). Indigeneity, ethnicity/race, and the settler-colonial project cannot be separated easily:

> The teleological binary Native/settler is perpetually complicated by the nonbinary relations of diverse non-Natives and Native peoples across commonalities and differences. Nevertheless, no degree of complication in either comparison removes the meaningful difference indigeneity continues to make in a settler society, as in Native sovereignty struggles and national and transnational Native alliances (Morgensen, 2011, p. 22)

Yet despite the complexity, those who falsely claim Indigeneity practice a form of settler-colonialism that forces those who struggle with questions of authenticity due to skin color, birthplace, or loss of cultural connection, such as the adoptees, to have to justify their inclusion as Indigenous peoples.

*5.1.2. Queer Indigeneity*. Two-Spirit identity was being defined and constructed around the same time as queer identity gained popularity in the 1990s: both denote a breakage from compulsive heterosexuality and cisnormativity within settler-colonial societies (Bradley, 2023). Queer Indigeneity and Two-Spirit identities serve umbrella terms for the ever-expanding Indigenous expressions of gender and sexual diversity, including the tribal-specific queer Indigenous identities/being recovered through decolonial practices. They reaffirm sexual and gender diversity within Indigenous communities against the normative understanding of the settler-state which often viewed them as undesirable, sad, and diseased. Thus, the construction of

gender, as understood in Western ontologies, is modern invention: queer decolonial Indigeneity works to deconstruct and reclaim non-modern identities like Two-Spirit.

*5.1.3. Setter-Colonialism***.** The term settler presents an equally complex concept juxtaposing Indigeneity within settler-colonial power relations. Justice defines settler-colonialism as the "creation of a new social order that depends in part on the ongoing oppression and displacement of Indigenous peoples" (2018, p. 9). Morgensen (2011) argues that, in simple terms, settlers replace, and Indigenous peoples disappear within the social order of settler-colonialism: thus, she claims that being non-Native/settler is a location within settler-colonialism rather than a set racial/ethnic identity. Glenn (2015) also characterizes settler-colonialism as a continual structural organization rather than a past historical event. This paper uses the term "settler" to refer to a wide range of non-Indigenous people who "settled" in North America for several reasons, some by force or necessity and others to colonize the land, resources, and people. The latter defines settler-colonists, while "settler" refers to a broader heterogeneous group of people who had different histories of arrival within the continent (Justice, 2018; Morgensen, 2011). This paper understands the settler-colonial project as a hetero-patriarchal project as argued by Morgensen's (2011); she contends that settler-colonialism marks all relationships between Native and non-Native peoples within the power relations of settler homonationalism, positing Native and non-Native people of color as queer racialized others to be eliminated. Smith (2010) also argues that we must queer settler-colonialism *and* decolonization to fight against current genocidal tendencies that reinforce the structures of settler-colonial heteropatriarchy which Two-Spirit identity denaturalizes.

*5.1.4. Indigenous Decolonization.* Theories of decolonization, indebted to post-colonial thought such as Fanon and Cesaire, began in Latin America by theorists, such as Quijano and Mignolo, to "delink" from Eurocentric thought and un-do aspects of colonial power relations such as capitalism, modernity, racism, sexism, Western imperialism, and beyond. Expanding upon and sometimes critiquing these theories, Indigenous decolonization specifically fights for the restoration of Indigenous languages, literatures,

knowledges, lands, resources, practices, and identities (such as Two-Spirit). It uncovers and deconstructs past and current histories of settler-colonial oppression and works to create realities and futures that recover and recenter Indigenous thought, peoples, identities, and practices. Smith (1999) writes that "decolonization is about centering our [Indigenous] concerns and worldviews and then coming to know and understand theory from our own perspectives and for our own purposes" (p. 39). It is the un-settling of settler-colonization. Indigenization, similarly, takes this un-settling to reaffirm and re-insert Indigenous presence. Thus, queer indigenization is part of the decolonial process.

## 5.2. Space and Time: Post-Modern Ontologies

Post-modern analysis of spacing or "the active construction of space and time" have more in common with Indigenous philosophies than earlier theorizations that viewed these as absolute and separate entities (Peters & Kessl, 2009, p. 27). For instance, Einstein's theories of relativity changed understandings of space-time (time being relative to place rather than simultaneous in the universe) and has since continued to influence theorizations of spatialization from mathematics to topology to linguistics (Peters & Kessl, 2009). This section explores Western post-modern conceptions of space-time and analyzes them in conjunction with Kumeyaay philosophies to support Indigenous spatial justice in this assemblage of Vigneault's life. In queer Indigenous traditions, environmental, racial, and feminist justice link with spatial justice as the foundations of their praxis. All human and planetary life exists as a web of interconnected energies that must be treated holistically with humility to "lead to minimal exploitation of other living creatures but also preclude the arrogance of aggressive missionary activity and secular imperialism, as well as the arrogance of patriarchy" (Forbes, 2001). This section briefly critiques Marxist-influenced theories of space-time including Lefebvre (1974), Harvey (1990), and Castells (1996) through decolonial theory. Then, it analyzes feminist geographies of space-time in Massey's (1994) and McDowell's (1999) conceptualizations from Indigenous/Kumeyaay understandings.

