

Understanding and Reclaiming our Two-Spirit Relatives

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ICWA Education Days

- ICWA Ed Day is a cultural learning experience
- The curriculum is designed to stimulate the mind, body, and spirit.
- Ed Day topics: Historical trauma; Customary Adoption, ICWA 101, etc.



You train dogs and horses.....



**You educate people or rather.....
people educate themselves**





We had a conversation and followed their lead

- Invited Two-Spirit individuals to our meeting
- Met after hours to make sure everyone was included.
- Asked them about language
- What did they want participants to know?
- Plan for safety
- Told them what I thought barriers might be
- Asked specific questions
- Developed vocabulary list
- Developed resource list
- Thought of initiative that would stimulate “out of box” thinking.

Indian Child Welfare Education Day
and

**Minnesota Two-Spirit Society
Presents**

*From a Place of Honor to a Place of Shame Return to Honor
Understanding the Native American GLBTQ Community*



**Indian Child Welfare Education Day
Co-Sponsored by WMCL Indian Law Center**

**The Minnesota Two-Spirit Society
Presents**

***Dynamic Families and Strengthening Children:
A Two Spirit Perspective***

***Opening Remarks:
Representative Susan Allen***

Presenters:

Antony Stately, PhD

Honor Project – Critical Issues and LBGT Two-Spirit
Populations

Diverse Parent Voices Panel

Lisa DeCory, Claudia Nicolosi, Antony Stately, Conan
Comes Flying, Angie Thornhill

Nick Metcalf, MSW

Systemic Barriers for Two-Spirit Families

Lenny Hayes, MA

Strength and Resiliency – Growing up Two-Spirited

Indian Child Welfare Education Day
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and
The Minnesota Two-Spirit Society

Psychosocial Trauma: Boarding School to
Bullying
Two Spirit Resiliency and Coping, Best
Practices

Presenters:

Florentine Blue Thunder

Traditional Cultural Perspective of Two Spirit People

Antony Stately, PhD

Historical Trauma Overview of Two Spirit People

Comanche Fairbanks

Bully Transformation

Panel Discussion

Reva D'Nova, Nathan Taylor, Conan Comes Flying

Clarity, Truth, and Transformation:

Two Spirit panel discussion on Healthy Safe Response to Bullying

Nick Metcalf, MSW

Lateral Violence: Hurt People, HURT People

Lenny Hayes, MA

Clinical Implication of Bullying on Two Spirit People

Welcome Back to the Circle



Smudge

Don't

Judge

**TWO SPIRIT AND LGBT
NATIVE AMERICANS**



Beginning of Time

- 1492-1990 –Berdache:**Two-spirit people** (also **two spirit** or **twospirit**) is a modern umbrella term used by some indigenous North Americans for Gender variant individuals in their communities. Non-Native anthropologists have historically used the term **berdaches** /bər'dæfɪz/ for individuals who fulfill one of many mixed gender roles in First Nations and Native American tribes, but this term has more recently fallen out of favour.
- Before the late twentieth century, the term *berdache* was widely used by anthropologists as a generic term to indicate feminine Native men; however, this term has become considered increasingly outdated and even offensive.

Where did the Two-Spirit term emerge from?

- Use of the *berdache* term has widely been replaced by the self-chosen *two-spirit*, which itself gained widespread popularity in 1990 during the third annual intertribal Native American/First Nations gay and lesbian conference in [Winnipeg](#). *Two-spirit* is a term chosen to distinctly express Native/First Nations [gender identity](#) and [gender variance](#), in addition to replacing the otherwise imposed and non-Native terms of *berdache* and *gay*.

What does it mean to be Two-Spirited?

- "Two-Spirited" or "Two-Spirit" usually indicates a Native person who feels their body simultaneously manifests both a masculine and a feminine spirit, or a different balance of masculine and feminine characteristics than usually seen in masculine men and feminine women.
- Most Indigenous communities have specific terms in their own languages for the gender-variant members of their communities and the social and spiritual roles these individuals fulfill — including Lakota: *wíŋkte*, Navajo: *nádleehé*, Mohave: *hwame*

Two-Spirit also means

- Male Two-Spirits were considered to be a "third gender," and female Two-Spirits were considered to be a "fourth gender" (similar to the way in which both male and female homosexuals are considered to be gay, while females are also considered to be lesbian).
- It is very important to remember that genders vary from tribe to tribe but are similar.
- It is said that some tribes have up to 15 genders to identify Two-Spirit individuals.

Traditional Two-Spirit Dress

- Their dress is usually a mixture of traditionally male and traditionally female articles, or they may dress as a man one day, and a woman on another.
- According to Sabine Lang many tribes have distinct gender and social roles.

Two-Spirit Community Roles

- Healers or medicine persons
- Parents of orphaned children
- Conveyors of oral traditions and songs ([Yuki](#))
- Foretellers of the future ([Winnebago](#), [Oglala Lakota](#))
- Name givers of children or adults (Oglala Lakota, [Tohono O'odham](#))
- Nurses during war expeditions
- Potters ([Zuni](#), [Navajo](#), Tohono O'odham)
- Matchmakers ([Cheyenne](#), [Omaha](#), Oglala Lakota)
- Makers of feather regalia for dances ([Maidu](#))
- Special role players in the [Sun Dance](#) ([Crow](#), [Hidatsa](#), Oglala Lakota)

Two-Spirit Community Roles

- Peace makers for the tribe
- Joined war parties
- Boys' and girls' puberty ceremonies
- Husbands
- Wives

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- Will Roscoe writes that male and female Two-spirits have been "documented in over 130 tribes, in every region of North America, among every type of native culture."

