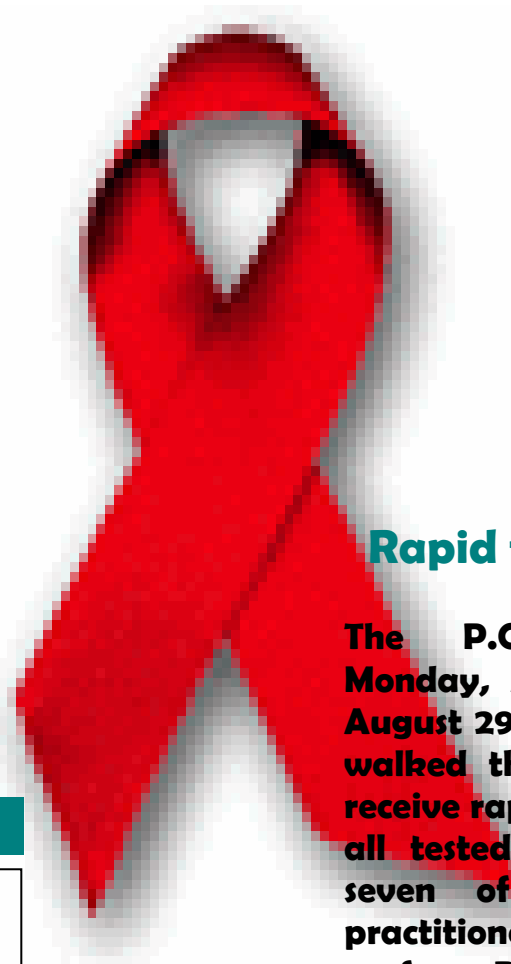


# The Sacred Fire



**2-Spirited People of the 1<sup>st</sup> Nations e-NEWSLETTER**



## **Rapid testing update**

**The P.O.C. testing began Monday, April 13, 2008. As of August 29<sup>th</sup> 2008 39 people have walked through AHT's doors to receive rapid HIV testing of which all tested negative. Presently, seven of AHT's health care practitioners are available to perform Point of Care rapid HIV testing.**

**Full article on pg. 26**

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## Message from the Executive Director Art Zoccole 2-Spirited People of the 1<sup>st</sup> Nations

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I would like to thank everyone who was involved in the Annual AIDS Walk. 2 Spirits is one of the organizations in Toronto that receive funds through the community partners fund. Our share last year was significant lower than previous years and as a result we had to discontinue our APHA fund. We receive our share in late November or early December after all pledges have been collected. So it is important for all of us to help the best way that we can.

Nancy Gonzalez, project consultant for the 2 Spirits Trans project organized a two day workshop in Hamilton on July 23 & 24, 2008.

There were 30 participants and 80 copies of "Our Relatives Said: A Wise Practices Guide – Voices of Aboriginal Trans people" were distributed. A number of the Trans manual evaluation have been received and will continue until the end of the project. At each of the workshops, Nancy is distributing pre and post evaluations. Two of our members who identify as Trans presented at the workshop and had a great impact on the audience on their stories of discrimination and stigma. Toronto's workshops are scheduled to take place from January to March 2009. The workshop for Sudbury is scheduled for September 29 & 30, 2008.

Joni Shawana has been hired as the 7 hour/week 2 Spirits HIV/AIDS Outreach Prevention Coordinator on July 25, 2008 with an end date of June 30, 2009. Her job duties include: develop a form which will gather information on the participants including age, gender and Aboriginal ancestry; develop a questionnaire that will gather evidence of knowledge, attitudes and behaviours and at-risk activities for HIV/AIDS prevention; coordinate and provide 2 HIV/AIDS prevention workshops per

month to Aboriginal women, men, youth and Two Spirit people located in York West, York South-Weston, St. Paul's, Toronto Central Rosedale, Toronto Danforth and Scarborough East; provide HIV/AIDS prevention workshops targeted to Aboriginal women, men, youth, Two-Spirit people and Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal service providers citywide; keep records of the distribution of HIV/AIDS prevention supplies (male and female condoms, safer crack kits, information on needle exchanges in Toronto, documents on HIV/AIDS prevention; prepare final report on the project and all information to our web site.

### **Second International Preconference on Native/Indigenous Peoples and Afrodescendants facing HIV/AIDS Sexualities and Human Rights**

This preconference was held at the Quality Inn in Zona Roma in Mexico City from Wednesday, July 30<sup>th</sup> through to Saturday, August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2008. The plenaries and roundtables included: Indigenous peoples and afrodescendants, sexual diversity and vulnerability: a challenge to research and action; Preventive and Educational models; Marginalization, Social Stigma and Statistics of HIV in our Indigenous communities; Community bonding for and effective response; Public policies and community facing HIV/AIDS; Traditional and Western medicine: an intercultural dialogue against AIDS; Indigenous women, vulnerability and HIV/AIDS; Prevention strategies; Afrodescendency, racism, violence and HIV/AIDS; Research results on Sexual Health and HIV/AIDS in Indigenous and afrodescendants communities; Step planning for the following days, general instructions, impact of our agenda in the international conference and presentation of a proposal for future strategies; Human, cultural and territorial rights, in the framework of the 169 OIT agreement; and Sexual Diversity and Indigenous peoples.

There were one hundred and fifty indigenous delegates from eighteen countries.

2-Spirited People of the 1<sup>st</sup> Nations distributed our resource materials at the preconference.

Amaranta Gomez Regalado (Colectivo Binni Laanu, A.C. Mexico) stated that during the AIDS 2008 conference that there would be three meetings at the Global Village to discuss and to make decisions for the next AIDS 2010 conference in Vienna, Austria.

The Indigenous peoples from the Spanish speaking countries (Mexico, Panama, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Honduras, Ecuador, Colombia, Peru,

Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Bolivia and Uruguay) elected Amaranta Gomez Regalado as the indigenous representative and Alta Hooker as the Afrodescendants representative to the Indigenous Peoples Secretariat. Also, the indigenous peoples from the Spanish speaking countries decided to have a conference amongst themselves before Vienna and that the conference would be held in Bolivia.