*5.2.1. Lefebvre***.** Lefebvre (1974) argues political and social processes (inseparable from time) construct perceptions of space, yet proposes a linear space-time narrative beginning with space as place (*topos*), which exists before the projection of space through Western thought (*logos*), associated with Aristotle:

> In the beginning was the Topos. Before – long before – the advent of the Logos, in the chiaroscuro realm of primitive life, lived experience already possessed its internal rationality; this experience was producing long before thought space, and spatial thought, began reproducing the projection, explosion, image and orientation of the body (p. 174).

While he mostly theorizes about the contradictions of global capitalism through a Marxist analysis, Lefebvre offers a useful postulation to reflect upon Indigenous communities located within an economic struggle for dominance: the survival of societies depends on the creation and existence of spaces. This is vital to the continued cultural existence of Kumeyaay peoples. American Indian communities have continually risked their lives for spatial justice and the survival of their societies, knowledge, and traditions within a capitalist system that wants to destroy and/or homogenize them into abstract-space as globalized New Age commodities like the 'wise Indian shaman' or an 'unoffensive' University "Moniker" (changed from mascot) like the San Diego Sate "Aztecs." This again erases Kumeyaay existence, and Vigneault's existence, on stolen lands to keep University stake-holders content in their nostalgic passive racism of the stereotypical Aztec Warrior, Monty Montezuma.

*5.2.2. Harvey and Castells.* Greatly influenced by Lefebvre, Harvey (1990) and Castells (1996) develop conceptions of space, time, and sociality after World War II with the development of new economic and international relationships in late capitalism. Harvey's book *The Condition of Post-modernity* (1990) develops the concept of space-time compression**,** a condition of late capitalism, while Castells (1996) in *The Rise of the Network Society* develops the concepts of "the space of flows" (technological space and infrastructure that allow for simultaneous social practices within heterogenous territories) and "timeless time" ("the time of the dominant functions and powerful social actors in the network society" (p. xiii).

While in late capitalism, time-space has clearly compressed and intensified bringing humanity to the edge of collapse, the authors move from the global to the local, while this paper posits that moving from the local to global allows for time-space compressions to be contextualized within their relative localities. Moreover, this paper explores time-space as neither rooted in capitalism nor socialism but emerging from non-modern understandings outside of these frameworks. As Mignolo (2013) asserts, "thinking decolonially is concerned with global equality and economic justice, but it also asserts that Western democracy and socialism are not the only two models to orient our thinking and our doing." (p. 31). He then posts communality as an option outside of capitalism and communism. Indigenous practices also exist outside or on the borders of these economic systems often employing communality as an economic modality as shown through Vigneault's life.

*5.2.3. Massy and McDowell*. Massey and McDowell have developed more contextualized analyses of space-time within geographies situated in local and gendered experiences. Massey (1994) critiques Harvey's theory of space-time compression for the erasure of local histories. She argues his theory reifies homogenization practices of capitalism. Likewise, McDowell (1999) explains, "Space is not inert, not merely a container for social action, but is a significant element in the constitution of identity" (p. 68). She characterizes space as a creative force exploring how bodies, environments, and localities construct, not just fragment, identities within gendered time-space:

> The correct place for embodied women are drawn on to justify and to challenge systems of patriarchal domination in which women are excluded from particular spatial arenas and restricted to others. In this sense to 'know their place' has a literal as well as a metaphorical meaning for women, and sexed embodiment is deeply intertwined with geographical location. (McDowell, 1999, p. 56)

As Massey and McDowell both assert, women have complex relations to place, yet women have fought back against "knowing their place" just like (LaHunt) Karen Vigneault has fought to open spaces

usually closed to queer Indigenous women. Massey (1994) provides a valid critique of Harvey, but her arguments verge on the same homogenization when she claims that the desire to hold place essentializes identity:

> All attempts to institute horizons, to establish boundaries, to secure the identity of places, can in this sense therefore be seen to be attempts to stabilize the meaning of particular envelopes of space-time. They are attempts to get to grips with the unutterable mobility and contingency of space-time. (p. 5)

Massey (1994) criticizes the fetishization of space yet reifies the same essentialism she critiques through her tokenistic use of women of color to support her arguments. She asks:

> Who is it who is so troubled by time-space compression and a newly experienced fracturing of identity? Who is it really that is hankering after a notion of place as settled, a resting place? Who is it that is worrying about the breakdown of barriers supposedly containing an identity? (p. 12)

She later asks a similar question but assumes that the reader also will take the leap that only white/First World people feel nostalgia for place:

> For who is it in these times who feels dislocated/placeless/invaded? To what extent, for instance, is this a predominantly white/First World take on things? … if one accepts that the identification of a current feeling of disorientation and placelessness has to be restricted primarily to the First World and even then differentially, and in different ways, to different strata of the population, there is still another curious anomaly. (p. 165-6)

To demonstrate this, she mostly uses the writing of African American writers such as Toni Morrison and bell hooks (no capitalization), both of whom fit her analysis, as descendants of settlers (though not voluntary nor white colonial settlers), yet ignores other perhaps contradictory examples of other BIPOC women including those affected by the gentrification of neighborhoods, enforced political and climate migration, displacement through destruction of ancestral lands, deforestation, and oil pipelines, or,

as in Vigneault's life, striving for recognition of her Indigenous culture on lands forcibly taken like Old Town, Balboa Park, Torrey Pines Natural Reserve, and SDSU. McDowell, on the other hand, admits an absence in her work "is skin colour but to date there is little explicit work by geographers" (p. 70). This reveals how little the foundational theories in post-modern time-space considered the realities of Indigenous lives. The Western post-modern, Marxist, and feminist theories of time-space outlined do not always align with Kumeyaay philosophies. While space and time are clearly dynamic and fluid, reducing the disorientation and mourning of space as white/First World preoccupations ignores space-time narratives that have left so many Indigenous people placeless, grieving the loss of their ancestral lands. To dismiss placing cultural significance on place as essentialist reveals the need for better understandings of the non-modern.

