

ANDREA THOMPSON

Two-Spirit People

She says

This may be crossing the line...

but because I like her, I say

Fine, cross away.

So she does

digs right in and says

Sometimes when you talk, you offer a disclaimer first

Begin an apparently declarative statement with

"I could be wrong here" or "I'm not really sure ... "

And when you do that, Sister

you give away your power.

She says she knows cause she's a tranny

a term I wasn't sure that I understand fully

only knew, even though she looked like a boy

she understood when I call her *she*.

I know what it's like, s/he tells me

*to cut yourself down before you've sprung up from
a seed.*

That's why they'd call us in - people like me.

In an ancient Native tradition

whenever there was a dispute in the village

between the men and women

they'd call one of us Two-Spirit people in

to negotiate a resolution.

So we'd go over to this side of the river where the men

were, and listen

mmm hmmm, ah ha, ah ha...

then go over to the other side of the river where the

women were, and

mmm hmmm, ah ha...

Then we'd tell them what we thought.

*Because they asked us, and because we know
how to be both.*

So I can tell you

men don't do that

don't put themselves down

before they open up their mouth.

Most men speak without apology

respect their own opinion enough

to present it with authority.

But women, a lot of women

say, "Sorry..."

say, "I don't really know, but..."

then offer priceless wisdom up.

Drop a gem with the power to heal the world

with a preface that establishes

their words don't really matter.

Or worse

hold that gem

under their tongue

cold as stone

never to be heard.

Don't do it, she says

don't apologize and cower.

If you have something to say

stand up straight

and speak your mind

from your heart

from your soul.

Let your words hold your power.

Writer and spoken word artist Andrea Thompson has performed her work at venues across North America and overseas for the past twenty years. Andrea is the author of the novel, Over Our Heads, co-editor of the anthology Other Tongues: Mixed Race Women Speak Out, author of the poetry collection Eating the Seed, and creator of the Urban Muisic Award nominated CD, One. Andrea is a graduate of the University of Guelph's MFA Creative Writing program, and currently teaches Spoken Word through the Ontario College of Art and Design's Continuing Studies department.