

2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations



**We Are Part of a
Tradition**

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WE ARE PART OF A TRADITION
A GUIDE ON TWO-SPIRITED PEOPLE
FOR FIRST NATIONS COMMUNITIES

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INTRODUCTION

Two-Spirited people have a long history with most of Turtle Island's Nations. Before first contact with the Europeans, First Nations people across Turtle Island recognized the special people given the responsibility of carrying two spirits. Very often, we were the visionaries, healers, the medicine people. 2-Spirits were respected as vital parts of the societies of our ancestors. There are individuals documented in our history, men who dressed as women and took husbands and of great women warriors who took wives and carried the bow.

Sometimes it meant a dream. A young woman who dreamt of warriors' or hunters' weapon would know her course. Young boys who preferred the company of women, cooking instead of going on the hunt, were also born for a different reason than most. People did not interfere with this. Indeed, this was within the realm of the wisdom of the Creator. The Great Mystery creates all beings for a reason, and two-spirited people are no exception.

The Europeans who came to Turtle Island 500 years ago, armed with their bibles, had already in their history attempted to kill their special people on a mass level (with the rise of Christianity, pagan religions came under attack as they also had room for lesbians and gay men and were very much earth and women centred). As much as our cultures and peoples came to be viewed as less than human and in need of salvation, so the two-spirited people, the powerful people, were used as examples of our inferiority and brutality and a directed conscious attempt was made towards the eradication of two-spirited people.

Today, modern Euro-western society views us as dykes, fags, perverts and queers. In the Aboriginal community, many of our people have adopted these negative attitudes and many two-spirited people have been ostracized from their own communities. However, we as two-spirited people are determined to reclaim our rightful place within the circle of all Aboriginal people.

Aboriginal lesbians and gay men, berdache, Winkte, 2-Spirits, Ogokwe, we are not going away. We've always been here and we will always be here as long as there are Aboriginal people.

The objective of this manual is instructional manual to assist people to learn how to give culturally-sensitive workshops on two-spirited people. ii) information on two-spirited people, i.e., teachings, history, spirituality, etc. iii) Homophobia/ prejudice & AIDS—how they interact.

The name of the Manual, *We Are Part of a Tradition*, was inspired by Susan Beaver's presentation to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples in 1992. As two-spirited people our traditional roles have been systematically eradicated by our colonizers and generally ignored by most Aboriginal leaders, Elders and communities. It was the vision of the founders of *2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations* to reclaim our traditions and our rightful place in the Aboriginal community. This Manual is just one small step to seeing that dream realized



SOME BASIC TERMINOLOGY

At this point it is important that some basic terminology is defined to help to frame the subject matter of this manual.

Heterosexism

Heterosexism is society's mistaken belief that all people are and must be heterosexual and the assumed acceptance of dominance through the personal, cultural, political, and institutional oppression of lesbians, gays and bisexuals. Heterosexism features a political situation in which heterosexuality is presented and perceived as natural, moral, practical and superior to any non-heterosexual option. Out of this reasoning, rises the attitude that heterosexuals are justly granted privileges, such as, political power, sexual freedom, religious sanction, moral standing, cultural validation, psychiatric and legal non-interference, occupational and tax privileges, freedom to have or adopt children and raise families, statutory protection, recourse against unfair hiring practices, public representation and validation in the media and entertainment industries, and the right to participate in Aboriginal ceremonies and cultural events, to name a few.

An illustration of heterosexist thinking is asking a woman what her boyfriend or husband does for a living, thereby assuming that she is heterosexual. If she is a lesbian, then she has been marginalized. To use the term partner or lover, instead of such sex-specific terms as boyfriend and/or girlfriend, is respectful, non-heterosexist and inclusive.

Out of heterosexism comes homophobia, lesbophobia and biphobia. Heterosexism is the political environment in which homophobia/lesbophobia/biphobia are created and in which they thrive.

Homophobia

Historically, homophobia has also been used to describe fear and/or hatred of lesbians. This perpetuates the invisibility of lesbians, as their experiences are different from those of gay men.

Homophobia is the fear and/or hatred of men who love and have intimate relationships with other men. Men who perform the masculine role so valued by society reap all sorts

GAY BASHING:

Physical violence against lesbians and gay men caused homophobic or lesbophobic feelings, which often result in severe physical and psychological injury and even death.

of rewards, especially the power to influence, and freedom from fear of being gay bashed. Homophobia keeps heterosexual men, and those homosexual men who have internalized homophobia, in line. Part of homophobia is guarding against the loss of masculinity through self-monitoring and the monitoring of others. Men are often amply rewarded for homophobic behaviour. Masculinity is perceived by society as being a natural outcome of being male; at the same time, maintaining manhood is dependent on continuing to do culturally defined masculine behaviour, otherwise a man may cease to be a “man”. Often boys will be pressured by their peer group or their families not to act like “sissies.” They may be cajoled to

commit acts of violence or cruelty to appear strong, unafraid, and not feminine, for they realize what will happen to them if they are accused of being a “sissy”, a “faggot” or a “queer”.

Not being a man/masculine means being labeled as the binary opposite female/feminine and that is a severe demotion in a patriarchal (male-dominated) society. Homophobic people will often act violently when even physically near a perceived gay male, because they feel homosexuality is contagious. There are taboos against men touching each other, especially in public, which is an example of how deeply engrained homophobia is within North American and Euro-Canadian culture.