## 5.3. Space and Time: Kumeyaay Ontologies/Cosmologies

While cosmology in Western conceptions of linear time, separated from space, has an extensive history from the Aristotelian geocentric model to the division between cosmology/religion (Maguire, 2016), Kumeyaay philosophies posit humans living in communion with a sacred space-time narrative:

> The spiritual connection with the environment rests in the tribe's conscious use of the gifts of the Creator, or Amayaha. This is illustrated through the Kumeyaay's many allegorical bird songs, which serve as an alternative from written language to enforce collective teachings within the tribe such as morals, geography, food, and history. (Goodman, 2010)

This understanding of a living cosmos, and living stories, goes in direct opposition of a Eurocentric colonial worldview where humans were made in God's image and carry a privileged position within an exploitable natural world, which often included Indigenous peoples (Bradley, 2021). Kumeyaay understandings of space and time are not antagonistic endeavors but integral: one can be rooted in space-time and recognize and celebrate the diversity of that space-time, social relations, and identity. Furthermore, for Kumeyaay peoples, space and time are united through experiential realities. For instance, in Kumeyaay

ontologies, two gods, Tuchaipa and Yokomati, help create a spatial and temporal helix based on the position of the sun and river and the relationship between life and death:

> Tuchaipa's east-west line symbolizes the cyclical, repetitive, or oscillating daily appearance, disappearance, and reappearance of the sun, suggesting an image of eternal return, whereas Yokomatis' north-south line represents the unidirectional, if not always linear, journey of the river to the sea, symbolizing the meandering albeit inexorably one-way course of a person's life and eventual death. Taken together, the images represent an eloquent model for the structure of time, combining both cyclical and linear aspects in what we can envision as a helix, for the pendulum of time goes back and forth, day following day is an endless cycle, yet time also moves ever forward, never in reverse, as surely as the river flows into the sea. (Levi, 2017, p. 93)

Likewise, the bird songs of the Kumeyaay peoples are also inspired from what Kumeyaay peoples sensed in their sacred places such as the trees, the air, and the mountains for which they created songs of creation in which they told their stories for thousands of years: "The metaphorical reference to animals substantiates the concept of being united with the natural environment. Today, these ancestral bird songs are used as a unifying element for commemorative ceremonies and rituals" (Goodman, 2010). As Deloria Jr. (2003) claims about the limitations of time: "It must begin and end at some real points, or it must be conceived as cyclical in nature, endlessly allowing the repetition of patterns of possibilities… religions that are spatially determined can create a sense of sacred time that originates in the specific location (Deloria, 2003, p. 70). Nevertheless, in the quickening time-space of late capitalism, "We can no longer derive concepts that will explain the world to us, for the world moves too fast" (Deloria, 2012, p. 150). We must "perceive situations in total experience" and shift our knowledge collection processes where "information gathering becomes our chief focus, relying upon individuals to absorb the world through perceptions… accumulating the type of wisdom that tribal societies have tended to produce" (pp. 149-150). Kumeyaay leaders have shared some traditions, despite their privacy, to save spiritual spaces such as Kuuchamaa, a

sacred mountain where, until recently when visiting the sacred mountain was opened to other individuals to celebrate the Solstice, only initiated shamans visited to receive messages from Maayhaay, the Spirit creator, about the correct way to live in peace and harmony with God, humans, and nature (Shipek, 1985). The interconnection understood by Kumeyaay peoples and their willingness to adapt to preserve their sacred places in the face of oppressive realities demonstrates an experiential space-time compression within lived realities to create a viable Indigenous futurity. Dillon (2003) defines Indigenous futurism as a process that involves "discovering how personally one is affected by colonization, discarding the emotional and psychological baggage carried from its impact, and recovering ancestral traditions in order to adapt in our post–Native Apocalypse world" (p. 11). Vigneault's work uses this ancestral wisdom to reclaim sacred lands, traditions, Two-Spirit roles and rejoin Indigenous families uniting other existences within time and space continuums that cure the fissures of settler-colonialism for better futures.

## 6. (LaHunt) Karen Vigneault: A Builder of Cultural Bridges

This section begins interconnecting stories emerging from (LaHunt) Karen Vigneault's life that conflate space and time in provocative ways. It commences with a brief history of the waves of Kumeyaay genocide to contextualize and highlight the importance of Vigneault's work. It then provides a short biography of Vigneault, connecting her life with future generations of Kumeyaay activists: for instance, the youth protesting the border wall between the U.S. and Mexico. It continues presenting Vigneault's academic achievements in library and information sciences in which she documented and preserved Kumeyaay history and heritage. In addition, it discusses how she fought for her great-uncle's Purple Heart and other medals for military service. It then celebrates her work uniting Indigenous families separated through oppressive Indigenous adoption policies uniting new kinship relations in space and time. Finally, it acknowledges her spiritual traditions as well as her work as a Two-Spirit activist and founder of the Nations of the Four Directions to reclaim Two-Spirit people as sacred within Indigenous tribal life. These

stories represent one assemblage of Vigneault's work to pay tribute to her life which extended in so many directions to heal the attempted cultural genocide of Kumeyaay peoples.

