



Intersecting Identities: Indigenous Peoples within the 2SLGBTQIA+ Community

- The term “Two-Spirit” refers to a person who identifies as having both a feminine and masculine spirit. It is believed to have originated from the Third Annual Inter-Tribal Native American, First Nations, Gay and Lesbian American Conference in Winnipeg in 1990. It was proposed by Elder Myra Lamee, containing a wide range of meanings for different people and different communities.
- Before colonization, oppression, and erasure of Indigenous Peoples and their Cultures and Identities in Canada, Indigenous Peoples believed that 2SLGBTQIA+ people in their communities were healers, counsellors, and persons with specific and honoured ceremonial rights.
- Two-Spirit people have long held specific and important roles in various Indigenous cultures. In many communities, they were viewed as sacred, as they were believed to have the gift of holding the views of both a man and woman.
- Heteronormativity and heterosexism are driving forces behind the discrimination that many Two-Spirit individuals experience due to their gender identity and expression.
- A new generation of Two-Spirit Elders are developing teachings based on the belief of finding your path and expression as a 2SLGBTQIA+ person, leading to more healing between communities and 2SLGBTQIA+ people.
- The Two-Spirit Identity is fluid and non-linear in all aspects of identity, including gender, sexuality, community, culture, and spirituality. Two-Spirit people, both historically and in the present, transcend the categories of colonially-defined gender and sexuality.
- The Two-Spirit identity is also a way of combatting the colonial legacies of heterosexism.

Reference: INTERSECTIONS: INDIGENOUS AND 2SLGBTQIA+ IDENTITIES - NATIVE WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION OF CANADA



Glossary of Terms

Many Indigenous societies have terms in their own languages for members of the 2SLGBTQQA+ community, which imbue great significance and meaning.

TERMS FROM ENGLISH

WG2STGD+: Women, Girls, Two-Spirit, Transgender, Gender-diverse.

Heterosexism: A type of homophobia that discriminates against people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, and/or asexual.

Heteronormativity: The belief that heterosexuality is the “normal” or only acceptable sexual orientation.

Trans or Transgender: Refers to individuals whose sex assigned at birth does not align with their gender identity. A person who is assigned female at birth and identifies as a man may refer to themselves as a trans man, short for “transgender man”, and a person who is assigned male at birth and identifies as a woman may refer to themselves as a trans woman, short for “transgender woman”

Sex: Assigned at birth as either male or female, based on external genitalia.

Gender: A social construct that comprises both Gender Identity and Gender Expression. **Gender identity** is an individual’s sense of being male, female, or an alternative gender and **Gender expression** is how an individual expresses their gender.

Cisgender: Refers to an individual whose sex assigned at birth aligns with their gender identity. A person who is assigned female at birth and identifies as a woman is referred to as a ciswoman, short for “cisgender woman” (cisman is used for cisgender man).

Gender Dysphoria: Distress or discomfort a person might experience because of a mismatch between their sex assigned at birth and their gender identity.

Intersex: An umbrella term that refers to any combination of anatomical, endocrinal, or chromosomal features that do not fit the binary biological criterion for male or female sex.

Gender-diverse: An umbrella term used to describe gender identities that are not within the gender binary.

Gender-fluid: Someone whose gender identity and/or gender expression is not static.

Non-binary/NB or “Enby”: Used to describe individuals who do not identify as a man or woman. It can also be used as an umbrella term to refer to other identities such as genderqueer, agender, or genderfluid.

Non-gendered, Agender, or Genderless: Someone who does not identify as having a gender. Some folks who self-identify using these terms do so to critique heteronormativity and the gender binary.

References

https://nwac.ca/assets-knowledge-centre/2S_Intersections_Booklet_V2.pdf

<https://ucalgary.ca/news/intersectionality-and-what-pride-can-mean-different-communities-our-city>

<https://www.theindigenousfoundation.org/articles/the-history-of-two-spirit-folks#:~:text=The%20concept%20of%20Two%2DSpirit,them%2C%20both%20male%20and%20female.>

<https://www.onwa.ca/love>