### **XVII International AIDS Conference**

I attended the XVII International AIDS conference in Mexico City from August 3<sup>rd</sup> through to August 8<sup>th</sup>, 2008. I listened to session presentations on Indigenous People, First Nations and Afrodescendants confronting HIV/AIDS: Breaking the Silence and Indigenous People: Rights, vulnerability and Responses.

I walked in the march to recognize "All women, All rights!"

I participated at a press conference at AIDS 2008, with Louise Binder, Dr. Julio Montaner and Michael O'Connor entitled "the seven deadly sins of the Government of Canada". I stated that the apology made to the Aboriginal people in Canada resulted in tears being shed in our office and the next day that we had no resources to help people to address their issues and I called upon the Prime Minister of Canada to add more financial resources to Aboriginal HIV/AIDS issues in Canada.

Copies of "Our Relatives Said: A Wise Practices Guide – Voices of Aboriginal Trans people" were distributed at the Indigenous Peoples Networking Zone in the Global Village.

## **HIV TREATMENT KNOW YOUR OPTIONS**

**Corena Ryan**

**Client Care Coordinator**

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### **What is HIV?**

HIV is the virus that causes AIDS. Only people who have HIV can develop AIDS. HIV stands for Human Immunodeficiency Virus. AIDS stands for Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome. A virus is a kind of germ that can make you sick. For example, some viruses can give you a cold while others give you the chickenpox, flu or a cold sore.

### **What is CD4?**

CD4+ refers to a kind of cell in the blood. Your body is made up of many different kinds of cells. Each cell has its own job to do. CD4+ cells help keep you healthy. They protect you from some germs. CD4 cells coordinate the immune response, signaling other cells in the immune system to perform their special functions. The number of CD4 cells in a sample of blood is an indicator of the health of the immune system.

### **What HIV does**

HIV attacks and kills CD4+ cells. When there are not enough CD4+ cells, your body is most vulnerable to illness and infections. The more HIV you have in your body, the greater chance you have of getting sick.

### **How your body fights HIV**

HIV kills CD4+ cells. Your body fights back by making more CD4+ cells. This process starts as soon as the virus enters your bloodstream. HIV is attacking your CD4 count even when you are feeling healthy. When the number of CD4+ cells goes down too much, your body can't protect itself properly from illness and infections.

### **Doctors keep track of HIV**

Doctors and healthcare professionals can measure how many CD4+ cells are in the blood. This is called a "CD4+ count." Your CD4 count is measured by taking a blood sample. Doctors can also measure how much HIV is in the blood. This is called "viral load." These and other tests can help the doctor identify appropriate treatments for you.

### **HIV can be very tricky to fight**

HIV is a tricky virus, the disease mutates, its always changing. Because it keeps changing, it's hard for your body to fight HIV only one way. Sometimes, the virus is changing in a way that lets it escape from a drug treatment. This virus is then called a drug-resistant virus.

### **Keeping HIV levels down may help you live longer**

Caring about yourself through healthy living, eating right, and exercising can help you fight HIV. And in some people, new treatment options are reducing the amount of virus in the blood to levels so low that the virus is undetectable. While there is still no cure for HIV, making the right choices about healthy living and treatment options can help you fight HIV as long as possible.

### **It's important to stay on your treatment plan**

Whatever the treatment options you and your doctor have chosen, it's important to stay with them as long as you can. Choosing a treatment plan that will work for you is important because stopping treatment, even for a short time, can allow HIV to reproduce. Keeping up your treatment isn't always easy. Sometimes, while they are working, they may make you: feel tired, have headaches, feel sick to your stomach, have diarrhea, break out in a rash. Ask your doctor about ways to make you feel better.

### **Working Together**

Today having HIV doesn't mean you have to give up. You and your doctor make a strong team. Together, you can find the best way to live a longer, healthier life. The Canadian AIDS Treatment Information (CATIE) provides free of charge, to all Canadians, information on the latest treatments, drug therapies, complementary therapies, clinical trials and health care related to HIV/AIDS. It is the only national bilingual organization of its kind in Canada. CATIE assists physicians and other healthcare providers with information on AIDS treatment advances. CATIE also advocates for improved research, better treatments and easier access to treatments. By providing HIV/AIDS treatment information, CATIE encourages people living with HIV/AIDS to be actively involved in making decisions and developing strategies to optimize their health care.

If you have any questions about the information you just read, call CATIE 1-800-263-1638 and speak with a Treatment Information Representative. It's confidential and free.

Miigwetch to CATIE for reprint permission from [www.catie.ca](http://www.catie.ca) Please check out the web site for the latest and the greatest info on living with and preventing HIV/AIDS.

Baamaapii~

## ***Time to Begin?***

### ***Corena Ryan***

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Occasionally I meet newly diagnosed Aboriginal people who have many questions about their recent diagnosis. Most are their concerns and questions are about starting anti-HIV medications.

I wanted to thank CATIE for permission for this article. If you feel you have more questions, please do not hesitate to call me at 416-944-9300 x 223 or email me at [corena@2spirits.com](mailto:corena@2spirits.com) Maybe we can get together and talk about your options.

#### **Starting anti-HIV medications**

If you have HIV, starting anti-HIV medications is a big decision. It is difficult to decide when to start taking medications. Usually you have to continue the medications for life once you start them, and they have good and bad effects. It is important to talk to your doctor, pharmacist and other people living with HIV/AIDS who are taking medications before you make a decision about starting them. Take the time you need to consider all your questions before making decision. However, you should understand that waiting too long before starting anti-HIV medication may put you at risk.

**Some of the good things about taking anti-HIV medications:**

They can help you stay healthy longer or get your health back.

They may help you live longer.

They can keep your immune system healthy, reducing your chance of getting AIDS-related illnesses.

They can help reduce the damage to your immune system by the HIV virus.

**Some of the bad things about taking anti-HIV medications:**

You have to take a number of pills everyday, usually at about the same times each day.

They have side effects that can be unpleasant or even harmful.

You may have to change your eating and drinking habits.

Others may find out you have HIV from your medications.

Some HIV medications and other drugs, herbs or food do not mix well together.

**Think about these questions before you choose your anti-HIV medications:**

Do you have a stable place to live?

Do you have a refrigerator where you live?

If you work, do the people you work with know you have HIV?