## 6.1. Waves of Kumeyaay Genocide

Kumeyaay peoples have inhabited the San Diego region of Southern California for over 10,000 years, confirmed through the remains of two Kumeyaay people and the subsequent battle for Kumeyaay sovereignty over these remains (Dang, 2019). Kumeyaay people have experienced multiple processes of genocide justified by an ideology of Christian/European superiority and Manifest Destiny: the first wave of genocide was the Spanish Catholic mission period from 1769 to 1820, where the missionaries acted upon their belief of moral and racial superiority (Reed, 2020). They took Kumeyaay lands, spread diseases, forced conversions to Catholicism and enslaved the Native peoples; many Kumeyaay peoples continued to secretly practice their spiritual traditions, and in 1775 some Kumeyaay peoples revolted against the Mission San Diego de Alcala, burning it to the ground, but the Mission was rebuilt, and the conversions and enslavement continued (Carrico, 1997). The second period of genocide from 1821-1845 happened during the Mexican-American War where more Kumeyaay territory was stolen, disease was spread, and many Kumeyaay people were enslaved on the growing Ranchos; during this period, settler-state made it a priority to eliminate the "Indian Problem," which continued into the third wave and most devastating wave of genocide during Gold Rush where more massacres, slavery, and environmental destruction ensued (Reed, 2020). The passing of "An Act for the Government Protection of Indians" in 1850 removed more people from their Native lands, separated children from their families, indentured many Indigenous peoples to white settlers, and implemented more campaigns to completely eradicate California Indians. During this period, treaties were rejected, and the Native peoples in lands now called California were left on small reservations of the least fertile lands with no access to water. Thus, almost all of San Diego resides on stolen Kumeyaay territory such as Balboa Park (named after a man who delighted in murdering Two-Spirit people in Panama) (de Bry, 1594), Old Town (or Kosa'aay) (where Vigneault's father tells of jumping from Presidio Park into

the San Diego River), as well as San Diego State University (where Vigneault and I studied). In addition, throughout these periods, laws and policies promoted the cultural annihilation through the implementation of "boarding schools" (which Vigneault's aunt and mother were forced to attend). This oppressive history highlights the importance of Vigneault's activism and the need to rebuild cultural ties.

## 6.2. Protection/Recognition of Ancestral Lands/Borderlands

Vigneault, an enrolled tribal member/citizen of the Iipay Nation of Santa Ysabel, worked as an Iipay/Tipay/Kumeyaay historian, librarian, genealogist and Two-Spirit activist for over 40 years and has inspired me to research Kumeyaay and Two-Spirit history, a task every LGBT community member, San Diego resident, and student/graduate of San Diego State University should undertake as much of San Diego is situated on lands unceded by the Kumeyaay Nation. The Kumeyaay Nation underwent centuries of violence and abuse at the hands the Spanish missionaries, lived through and participated in wars and uprisings between the United States and Mexico, suffered discrimination, land removal, and the creation of "boarding schools" and cultural and economic isolation on reservations. As Alvarado (2020), SDSU professor and tribal liaison officer entreats:

> Please put yourself in our shoes, and right now imagine a foreign nation coming to your lands and taking everything by force, and forcibly trying to destroy your identity, culture, and traditions by converting your way of life through assimilation and the use of religious acts. Hundreds of years have passed, and we are still affected by the historical and intergenerational trauma of this tragic forced assimilation. We were stripped of almost everything, but no matter what we endure as people, the spirit of the Kumeyaay Nation is stronger than any tool of colonization. We continue to live the legacy of our ancestors (para. 9).

All these events produced intergenerational trauma affecting the current reality of Kumeyaay people and the land: the border wall, global warming and environmental damage, poverty, violence, stolen children through oppressive "adoption" policies and "boarding schools", substance abuse, to mention a few.

San Diego State University, from which Vigneault and I are both Alumni, finally acknowledged in 2019 that the land SDSU currently occupies Kumeyaay territory and now flies a Kumeyaay Nation flag along with that of the United States (Alvarado, 2020). Nevertheless, it continues to use a contested Aztec moniker as a form of contemporary colonization with little other acknowledgement of the Kumeyaay people. Without the activism of Vigneault, I would not know that my education was made possible through the continuous cultural genocide of the Kumeyaay people. Martha Rodriguez, a SDSU student, insists:

> The great Kumeyaay Nation has faced four waves of genocide. We are still here strong as always on both sides of that imaginary border to us. Our roots are deep in; no wall will separate our families. We are not illegal in our homeland. The Kumeyaay are the original people of this land since time immemorial…These are our homelands where our ancestors are. They deserve respect and protection. No more desecrations to our ancestors to Mother Earth. We're not a conquered people, museum relic, or someone's mascot. (in Alvarado, 2020, para. 7)

As a beneficiary of this system, I must honor the enforced sacrificed that made my education possible by paying tribute to the Kumeyaay Nation, so we may grieve the past and create a more equitable future.