What does it mean to be Two-Spirited?

- Alex Wilson (1996), a Two-Spirit woman activist and educator, wrote that the term Two-Spirit “proclaims a sexuality deeply rooted in our own cultures. Two-Spirit identity affirms the interrelatedness of all aspects of identity, including sexuality, gender, culture, community, and spirituality.”

What Happened to Honor and Respect?

- Since European colonization, the Two-Spirit community has been denied and alienated from their Native identity and community.
- As a result, Two-Spirit individuals were often looked down upon as being perverted and were shamed.
- Results of Historical and Intergenerational Trauma

What happened to our Two-Spirit people?

- Out of the love and respect for Two-Spirit people, many chiefs were reluctant to defend their Two-Spirit people and they were sent underground to protect them.
- It has been said that Europeans and missionaries were murdering our Two-Spirit people.

Issues that impact the Two-Spirit Individual

- Loss of Identity
- Loss of Culture
- Drug and alcohol abuse
- Serious mental health issues related to all forms of trauma
- Depression
- Suicide
- Discrimination
- Sexual Assaults
- HIV infection
- Alienation from family and friends
- Sex addiction
- Gambling
- Hate crimes
- Shame
- Homophobia
- Racism
- The Coming Out Process
- Bullying
- Domestic Violence

**Digital Recordings of Two-Spirit
Individuals involved in the
foster/adoptee system**

Statistics of Two-Spirit vs. Hetrosexual

Two-Spirit Individuals

- Childhood physical abuse 40.0%
- Childhood sexual abuse 40.0%
- Lifetime sexual assault 48.0%
- Lifetime physical abuse by partner 29.2%
- Lifetime physical assault by other acquaintance 28.0%
- Lifetime experience of being
robbed, mugged, physically
attacked 60.0%

Hetrosexual Individuals

- Childhood physical abuse 20%
- Childhood sexual abuse 25.8%
- Lifetime sexual assault 35.1%
- Lifetime physical abuse by partner 29.1%
- Lifetime physical assault by other acquaintances 23.8%
- Lifetime experiences of being robbed, mugged, physically attacked 48.3% (Jane M. Simoni, PhD, Karina L. Walters, PhD, Kimberly F. Balsam, PhD, and Seth B. Meyers, PhD)

Risks for Our Two-Spirit/LGBTQ Youth

- LGBTQ youth are up to 4 times more likely to attempt suicide than heterosexual peers
- Over 30% of all reported teen suicides each year are by LGBTQ youth
- 50% of all LGBTQ youth reported being rejected by their parents and community due to their sexual orientation.
- 26% of LGBTQ youth are forced to leave home because of conflicts over their sexual orientation

Risks for Our Two-Spirit/LGBTQ Youth

- Nine out of 10 LGBTQ students (86.2%) experienced harassment at school
- Three-fifths (60.8%) felt unsafe at school because of their sexual orientation
- About one-third (32.7%) skipped a day of school in the past month of feeling unsafe (GLSEN, the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network, National School Climate Survey, 2009)

Risks for Our Two-Spirit/LGBTQ Youth in Rural Areas

- Two-Spirit/LGBTQ youth in rural communities and those with lower adult educational attainment face particularly hostile school climates (JG Greytak, Diaz EM-Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 2009)

What Can We Do?

- Educate on Bullying
- Zero tolerance for bullying
- If we don't have the answers, seek them out
- Laws protecting LGBTQ victims
- Encourage
- Choose not be silent

What can Mental Health Professionals and others do?

- Understand the effects of homophobia and to remember that “Homophobia is a choice.”
- Don't focus therapy on the client's sexual orientation unless the clients wants to
- Be culturally competent on Two-Spirit/LGBTQ issues
- Be aware of Two-Spirit/LGBTQ community resources
- Exhibit gay-affirming attitudes
- Understanding what it means to be oppressed
- Being more understanding of Two-Spirit/LGBTQ issues

What can Mental Health Professionals and others do?

- **Show compassion and empathy**
- **Being willing to find services for Two-Spirit/LGBTQ individuals if you are not able to provide proper services**
- **Understand the impact of Native American Historical and Intergenerational Trauma and how it impacts the Two-Spirit/LGBTQ Community**
- **Allow the individual to define the identity of themselves either as Two-Spirited or LGBTQ**

As an individual, ask yourself

- If someone were to come out to you as Two-Spirited/LGBTQ, what would your first thought be?
- How would you feel if your child came out to you as Two-Spirited/LGBTQ?
- How would you feel if your mother, father or sibling came out as Two-Spirited/LGBTQ?
- Have you ever stood up for a Two-Spirit/LGBTQ individual who was being harassed?

As an individual, ask yourself

- Have you ever laughed at or made a joke at the expense of Two-Spirit/LGBTQ people?
- If you do not identify as Two-Spirited/LGBTQ, how would you feel if people thought you were Two-Spirited/LGBTQ?

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- **As Little Thunder, a Lakota Two-Spirit woman activist said “The pain of being rejected by one’s own people can be the most devastating.”**