Do you work the same hours every day or do you have changing shifts?

Can you store things in a refrigerator at your workplace?

Can you get to a bathroom easily at your workplace?

Do you spend most of your time living in one city?

Can you swallow pills without difficulty?

Have you taken HIV medications before?

Have you taken other medications on a regular basis before?

Do you usually sleep and wake up around the same time every day?

Do you usually eat every day?

Do you have any special diet or food needs?

Do you think you can drink 8-12 glasses of water everyday?

**Deciding on a combination that will best suit your needs:**

It is very important to take all medications the way they are prescribed. So, in choosing which combination of medications to take is very important.

If any of your answers to the above questions is "NO," it may mean that you would have some difficulty taking some of the anti-HIV medications. When you talk with your physician about which anti-HIV medications to take, your answers to the above questions can help your physician design

a combination that will suit your situation and lifestyle so that you can stick to the treatment easier.

For more info check out [www.catie.ca](http://www.catie.ca)



## Percy Lezard HIV/AIDS Educator

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Hello community members!

There has been a lot happening with 2 Spirits and the staff this summer. The International AIDS Conference in Mexico City, the 20<sup>th</sup> international AIDS Conference in Minnesota, the 1<sup>st</sup> Annual 2 Spirit Women's Gathering in San Diego.

I was able to make it to Mexico City for the AIDS conference; a lot of my focus was attending workshops, research presentations and skills building seminars on the Violence that women or queer women experience. I was able to network with other researchers whose focus is HIV/AIDS, Gender and violence.

A lot of the work that I will be doing in this fall and winter will be to continue with the workshops that focus on education of HIV/AIDS in the Aboriginal, Women, Youth sectors. I have a few conferences that I will be speaking at; OAITH Annual General Meeting that where I will be facilitating workshops with Transitional House and Women's Shelter workers who work with Aboriginal women and 2 Spirit Aboriginal Women. I will also be speaking at several University Conferences where I will address issues of colonization, HIV and Aboriginal Community members (at Ryerson University, University of Toronto, and George Brown College). I will be working with Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network on a couple of research projects as an interviewer for the Greater Toronto Area. I am also starting my 1<sup>st</sup> draft for a book; I have to write a 30-40 page chapter on Violence

in Aboriginal 2 Spirit and Transgender relationships. It will be the first publication before I finish my double Doctorate at the University of Toronto in another three years. Summer tends to be slower for me as an educator, but it is slowly picking up for the fall and I will be in full swing by the end of September until the end of November.

What does it mean to be 2 Spirited in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century? Looking at two articles by authors who asked themselves that same question! I think that it is critical and our responsibility to explore all options of what it means to be "two spirit," or to live as "2 spirit," in an era that does not include us as races, genders and sexes. So I want to share two starting points for us as 2 spirits who live this side of the invisible border called "Canada."

In Spirit,

Percy Lezard



## **Two-Spirit Peoples**

### **Bess Lovejoy, Arts Editor**

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Just as Indians [sic] are carriers of sacred gifts such as democracy and respect for the environment, Indian cultures emphasize the sacredness of alternative gender statuses and lifestyles, and this provides [them] with a sacred purpose and plan." , Duane Champagne, author of *Sharing the Gift of Sacred Being in Two Spirit People: American Indian Lesbian Women and Gay Men*.

You may have heard the term "two-spirit" before within the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered community. What does it mean? There is a lot of confusion and misinformation present; often coloured by the desires of non-aboriginal people and the interpretations of non-aboriginal anthropologists. This is a brief introduction to some of the ideas and concepts involved, though it is by no means exhaustive or fully representational.

The term most often used in the anthropological literature, berdache, presents a host of problems. It comes from the French (via the Persian, Italian, and Spanish) berdache, meaning a young boy who is kept as a passive sexual partner. European explorers, encountering indigenous gender categories that were confusing and shocking to them, used this term. However, the aboriginal two-spirit man and the European "boy kept for unnatural purposes" are obviously quite different, and it is for this reason that "many native American gay, lesbian, transgender, and other two-spirit people consider the term 'berdache' derogatory and insulting", writes Sue-Ellen Jacobs, co-editor along with Wesley Thomas and Sabine Lang of *Two Spirit People: Native American Gender Identity, Sexuality, and Spirituality*. Although for clarity's sake I have kept in the term berdache when quoting directly from the anthropological literature, but it is important to understand the historical conditions in which it came about.

Jacobs writes that the term "two-spirit" was proposed instead during the third Native American/First Nations gay and lesbian conference in Winnipeg in 1990 in order to emphasize the spiritual aspect of one's life. Ryan Mercredi, who recently gave a presentation at the Vancouver Metis Association on two-spirit people, says, "I identify with the term two-spirit because for one, it is a term that has been coined within the queer aboriginal communities, it isn't something that has been created by a European or Euro-North American community." Mercredi emphasizes that "it refers to one's spiritual nature and it refers to one's person as being composed of... a male and a female spirit and that's very important when considering the balance and harmony that is inherent in pre-European aboriginal society. [It implies] balance within oneself, and between the emotional, physical, spiritual and intellectual parts of one's person."

### **What does it mean to be a two-spirit person?**

One academic definition comes from Callender and Kochems in their paper *The North American Berdache*: "[A] person, usually male, who was anatomically normal but assumed the dress, occupations, and behaviour of the other sex to effect a change in gender status. The shift was not complete; rather, it was a movement toward a somewhat intermediate status that combined social attributes of males and females." However, like the term berdache, this definition is fraught with controversy.

Williams emphasizes that a two-spirit person is not a transsexual. Understanding this involves understanding the notion of gender in Native Americans and First Nations peoples, as Williams writes, "The concept of a 'transsexual' is a Western one... based on the notion that there are two 'opposite sexes'... Indians (sic) have options not in terms of either/or,

opposite categories, but in terms of various degrees along a continuum between masculine and feminine." However, Mercredi points out that "within aboriginal communities there's a movement away from defining things according to a linear spectrum or a continuum. A model a lot of people can relate to is the circle, because the circle is a very important symbol both spiritually and culturally. There's an infinite number of points along a circle-there's no one way to be, and no one end or beginning."