Like many Kumeyaay peoples, Vigneault and her family can trace their family lineage to generations of basket weaving women from the San Diego region. The Kumeyaay people have lived in the San Diego/Baja California region for over 10,000 years before the colonial concept of borders was imposed upon the continent. As Alvarado (2020) states about the creation of a border wall between Southern California and Mexico:

> The border has divided our people; it cut a line right through our land and separated us. The Kumeyaay Nation extends from North County down into Baja California, where our brothers and sisters live. We do not ask for much, we are peaceful people, but a united people and will stand up

> for our rights and protect our sites because that is who we are. We are like a hornet's nest, you disrespect our lands, our home, and you get the entire Kumeyaay Nation (para. 9).

Colonial settlers removed Kumeyaay peoples in Southern California from their homelands first during the Spanish Mission period, later during the Mexican Rancho period, and finally by the U.S. government which forced them onto small reservations, most with infertile soil and little water (Hoffman & Gamble, 2006). In the *Mexican Cession* originating from the *Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo* after the *Mexican American War*, the Kumeyaay lands were separated by new US/Mexican border dividing people within the Kumeyaay Nation who had historically migrated between the two countries (Hoffman & Gamble, 2006). Of the eighteen federally recognized Kumeyaay tribes (other tribal groups also live in the area), thirteen exist in San Diego country and another five across settled across the border in Northern Baja California, Mexico (Alvarado, 2020). In fact, the border itself crosses an ancient burial site on the graves of Kumeyaay ancestors which is being further threatened by the border wall. This wall, protested by the Kumeyaay Nation, threatens to continually tear apart cultures and communities and to desecrate a sacred Kumeyaay heritage site. Kumeyaay activism *is* border thinking and activism. One Kumeyaay protester, Jamie LaBrake, claims: "Our ancestors left their teachings behind. It's up to us to find a home in our hearts for them, and today that home was built" (Alvarado, 2020). While Vigneault had crossed over by the time of this protest, she would be honored by the Kumeyaay youth's commitment to protest the wall and the unity of Kumeyaay people on both sides of the border. In an interview I conducted in 2008 she stated: "What gives me hope is that more and more women are standing up for whatever, whatever their belief is, whatever their struggle is, more and more women are standing up… especially the young ones, now are not afraid to stand up" (San Diego Hall of Fame, 2012). She would be proud that Kumeyaay youth are continuing in her legacy of activism.

Vigneault's work volunteering for the Peace and Dignity project exemplifies her conviction against border restrictions for Kumeyaay people. For instance, a short article on Two-Spirit people comments upon

one of her visits to an Indigenous children's shelter in Tecate, Mexico, noting her work "cultivating Kumeyaay traditions, language, and culture while protecting children from the hardships of orphanages" (North East, 2006). It mentions her visit to the Kumeyaay children's shelter to bring shoes and pizza to children forced to leave abusive and unsafe homes, consequences of histories of colonial violence and oppression. This may seem like a small act, but it is a reminder of the importance of living a life of service. If we all shared the gifts we had in small, communal ways, we could truly make a difference in the world around us and towards the healing of Indigenous peoples. It further exemplifies the problem with the border wall and difficulties it imposes on Kumeyaay people who have families living on the other side or who want to travel to visit Kumeyaay people on either side of the border. It heals the historical violence against Kumeyaay peoples that continue to separate children from their communities further separated by an oppressive border dividing a Nation between nations.

As Anzaldúa asserted in 1987, Indigenous and queer women must straddle space and harness their fire to burn a in clearing in the wood to create firm ground upon which to stand in stolen lands that were once homelands. In Vigneault's own life, she was often disoriented as a body "out of line": not the right color, neither white nor black with no school system that would accept her in the Jim Crow era Louisiana, not "straight" and hence sometimes rejected as the role of Two-Spirit people was no longer visible in her communities, the "wrong" sex, the "wrong" religion, etc.…, yet she continued to orient herself, revive histories, and reconnect lines creating a sense of place: "The temporality of orientation reminds us that orientation are effects of what we tend towards, where the "'toward' marks a space and time that is almost, but not quite, available in the present" (Ahmed, 2007, p. 20). Her "tending towards" has opened new paths that this paper trails. Ahmed (2007) continues, "When people stop treading, the path may disappear. So, when we see the line of the path before us, we tend to walk upon it, as a path that 'clears' the way" (p 16). Thus, Vigneault's own life has cleared the way for other women, queer and/or Indigenous peoples where the paths to follow are disappearing.

## 6.3. Reclamation of Knowledge, History, and Traditions

Like her volunteer work and activism, Vigneault dedicated her professional career to reclaiming and documenting Kumeyaay history, knowledge, and traditions to honor her ancestors and preserve their legacy for future generations. Vigneault was one of the first to graduate from university in her family where she received her Associates of Arts degree from Grossmont College in 1997, her bachelor's from San Diego State University in 2001, and her master's in library and information sciences from Drexel University in 2008. During her studies she was involved in activism inside and outside her academic institutions. For instance, at Grossmont college during the 1990's, she implored them to offer Kumeyaay language classes (which was at first denied), and, at San Diego State University, she worked for the institution to recognize Kumeyaay students and land recognition and spoke against the use of a colonialist Aztec mascot. She also founded the non-profit Kumeyaay Historical Society where she researched and assembled articles, photographs, and artifacts on Kumeyaay peoples and traditions to generate and promote awareness (Goodman, 2010). With her research, she collaborated with the San Diego Women's History Museum to preserve and facilitate the knowledge within San Diego and beyond. Vigneault explains, "The past is what we learn from. Our past is our future. The Creator gave our elders these gifts that have become our traditions. They kept these traditions alive because they are a part of who we are" (Goodman, 2010). Thus, time-space remains cyclical, and our ancestors are also our future.

Likewise, she has worked as a librarian in both Santa Ysabel Tribal Library and at Kaplan college. She championed Indigenous literature and advocated for libraries to include more Indigenous texts as a member of the American Indian Library Association. She has received various honors and awards for her work: she was awarded the Soroptimists Women Making a Difference Award in 2007, she was inducted in the San Diego Women's Hall of Fame as a Builder of Cultural Bridge in 2008, and she was awarded the DURGA award in 2010 for her ability to merge history and cultural heritage. As Alvarado questions (2020):

> How can we be a country if we do not acknowledge the wrongdoings we have done? Do you wonder why we're upset? It's called historical trauma and intergenerational trauma, a wound that has been passed down from one generation to the next. How can we move forward when our voices haven't been heard, and we haven't healed from past wounds?

Coming from an environment where she was once denied education for being American Indian, where her mother and aunt were forced into oppressive "boarding schools," she overcame these traumas, achieved her own educational goals, and used her education as a tool to benefit and reclaim knowledge and traditions once denied and suppressed. Through her research, she helps people acknowledge the wrongdoings of the past to allow silenced voices to be heard as an act of resistance and healing for the present and future generations, as an act of survivance (Vizenor, 1999).

Vigneault also fought to restore lost customs including Kumeyaay language, basket weaving and pottery to strengthen future generations and their cultural connections (Goodman, 2010). She also decided to reclaim traditions by getting a traditional tattoo, writing about this process:

> Our rite of passage ceremonies were wiped out due to the oppressors and religion. I was inspired by Anna Sandoval, who was the first female Kumeyaay leader of our local reservation. She is the only other person from our tribe that I knew who had it. When I was younger, I was always in awe about how she preserved one of the old ways of women. I always wanted to do the same but thought deeply about when and how. So on my 50th birthday I had the ceremony. I invited many women from my reservation that are close to me. We did it the traditional way, using an agave needle. (Goodman, 2010, para. 8)

Through this tattoo and her other work, she fought to preserve Kumeyaay customs, identity, and spirituality: "They are the essence of us as Kumeyaay people…It is through our language, songs, dances, and ceremonies that the Creator hears our prayers" (Goodman, 2010, para. 15). She also advocated in

support of women's rights including opening the blessing/prayer at the San Diego Women' March (Meschen, 2018).

## 6.4. Indigenous Military Acknowledgement

Despite the violence against Indigenous people by the U.S. government, American Indian peoples in the United States have fought in high numbers in every major armed conflict in the United States since the American Revolution. Many hold their service with pride and honor, but it is not always reciprocal. Despite their service, Native Americans/American Indians were not considered citizens until 1924, although some gained citizenship earlier through their military service (Native, 2024). Vigneault, like many Native Americans, was born in 1958 into a military family who dedicated and sacrificed their lives to protect a nation which has not historically protected their own. She tried to continue in this tradition of military service in the Air Force but was discharged as she had contracted Eastern Equine Encephalitis while living in Louisiana, the same place she had been denied admission to the public school system for being "Indian" despite having a father who served in the U.S. military with a Top-Secret Security clearance. This disease affected her ability to get a driver's license, caused seizures and, later, was a contributing factor to Vigneault experiencing homelessness and addiction in San Diego, California. Nevertheless, Vigneault respected her family's military tradition and served in another way: she remembered her family telling stories of the service and legacy of her great-uncle, Augustine Quevas, a Prisoner of War (POW) and Santa Ysabel tribal member, who died during his service in World War II (Soto, 2018). Yet until Vigneault started her research, her family had not known precisely what had happened to her great uncle. Quevas, known colloquially by his fellow soldiers as "chief," fought in the Army Air Forces' 30th Bomb Squadron during World War II where he survived the Bataan Death March, a brutal, 60-mile march that killed 7,000 to 10,000 prisoners. He was then accidentally killed by a torpedo from a U.S. submarine while being transferred on a Japanese ship after time spent in horrid conditions as a POW (Soto, 2018). Vigneault fought to have her great-uncle, who never had children of his own, recognized with a Purple

Heart: in total, he was owed five medals and a lapel button. Yet, to her disappointment, after a congresswoman had told her the medals were on their way, she later was told she would not receive the medals as she was not next of kin. She had wanted to donate the medals to an exhibit on the military service of American Indians at the Veterans Museum and Memorial Center in Balboa Park to honor her great-uncle and the service of all American Indians who had not been recognized (Soto, 2018). Finally, through her dedication and a network of POW's, she was contacted by the son of Robert Blakeslee, who had survived the bombing that had killed her great-uncle and was awarded the same medals he would have been given. The late POW survivor had claimed his medals, and his wife had received extra medals that the family now gifted to Quevas' family (Soto, 2018). Through Vigneault's persistence, she honored the service of her great-uncle. These small acts of reclamation create a legacy of honor for American Indian peoples and their military service: it holds her great-uncle and all who fought in different wars and conflicts as warriors.