Others emphasize that the berdache is also not simply an institutionalized form of homosexuality. Callender and Kochems write, "Its [the two-spirit person's] frequent association with homosexuality... distorts the sexual aspects of berdachood." Furthermore, they write, "their orientations could be bisexual or heterosexual." More to the point, these neat categories are misleading and useful primarily only for those who have a need to create them. As Mercredi says, "Sexuality is fluid, and a lot of people are trying to come up with definitions that are more inclusive than gay, or lesbian, or bisexual, and two-spirit... doesn't say that you have to be one, or remain one way."

Understanding the two-spirit person can only happen through an understanding of the religious/mythological basis of the status, his social and economic roles, and how a child would become such a person. Thus an explanation of this status might begin here, but it does not end here.

In the creation stories of several tribes, two-spirit people figure prominently. Williams writes, "A key episode in the Zuni creation story...[in which] a kachina spirit called ko'lhamana was captured by the enemy spirits and transformed in the process. This transformed spirit became a mediator between the two sides, using his peacemaking skills to merge the differing lifestyles of hunters and farmers. In the ceremony, a dramatic re-enactment of the myth, the part of the transformed ko'lhamana spirit, is performed by a berdache... The continual re-enactment of this story provides a justification for the Zuni berdache in each generation."

There is an obvious symbolic link between the ko'lhamana and the two-spirit, in that both move between two worlds, and have the resultant skills of peacemaking. In fact, Williams writes, "The Zuni word for berdache is lhamana, denoting its closeness to the spiritual mediator who brought hunting and farming together."

The presence of a two-spirit in a tribe's origin story is not limited to the Zuni. The Navajo creation story carries the message, according to Williams, "that humans are dependent for many good things on the inventiveness of the nadle [the Navajo term for the two-spirit]. Such individuals were

present from the earliest era of human existence, and they... were part of the natural order of the universe, with a special contribution to make."

Callender and Kochems discuss how in many tribes, the two-spirit person was associated with a specific deity, such as Double Woman or the moon. Often these deities were instrumental in the process by which a person became a two-spirit, appearing in their dreams or visions. Because of their spiritual connection, according to Williams, two-spirit people in many cultures were seen as especially effective shamans, and were also often seers and prophets. They were "said to possess supernatural powers for healing (Cheyenne, Arapaho, Plains Cree) or for naming (Dakota)", according to James Thayer, author of the paper *The Berdache of the Northern Plains: A Socio-religious Perspective*.

Two-spirits also often held important ceremonial roles. Williams says that the nadle and the winkte are often involved in sacred food preparation, and that among the Plains tribes "It was a berdache who was responsible for blessing the tree used for the Sun Dance ceremony, the chief religious rite of the Plains culture."

Two-spirits were also often seen as possessing supernatural powers because of their ability to go between different worlds. As Williams puts it, "Viewing things from outside the usual perspective, they are able to achieve a creative and objective viewpoint that is seldom available to ordinary people."

There is also a more basic, underlying aspect to native religion that affects the two-spirit role, and this is the idea that one's character comes from the Spirit. As Williams writes, "The holiness of the berdache has to do with Indian [sic] views that everything that exists is a reflection of the spiritual. If a person is different from the average individual, this means that the spirit must have taken particular care in creating this person... by this reasoning, such an individual must be especially close to the spirits."

Clyde M. Hall, a Shoshone man, emphasizes this spiritual aspect of the two-spirit when he says "[Spirituality] is the glue that makes it all stick together. That is the glue that makes us two-spirit people go with it and lives our lives the way we do."

Will Roscoe, author of *The Zuni Man-Woman*, writes that two-spirit people were "not anomalous. They were integral, productive, and valued members of their communities". Just like everybody else in a small scale community, two-spirit people had to carry their own weight. They did this through a unique combination of men's and women's roles, as well as through berdache-specific roles.

First of all, berdache craftwork was quite valued, and they were considered exceptionally skilled and productive, according to Callender and Kochems. They were also known to take up male roles-they would hunt on occasion, during which time they would assume men's dress. They were often considered to be very prosperous, and Callender and Kochems remark that the Navaho believed their berdaches "were predestined to be wealthy and control wealth."

Two-spirit people had roles specific to their status as well. Thayer mentions one example; the Dakota berdache (winkte) had "the right to grant infant boys a second name at the naming ceremony... believed to have magical power to protect the young child from sickness and to bestow upon him the gift of long life."

Williams and Beverly Little Thunder (author of *I Am a Lakota Womyn, in Two Spirit People: Native American Gender Identity*) write that in many cultures the two-spirit was also recognized as having a special talent in educating children, due partially to his reputation for high intelligence. Two-spirits often adopted other people's children, and this might have been a key method by which they made their contribution to their families, although in several tribes they were also seen to have a special responsibility to care for elders as well, according to Williams. Thus, two-spirit people were integral members of their communities through their spiritual, artistic, intellectual, social and economic contributions.

In the one instance, writes Williams, the family usually had observed female and two-spirit-specific traits in the boy before he reached puberty. After talking amongst themselves about their observations, several tribes had a test by which they would determine whether a child was really destined to be a two-spirit or was just passing through a phase. Callender and Kochems note that the Papago "placed such a child in a brush windbreak containing basketry material as well as a bow and arrow and set fire to the enclosure; choosing the basketry as he fled ensured his future as a berdache." Williams noted that this was "not an involuntary test of his reflexes... [but] may be interpreted as a definite statement by the child to take on the berdache role."

However, most accounts center on the spiritual determination of the two-spirit role. Thayer writes of the two-spirit status being assumed after "repeated dreams of the buffalo, of the hermaphrodite buffalo, or of the moon being." He points out that vision was often resisted "until the dreamer felt compelled, through repetition or some disaster, to submit." This is echoed when Williams quotes a Lakota traditionalist as saying "Winktes had to assume the role, because if they did not, something bad would happen to them or their family or their tribe."