## 6.5. Unification of Native Families

In addition to her other reclamation work, Vigneault's dedicated her skills as a Native genealogist to reunite adopted American Indian and First Nation children, often referred to as the Stolen Generation or "lost birds" (Henz, 2019). While the exact numbers of people she helped reunite is not available, she did this work for many Indigenous people who had been adopted over the years, never charging for her services. One such adoptee was our mutual friend, a nurse from San Diego, Patrick Quinton Yeakly, who later passed away in a tragic car accident related to substance use. Vigneault helped him find his birth mother and enroll as a member in his tribal Nation from Alaska (Henz, 2019). His case posed a challenge as his mother had also been adopted and was deceased, but she was able to open both Quinton's and his mother's cases to find the grandmother's name, spelled incorrectly. By speaking to people from the village, she was able to find his enrollment information (Hentz, 2019). Connecting with his roots and being an enrolled tribal

member/citizen of his tribe impacted Quinton's life and gave him great comfort. Before his passing, he regularly visited Vigneault and maintained contact with her sister, Joyce, after she passed.

Another adoptee, an Elder Nenana Athabascan woman, Donna Kayser, shared her experience with Vigneault as her advocate along this difficult path:

> Karen has always been ready with just the right thing to say, or the exact small push I've needed to take me to the next step. She has been my voice and my advocate and has understood the issues that I suffer as a result of the adoption process and loss of culture. I currently have an application pending for tribal membership, and I don't believe this would have been possible without Karen's help and support. Native children who are in the foster care system or going through the adoption process desperately need someone like Karen, who is caring, knowledgeable, and passionate about keeping these children connected to their culture. (Vigneault, n.d.)

Furthermore, Vigneault's work transcended national borders as she also helped a woman from Iceland, Gudrun Emilsdottir, reunite with her sister and become an Otoe-Missouria tribal member (Hilleary, 2018b). Her father, an American Indian soldier from Red Rock, had been in Iceland where he helped conceive Emilsdottir with her birth mother, who later gave her up for adoption. Since the reunification, she has visited her sister and her tribe various times (Hilleary, 2018b). Vigneault writes about this cultural recovery process for adoptees: "There is so much that goes on in the minds, hearts and souls of adoptees, so much pain over the decades…I feel like some kind of a train conductor, working to round up all these souls and bring them back home" (Hilleary, 2018a). This healing and reunification work continues as part of Vigneault's legacy.

## 6.6. Creating Sacred Social Space: Twin-Spirit Communities

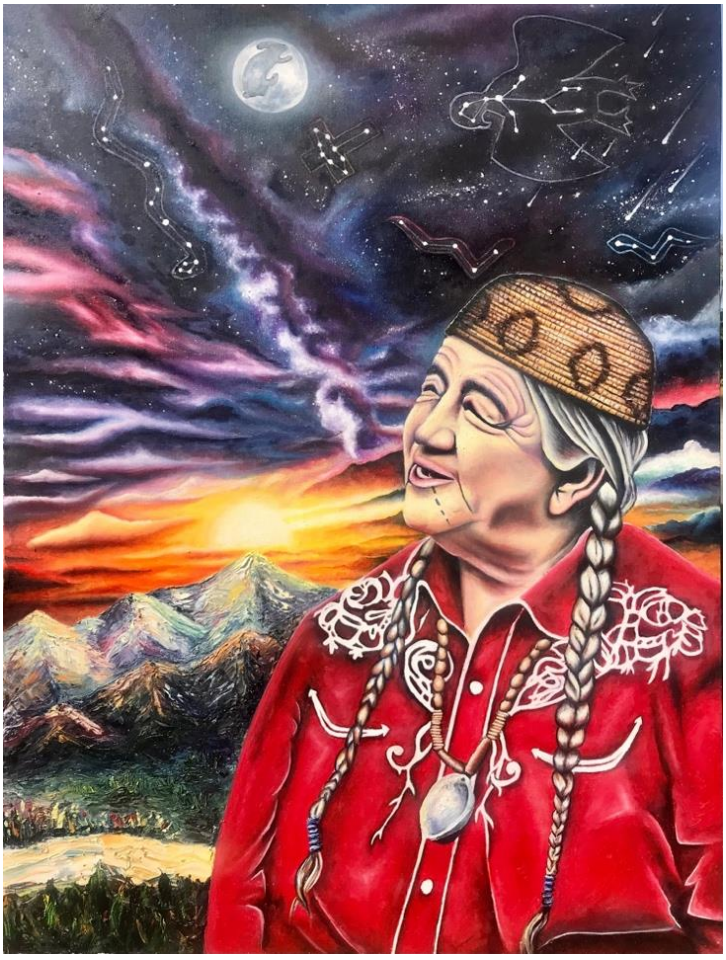
(LaHunt) Karen Vigneault has played a significant role in queer Indigenous activism in San Diego. From her own experiences of homophobia from her Catholic education, racism within LGBT+ communities as well as homophobia within Indigenous spaces (due to the imposed Christianity and homophobic

education many Indigenous people received through the missions and the "boarding school" system), she has worked to reclaim the sacred role of Two or Twin Spirit people, both within the LGBT+ and Indigenous communities. In 1989, after a San Diego Pride parade, she co-founded the Nations of the four Directions along with Tom Lidot**,** Travis Anderson**,** and Bob by Rubio. She stated that "the spirit told all of us at the same time, this is it" (Wiegand, 2020). They founded this group, which represented local Kumeyaay, Luiseno, and Cupeno tribes as well as other non-local tribes, to promote queer Native pride, re-educate people on the historical role of Two-Spirited people, unite Native Americans from reservations and urban areas, and create visibility (Wiegand, 2020). The Four Directions referred to in the group name held spiritual significance: "The North (white) represented the tribes' elders, the East (gold) represented rebirth, the West (red or black) for spiritual discipline, and the South (green) represented physical discipline" (Wiegand, 2020). The meetings incorporated prayers, smudging, and songs/drums to help the members reconnect with spiritual traditions and included other forms of activism like as fighting against as the AIDS epidemic and LGBT violence that existed on reservations (Wiegand, 2020). The group also marched at the front of the San Diego pride parade as the first gender and sexually diverse inhabitants in the region, a tradition that continues passed Vigneault's passing. As Meschen (2018) writes, Vigneault's Two-Spirit activism "emphasizes that Native American traditions are living, breathing cultures, and the traditions and the identities of the past are just as relevant today as they were generations ago." In addition, Vigneault participated in other queer activism such as participating in LGBT+ news programs like Our World News and as an activist in Anti-Aids group Act Up. She also contributed the chapter "LGBTIQ History starts here: Indigenous/Native Terminology" in the book *LGBTIQ Library and Archives Users: Essays on Outreach, Service, Collections and Access* (Greenblatt, 2011). Thus, she is held as an example of a respected Two-Spirit Elder for her role in building community.

# 7. Conclusion

**Figure 1.**

*Journey to the Spirit. Oil on Canvas*



Source: own picture.

This paper reveals historical traumas of settler-colonialism for Kumeyaay and Two-Spirit peoples and how Vigneault worked to restore balance in both. It defined major concepts in Indigenous studies such as Indigeneity, settler-colonialism, and decolonial Indigenization as well as comparing Western and

Indigenous conceptions of space-time. It represented Vigneault's life and activism through her work as a genealogist and activist who reclaimed Two-Spirit identity and reunited adoptees with their Indigenous families. The representation of (LaHunt) Karen Vigneault's work unites space-time configurations extending beyond her life. Her story, as a postindian warrior of survivance now "arise[s] from the silence of heard stories...not the absence of the real in simulated realities; the critical distinction is that postindian warriors create a new tribal presence in stories" (Vizenor, 1999, p. 12).

This paper does not share private moments, so I want to end writing myself, a non-Indigenous lesbian into this telling. As the ancient Chinese proverb expresses, which resonates with Vignaelts philosophy of life: "An invisible thread connects those who are destined to meet regardless of time, place, and circumstance. The thread may stretch or tangle, but it will never break" (Schroff & Tresniowski, 2011). During my own struggle with alcohol use, Vigneault visited me in a dream, and I decided to write to her only to find she had recently transcended this world. Vigneault had also survived her own journey from substance use. Anzaldúa (1987) writes that addiction "is a ritual to help one through a trying time; its repetition safeguards the passage, it becomes one's talisman, one's touchstone. If it sticks around after having outlived its usefulness, we become 'stuck' in it and it takes possession of us" (p. 46). Since I could no longer speak to her, I began painting a portrait of Vigneault, and she accompanied me in spirit through my own process of recovery and dispossession (Figure 1.) In this painting, Vigneault is at Kuuchamaa mountain during sunset with the presence of both the sun (masculine) and the moon (feminine) to honor her Two-Spirit identity and the passing of time through space. It represents Kumeyaay cosmology with constellations and the Milky Way, her path to transcend to the Spirit world; the painting is now in San Diego with her sister Joyce. The stories I included in this paper are from public sources and conversations with her sister, but in every private life exists the stories of trauma, fear, loss, grief as well as courage, which the reader will have to imagine. Vigneault's accomplishments were impelled by her own personal struggles. By overcoming these challenges, she became the strong Twin-Spirit activist outlined here: she

earned the privilege of wearing her face tattoo and traditional hat to honor herself, her ancestors, and future generations with her authenticity. Sometimes we must pass through trials and pain to develop the deep empathy Vigneault cultivated. She was not the only one in her family who made that journey within to recover the self, the self settler-colonialism worked tirelessly to destroy: thus, self-healing, for Indigenous peoples, is decolonial practice. After centuries of erasure, she is her ancestor's prayers answered:

> Our ancestors sacrificed everything for us to be here today. We are our ancestor's prayers answered. I want to paint a picture for you: imagine all the atrocities that were committed against the Kumeyaay Nation recorded live and seeing what we went through. How would you look at them? How would you feel? (Alvarado, 2020).

Thus, the sacred knowledge and traditions she reclaimed provide hope for the future. Vigneault lived a life of service, scaling space-time dimensions to heal herself and her communities.

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