Lester B. Brown writes in *Two Spirit People: American Indian Lesbian Women and Gay Men* that after having such a dream or vision, or being recognized by his family and the tribe as displaying two-spirit traits, the child would participate in a public ceremony initiating him into his new status. Williams quotes a Mohave shaman who describes the ceremony of his tribe: "The boy was led into a circle, and the singer in the crowd began to sing songs. If the boy wanted to become a two-spirit (alyha in Mohave), he would dance as the women do." However, the involuntary and spiritual nature of the berdache is indicated once again when Williams writes "If the boy is unwilling to assume alyha status, he would refuse to dance. But if his character-his spirit-is alyha, 'the song goes right to his heart and he will dance with much intensity. He cannot help it.'"

It is likely a testament to the pre-contact cultural continuity and longevity of First Nations people that they were able to absorb what many see as a naturally occurring, and universal, phenomenon into their cosmology and social order, rather than denying them an integrative and productive place as we often do in our society. As Mercredi says, "Considering everything in this society that I've been taught until a few years ago, and everything I'm still being taught through mainstream channels is that being queer is a sin, it's unhealthy, unnatural. So for me today to be a two-spirit person gives me strength. It's good to know that historically, I do have a place."

**Springwater Hester-  
Meawassige  
Coordinator of  
Volunteer Services  
And Development**



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Dear Members:

I would like to extend many thanks to all of our volunteers who helped make this year's Pride a wonderful success. As most of you are already aware that this year's theme was Unified. In spirit of the theme, 2-Spirits Pride Committee decided to make paper mache's of different animals that hold special meaning to the volunteers. The masks looked wonderful, a lot of careful planning, time and energy went into designing and creating the masks. The banners, tipi, and other float decorations were done with care and the float looked great. For those of you who do not know very talented young man decided he wanted to participate in the actual parade this year. A singer/songwriter from Six Nations, Derek Miller performed on 2-Spirits float and did a wonderful job. Once again, a chi-miigwetch goes out to ALL volunteers and members who made this year's parade one to remember!

The Sacred Fire  
2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations  
e-NEWSLETTER



This past Sunday, 2-Spirits participated in the AIDS Walk and it was a wonderful experience for all. We started off our day with a breakfast at the office and then our team proceeded to the registration and walked along side with many other teams. This year marked the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary for the AIDS Committee of Toronto and many teams were there to assist with this very important fundraising event. I would like to extend my thanks to all of our volunteers, walkers and supporters.



## **Nancy Gonzalez** **2 Spirit Trans Project Coordinator**



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Good day members!

It has been an eventful summer at 2 Spirits. Full of fun and spirit with Pride 2008, 2 Spirits Annual Feast, AIDS Vigil and the International AIDS Conference in Mexico City.

It is with great excitement that I share an update about the launch of the Trans Manual, titled:

**Our Relatives Said: A Wise Practices Guide  
Voices of Aboriginal Trans People**

The first workshop took place in Downtown, Hamilton at the Sky Dragon Centre. The Sky Dragon Centre is a non-profit community centre with a trendy neighbourhood café that is GLBTQ friendly.

The workshop was a two day event and the audience varied in areas of the helping sector. They included members of: the Trans Positive Youth Group of Hamilton, staff from Native Women's Resource Centre of Hamilton, Hamilton & Stoney Creek Early Year's Centre, the Good Shepherd Centre and the Sexual Assault Centre in Hamilton and surrounding area.

Two 2-Spirit Trans participants along with myself were part of the Trans Manual- Wise Practices workshop launch. Their lived experiences they shared with the audience were an integral part of the 2 Spirits Wise Practices workshop. It created a balance between real life history and added context to the literature presented. We were also very fortunate to have an Elder from Hamilton conduct the opening and closing prayer for the workshop.

The positive feedback we received was outstanding. We were capable of having the audience complete questionnaires. The information gathered will assist us with the knowledge and understanding of how we can improve further workshops.

So far I have learned that there are no other workshops like this one in Ontario. By making these workshops possible we begin to educate others hands on, with hope that the information presented will transcend. The next workshop will be held in Sudbury. That the information gained will be passed on to others, I can confidently say that this is the flourish of the wing of the eagle. Where her feathers were once plucked by the foreigner, she stands tall and strong; wings spread protecting her children.

I welcome all 2 Spirits Trans community members to contact me with any questions or comments they have. Be sure to check out the online version of :

**Our Relatives Said: A Wise Practices Guide  
Voices of Aboriginal Trans People**

I wish everyone: Peace in your mind, Love in your heart and Happiness in life!

Nancy Gonzalez  
416 944 9300 x 225  
[nancy@2spirits.com](mailto:nancy@2spirits.com)

# 2-Spirited People of the First Nations

**Invites you to a Workshop launch  
of....**

**Our Relatives Said:  
A Wise Practices Guide  
Voices of Aboriginal Trans People**

**Date: September. 29 & 30**

**Time: 10:00am- 2:00pm**

**Location: Shkagamik-Kwe Health Centre**

**161 Applegrove St.**

**Downtown Sudbury, Ont**

**Please [RSVP](mailto:nancy@2spirits.com) via Email to: [nancy@2spirits.com](mailto:nancy@2spirits.com)**

**Refreshments and Snacks will be provided.**



# NAADMAAGEHWIINAG

## *Stories from The Helpers*

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Naadmaagehwiinag program consists of Aboriginal volunteers who are trained and certified as Personal Support Workers (PSW) supervised by the Coordinator of Volunteer Services and Development. This also includes hospice trained volunteers who are both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal. Naadmaagehwiinag Volunteers are supervised to provide palliative and supportive care to APHA's (Aboriginal person living with HIV/AIDS) in their homes, or place of choice, utilizing a case management model of care. The Volunteer helps with routine and often physically challenging tasks such as doing laundry, grocery shopping or meal preparation.

The Naadmaagehwiinag volunteers at 2-Spirited People of the 1<sup>st</sup> Nations are crucial to our community, organization and members. Our volunteers have been caring for our community and have dedicated their time and energy to assist those who are living with HIV/AIDS.

**"My whole experience at 2-Spirits changed me. Everyone should volunteer at least once, the experience opens your eyes to everything".**

Robert Minnie is a two spirited Metis man who came to the 2-Spirit office during a time in his life when he wanted to give back to his community. Mr. Minnie signed up for the Naadmaagehwiinag program and began his training at Alliance Hospice. Mr. Minnie described the training component as a group of people from diverse backgrounds coming together with the common goal of wanting to help people. "The training was excellent, it

really helped prepare me for the work that I was going to be doing with clients at 2-Spirits" says Minnie.

"When I got the call from 2-Spirits telling me that the Volunteer Coordinator had found a match I was scared" says Mr. Minnie. Robert explained that he was a little scared of the unknown and nervous to meet his client for the first time. Mr. Minnie had never done anything like this before and it was nerve racking for him. Although, he has had close friends live and pass on from HIV/AIDS he explained that his knowledge of HIV was minimal. "I knew how to protect myself, how one could contract it and how one could not". Robert did explain that prior to meeting his

first client he was given an HIV 101 at 2-Spirits and was given HIV/AIDS literature to take home with him.

The day of his first meeting, the Coordinator of Volunteer Services and Development met Mr. Minnie at Casey House where the client was living. "I was given a brief tour of Casey House and was taken to my client. The Volunteer Coordinator introduced me and the client and stayed with us for about a half of an hour. It was explained to myself and the client that we would both be getting a call at the end of the day to see if both of us were interested in keeping the match" tells Mr. Minnie. "We both clicked and after my first visit all the fears that I had went away". Mr. Minnie visited his first client weekly and felt that he learned a deeper meaning of compassion and that everyone has a story. "Its only a disease but its someone's life . . . volunteering with this particular program really enriched my life" Robert says.

Mr. Minnie shared with us that when he came out as a two spirited man it was during the time when HIV/AIDS first hit the scene. He, like many others saw many friends pass away and was deeply affected by HIV/AIDS. Despite being aware of what the affects are surrounding HIV/AIDS, Robert found it difficult seeing his client go through what he went through. Being witness to the weight loss and dementia was a little scary at times for Mr. Minnie. "I felt so sorry that I couldn't help in the ways that I really wanted to help . . . but I was made aware the Client Care Coordinator and Volunteer Coordinator that I was free to contact them and discuss my concerns and experiences. I was always reassured that what I was feeling was valid". Mr. Minnie explained that as a Helper he often became the client's right arm but gained so much from the client as well. "My whole experience at 2-Spirits changed me. Everyone should volunteer at least once, the experience opens your eyes to everything".

Miigwetch to Robert and all volunteers!



## **Rapid HIV testing @ Anishnawbe Health Toronto 39 people tested . . . all tested negative!**

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Anishnawbe Health Toronto (AHT) is a vision of the late Elder, Joe Sylvester. Initial efforts began with a diabetes research project, which realized that a more comprehensive approach to health care was needed by the Aboriginal community. In response, Anishnawbe Health Resources was incorporated in 1984. One of its objectives stated, "To recover, record and promote Traditional Aboriginal practices where possible and appropriate."

Point-of-care testing (POCT) is defined as diagnostic testing at or near the site of patient care. The driving notion behind POCT is to bring the test conveniently and immediately to the patient. This increases the likelihood that the patient will receive the results in a timely manner.

In September 2007 AHT was approached by the AIDS Bureau, Point of Care Testing Program to the delivery of a pilot project for HIV testing.

**POINT OF  
CARE  
(P.O.C.)  
HIV RAPID  
TEST IS  
NOW  
AVAILABLE.**

**PLEASE  
CALL 416-  
360-0484.**

The Sacred Fire  
2-Spirited People of the 1rst Nations  
e-NEWSLETTER

Criteria was met for rapid HIV testing, as Anishnawbe Health Toronto was already providing Anonymous HIV testing. AHT has met the Point of Care Quality Assurance criteria which includes completion of BioLytical Laboratory Inc. Insti Test Kit-Practitioner Training, participating in Practitioner HIV continuing education. Also, a Quality Assurance Supervisor has been delegated to be in charge of the Point of Care Quality Assurance Program. The P.O.C. testing began Monday, April 13, 2008. As of August 29<sup>th</sup> 2008 39 people have walked through AHT's doors to receive rapid HIV testing of which all tested negative. Presently, seven of AHT's health care practitioners are available to perform Point of Care rapid HIV testing. The INSTI HIV antibody test features results in 60 seconds, its convenient; can be done in any setting, with blood, serum, plasma. The INSTI HIV antibody test is 99.6% and the test is simple. All reagents and materials are included and the test itself is done in 4 easy steps, there is no measuring, no counting and no timing. (2)

The Anonymous HIV Testing Program at Anishnawbe Health Toronto provides clients with a culture-based counseling and support services. Supports and resources include access to Traditional Healers, Elders, Medicine People, counselors and they will have access to physician services as well as referrals. Clients are encouraged to bring a support person with them and should expect to be at their Point of Care rapid HIV testing appointment for a half an hour. During this time clients should expect pre and post test counseling, testing and test results.

**POINT OF CARE (P.O.C.) HIV RAPID TEST IS NOW AVAILABLE. PLEASE CALL 416-360-0484.** Walk-ins are also welcome. AHT is located at: 225 Queen St. E

## AIDS COMMITTEE OF TORONTO MARKS ITS 25 YEARS

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As leaves begin to mark the arrival of Fall, The AIDS Committee of Toronto (ACT) officially Marks their 25th anniversary. The Sacred Fire was fortunate to interview ACT's Communications Coordinator Mr. Stiem.



We asked Mr. Stiem how ACT is marking its 25th year.

Mr. Stiem explains "ACT is recognizing its 25th anniversary with an anniversary campaign that began this summer with the launch of a new logo and website. We will continue throughout the next 10 months with special community events.

We have also launched a campaign: '25 years, 25 stories.' where the history of the AIDS movement and of ACT is honoured. People are encouraged to log on to the ACT website and share their memories of over the past two and a half decades."

<http://www.actoronto.org/25years>

Over the decades ACT has created many supportive programs that have helped many people and their families affected by HIV/AIDS.

"During the 25 years that ACT has been in the community it is hard to put a concrete number on the number of individuals who have benefited from ACT's services and programs over the past 25 years.

In the early years, tracking statistics was not a priority. However, by looking at the last five years, over 30, 000 people have come in to ACT's offices for help each year. On top of that, our outreach, education and condom

distribution programs have reached tens of thousands of Torontonians each year", Mr. Stiem explains.

"Throughout the decades ACT's programs and services and structure has evolved. The early years were very much about providing support groups and helping those cope with the loss of loved one. Early education work focused on letting the community know about the basics of HIV/ AIDS transmission. Today, ACT's support services have evolved to meet the changing needs of those living with HIV- providing counseling, case management, health promotion programs as well as practical, concrete services (drives to medical appointments, help with moving to affordable housing, access to furniture and household goods, weekly hot lunch programs) as well as programs to help people with HIV/ AIDS return to work."

**"Organizations such as 2 Spirits and the Ontario Aboriginal HIV/AIDS Strategy are already doing excellent work within the Aboriginal communities." ...  
....ACT**

ACT has always worked with the community as a whole. Over the years their programs and services have shown progress.

"In addition, our outreach and education work has become more sophisticated and tailored to meet the needs of gay/ bisexual men, women and at-youth."

ACT first began its women and AIDS project in 1989, and outreach to at-risk youth in 1999. ACT has always worked with families affected by HIV/AIDS. With the growing infection rate amongst the Aboriginal population, ACT said this about the crisis:

Organizations such as 2 Spirits and the Ontario Aboriginal HIV/AIDS Strategy are already doing excellent work within the Aboriginal communities. They are the best to work within the Aboriginal community. ACT, through its Community Partners Fund Provides annual funding to Toronto-based AIDS Organizations so that they have the necessary resources to do work within their communities. ACT and the Ontario Aboriginal HIV/AIDS strategy (along with voices of Positive Women) jointly received funding from the MAC AIDS Fund to implement the "From My Community" project, which trained women (including Aboriginal women) to act as peer

educators. 2 Spirits is one of the organizations that received funding from ACT.

The AIDS walk is an important event held annually and one of its major functions is to fundraise for ACT and fellow community ASOs. There will always be a challenge to get people to recognize why your cause is still so important, like any fundraiser.

Two Torontonians are infected with HIV each day and over 15, 000 people live with HIV/ AIDS in Toronto. The demand for services is increasing. It's important for all of us to remind people of this fact, to let them know that there is still is no cure for HIV/ AIDS , that HIV prevention is our best defense, and that people with HIV/ AIDS face many challenges.

**We thank ACT for their on going support over the years of our community.**

**'25 years, 25 stories'**

**Where does ACT see themselves in the next 25 years?**

Ideally, we would very much like for there to NOT be a need for ACT, or other AIDS organizations- in 25 years- that a cure for HIV/ AIDS can be found. However until that time, ACT will continue to provide services that respond to the changing needs of those living with, at risk for, and affected by HIV/ AIDS in Toronto.

A call for papers from Trans people,  
our allies and supporters  
  
(INCLUDING GENDERQUEER, INTERSEX AND TWO-SPIRIT  
PEOPLE WHO ALSO IDENTIFY AS TRANS)

**TRANS ACTIVISM:  
A Canadian Reader and Practical Guide**

(co-editors: Rupert Raj, M.A. & Dan Irving, Ph.D.  
reviewer: Yasmeen Persad)

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This dynamic book project will *critically* explore the history of trans resistance efforts, as well as the issues and struggles shaping contemporary trans activism in Canada. A groundbreaking initiative, it will be the first-ever *anthology* soliciting papers from a diverse range of trans advocates working in a Canadian context.

Working within an *intersectional, anti-oppression, feminist* and *critical political-economic* framework, this project will address multiple approaches to trans (transsexual/transgender) activism in Canada. These will include the political, economic, sociocultural, psychological, legal, medical, scientific, religious and existential/spiritual aspects of trans oppression *and* trans advocacy (the latter including anti-racist and anti-colonial approaches).

The goals of this book project are: (1) to continue to combat trans erasure and invisibility through illustrating the rich history and contemporary presence of trans communities and activism within a Canadian context; (2) to enhance

community-based research, trans activist endeavours and theorizing through critical engagement with the understandings of trans identities and strategies, with a view towards advancing the material lives and real experiences of trans people residing in Canada; and (3) to inspire and reinvigorate trans activists and community workers to continue to struggle for equity and social justice for *all* trans people.

While much depends on the submissions received, this book will be divided into three sections:

(I.) **Histories of Trans Activism:** What were some of the earlier forms of trans resistance (pre-1990)? How did resistance take place? Where did it occur? With whom/what institutions were activists engaging? Did other forms of activism (i.e., early gay Pride marches, organizing for sex workers rights, indigenous anti-colonial struggles, etc.) include issues arising from sex/gender alterity? What lessons were learned? Is history repeating itself?

(II) **Contemporary Activism:** (a) Politicized Issues, (b) Ways of doing trans activism (i.e., community-based research, art as activism, therapy as activism, community service organizations, academic contributions), (c) Barriers facing trans activists (i.e., burnout, dealing with “differences” within trans communities, confronting transphobia, etc.); (d) Allies and Supporters.

(III.) **Practical Tips for the Trans Activist:** Self-care, networking, becoming media savvy, self-advocacy.

Not all submissions must be articles. You can submit drawings/graphics, poems, short stories, etc. If you are a grassroots trans activist, who finds it challenging to write (which *might* include people whose first language is not English, persons with language or computer literacy issues, visually-impaired individuals, or other folks with specific issues: please specify), you may also submit a request to be interviewed by

one of the editors. If accepted, selections from the interview transcript will be included in the book. (We will limit the number of interviewees to a maximum of three people).

We encourage contributions which address, *but are not limited to*, the following:

- \*accounts of Francophone trans activism/organizing within Quebec and other parts of French Canada (e.g., New Brunswick, northern Ontario)
- \*histories of trans organizing from all regions of English Canada
- \*essays on/by key historical figures within trans communities
- \*histories of two-spirit identities by those who identify as both two-spirit and trans; organizing by First Nations trans people
- \*historical, institutional and/or personal challenges of trans activists
- \*trans organizing within, against and beyond gender identity clinics
- \*struggles for trans-specific health care services and equitable access to health care
- \*fighting for inclusive, responsive and transpositive social services for trans people
- \*trans people with disabilities; ableism within and without the trans and disability communities
- \*art-as-activism ("artivism")
- \*trans labour activism
- \*developing trans feminism and alliances within women's communities
- \*trans prisoners; a transphobic justice system and a need for transpositive prison reform
- \*past campaigns to decriminalize prostitution; trans prostitutes/sex-workers as leading activists
- \*legal battles for human rights of trans people
- \*therapy-as-activism; the potential activist role of trans-identified therapists/ counsellors
- \*trans theorizing as activism (trans academia)

- \*scientific activism; trans-specific, clinical research as transphobic or as transpositive (an evidence-based tool for trans advocacy)
- \*trans organizing within religious/spiritual contexts
- \*the fight for affordable access to (higher) education as well as job training
- \*affordable, safe housing for trans people
- \*trans (chosen) families as politicized sites of struggle
- \*HIV/AIDS and safer-sex activism
- \*trans seniors-as-activists; ageism within the trans community; organizing re: the rights of older trans people
- \*immigration, refugee and settlement issues
- \*fighting racialization of trans people within and without the trans community; whiteness as an obstacle to solidarity
- \*trans activism within gay, lesbian and bisexual communities
- \*the rights and/or emancipation of trans and gender non-conforming children and adolescents
- \*anti-capitalist trans activism
- \*trans and genderqueer youth
- \*sexuality and trans activism
- \*intersex activism by those who identify as both intersex and trans
- \*transsexual versus transgender tensions
- \*developing anti-oppression frameworks within activist spaces
- \*trans activism reproducing colonial and nationalist frameworks
- \*class as a barrier to trans solidarity
- \*battling misogyny within ourselves and our communities
- \*coping with burnout, self-care strategies
- \*negotiating power relations within community-based research projects
- \*the violence we do to each other and working through our internal differences
- \*negotiating alliances between trans and non-trans activists
- \*strategies to transact, transgress, transcend...

Contributors *must* have experience as advocates or community workers working with trans people in the *Canadian* context. While we cannot promise that we will be able to include *all* submissions received, we still hope that all interested individuals will send us an abstract, including our allies and supporters (e.g., family members, partners, friends, colleagues, health care and social service providers, legal and medical professionals, researchers, educators, policy makers, politicians, faith leaders, etc.). We also strongly encourage First Nations trans people, trans people of colour, trans newcomers, sex-workers, trans seniors, low-income trans people or those with a disability, trans prisoners, as well as *trans-identified* genderqueer, intersex and two-spirit people, to submit.

A contract with a publisher has NOT yet been secured (but we do have three POTENTIAL publishers). Selected abstracts and bios from contributors will be submitted as part of the book proposal.

The editors are Dan Irving, Ph.D. and Rupert Raj, M.A. Dan is a trans man, trans activist, academic and university instructor working in Ottawa, and has published "*The Tragedy of Progress: Marxism, Modernity and the Aboriginal Question.*" Rupert is a Eurasian-Canadian trans man, trans activist, published researcher, therapist and gender specialist based in Toronto. Your abstract submission will be reviewed by a three-person committee, including the co-editors and Yasmeen Persad, a Caribbean-Canadian trans woman, trans activist and community worker, who also does outreach with trans sex-workers in Toronto.

Please submit a 500-word abstract (double-spaced), and a 100-word bio (double-spaced) by **Friday, October 24<sup>th</sup>, 2008 (12 midnight)** to: [irving.dan@gmail.com](mailto:irving.dan@gmail.com), [rraj@sherbourne.on.ca](mailto:rraj@sherbourne.on.ca) and [ypersad@sherbourne.on.ca](mailto:ypersad@sherbourne.on.ca).

(For your clarification, as a courtesy to non-academics: the abstract is only a synopsis or outline - not the finished piece itself - and should include the overall purpose, focus and proposed content, with examples, if applicable. The focus might be a particular population: e.g., trans people with a disability, and/or a specific issue: stigmatization around ableism within the trans community and/or transphobic discrimination within the disability communities and/or mainstream society. Your bio should ideally include relevant professional, community-activist and personal demographic information: i.e., ethnoracial, national, regional and cultural status, place of birth, age, gender identity, sexual identity, and specialized demographics: e.g., are you homeless/underhoused, poor/on a limited income, disabled, new to Canada, etc.; as well as any past, present or future specific trans activist efforts/projects).

We hope to be able to make our final decisions by Sunday, November 2<sup>nd</sup>, at which time we will notify *all* submitters whether we will be including your piece in the anthology. We will also acknowledge receipt of abstract submissions and bios as we receive them.

# MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

## **NOT A MEMBER YET?**

Please fill out the following application to receive our quarterly newsletter and many other benefits! Bring or mail in your completed application with corresponding payment. Chi-meegwetch for supporting 2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations!

## **MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM**

All information is strictly confidential—our membership list is not shared with anyone.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_ (month/date/year)

First Nation/Reservation Affiliation:

\_\_\_\_\_

Please check one only:

## **FULL MEMBERSHIPS**

(are available to people who are Native and two - spirited gay/lesbian, bisexual, transgendered)):

Regular \$10.00 \_\_\_ & you are a student and/or unemployed and/or on disability or

receiving social assistance \$5.00 \_\_\_ and you are a U.S. resident \$20.00 \_\_\_ and you are

a resident over seas \$35.00 \_\_\_

## **ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIPS:**

are available to people who are not native and/or not two -spirited:  
regular \$10.00 \_\_\_ & you are a student and/or unemployed and/or on  
disability or receiving  
social assistance and/or a person living with HIV/AIDS \$ 5.00 \_\_\_ and you  
are a U.S.  
resident \$20.00 \_\_\_ and you are overseas \$35.00 \_\_\_

## **ORGANIZATION MEMBERSHIPS:**

organizations in Canada \$25.00 \_\_\_  
organizations in the USA \$35.00 \_\_\_  
organizations overseas \$45.00 \_\_\_

YES! I WILL SUPPORT 2-SPIRITS AND WOULD PREFER TO DONATE \$ \_\_\_\_\_.

## **MEMBERSHIP POLICY:**

Full membership is open to all members of any Aboriginal person  
who defines themselves as lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered.  
Associate  
membership is open to any individual who wishes to support TPFN and its  
objectives. All  
members receive regular updates and The Sacred Fire newsletter.

**ONLY FULL MEMBERS  
MAY VOTE AT THE TPFN ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING.**

# Map



## Staff Includes

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