Lesbophobia

Lesbophobia is a term that has been created to describe the distinct kind of oppression that lesbians experience and the different ways in which fear and hatred of lesbians is expressed from the type of oppression experienced by gay men. Therefore, lesbophobia is the fear and/or hatred of women who love and have intimate relationships with other women.

An example of lesbophobia would be “all she needs is a good fuck,” which is not only lesbophobic, but also sexist, and woman-hating as well. It implies that all she needs to put her “right” or “straighten her out” is to be raped. Lesbians are also more likely to be economically disadvantaged since two women living together will more than likely make much less than the combined income of a heterosexual couple. Whereas two gay men living together will more than likely, with their two incomes combined, make more money than the average heterosexual couple since men are paid more than women.

Along with persecution, lesbians have been erased from the historical record, their culture and history denied and their experience silenced to a greater extent than gay men have. Lesbians have never had and do not have the economic or cultural power that gay men have possessed and still do possess. All lesbians experience not only lesbophobia, but sexism as well. Consequently, their oppression is double that of gay white men. Also, if they are a lesbian of colour (black or aboriginal, etc.) then their oppression is more multi-layered. Often lesbophobic behaviour is coupled with sexist behaviour. Lesbianism has been and still is co-opted by heterosexual male pornography culture as a turn-on, which again reinforces the premise that women are here to be sexually available and accessible for men, even if they are lesbians.

Biphobia

Biphobia is the hatred and/or fear of those people who love and have intimate relationships with people of both sexes.

The discrimination that bisexuals face is different from the discrimination lesbians and gay men encounter. An example of biphobia would be the attitude that bisexuality is a phase or process of experimentation only, thus a person is either gay or heterosexual, but never both. Biphobia comes from heterosexual society and gay and lesbian communities as well. Bisexuals are sometimes seen as “traitors” by some gays and lesbians and often they are pressured to “choose a sexuality.” The attitude is that bisexuality does not “really” exist. This kind of thinking is discriminatory and refutes bisexuality.

Heterosexual Privilege

1. The right to kiss/be affectionate on the street.
2. The right to talk about your relationship.
3. The right to not question your normalcy.
4. The right to show pain openly when a relationship ends.
5. The right to children without any question.
6. The right to be open about apartment hunting with significant other.
7. The right to be validated by your religion.
8. The right to be socially accepted by neighbourhood, neighbours.
9. The right to feel comfortable in children’s school, with children’s teachers and school activities.
10. The right to dress without worrying about what it represents.
11. The right to have in-laws.
12. The right not to hide friends and social activities geared to same-sex.
13. The right not to resent media for heterosexual reference base (or feel excluded).
14. The right to share holidays with lover and families.
15. The right to openly discuss politics without fear of someone reading between lines.
16. The right to have children comfortable with their friends—children’s friends into the home.

18. The right to have access to sitcoms, songs, books, etc. with your sexual preference the basic core of the plot.
19. The right to live in rural Canada and have access to libraries, art institutes, radio stations, movies, etc. with all heterosexual plots.
20. The right to health insurance through spouse/partner's employment/health plan.
21. The right to not explain their sexual preference.
22. The right to return to your Aboriginal community with your partner and not fear for you or your partner's safety.
23. The right to not feel compelled to disprove the myths of your own heterosexuality.
24. The right to not fear that your sexuality may become a major point in a smear campaign that may affect the custody of your child, the job you want, the house you would like to buy, the way you are treated by neighbours, friends, and family.



A SUMMARY OF LESBIAN & GAY RIGHTS IN EACH JURISDICTION OF CANADA

Federal

the military, as a result of a Court challenge in Douglas v Canada.

In 1995, the federal government amended the *Criminal Code* to provide increased penalties for crimes motivated by hatred on certain grounds, including sexual orientation. This means that hate crimes such as lesbian and gay-bashings will now receive more severe penalties.

In 1996, the government amended the *Canadian Human Rights Act* to explicitly prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation.

In June of 1996, the federal government responded to the decision of a Human Rights Tribunal in Moore & v Canada and extended many same-sex benefits to federal employees. A number of benefits, such as pension benefits have not yet been extended, and federal common law still prohibits same-sex marriage.

In 1996, the British Columbia Supreme Court held in Little Sisters Book and Art Emporium v Canada that Canada Customs systematically discriminates against lesbian and gay materials imported into Canada.

Some scope exists for the same-sex partner of a lesbian or gay Canadian to immigrate to Canada, although lesbians and gays do not yet have the “automatic right” available to heterosexuals who wish to sponsor an opposite-sex spouse or fiancé(e).

Alberta

Alberta has not yet amended its human rights legislation to prohibit discrimination against lesbians, gays and bisexuals.

In 1991, Kings College dismissed gay employee Delwin Vriend, claiming that his continued employment violated their religious policy against homosexuality. Vriend launched a legal challenge to have “sexual orientation” read into the Alberta *Individual Rights Protection Act*. He was successful before the Alberta Court of Queen’s Bench, but this decision was overturned by the Alberta Court of Appeal in 1996, which ruled that the Alberta government was entitled to exclude gays and lesbians from the scope of human rights protection. The Vriend v Alberta case was appealed to the Supreme Court of Canada. On April 2, 1998 the Supreme Court ruled in his favour.

More recently, the Alberta government has announced that lesbians, gays and bisexuals will no longer be eligible to foster children. This decision is being challenged by lesbian foster mother Ms. “T”.

British Columbia

In 1992, British Columbia amended its human rights legislation to include sexual orientation as a prohibited ground of discrimination.

The British Columbia government has also extended same-sex benefits to provincial employees.

The *Health Care (Consent) and Care Facility (Admission) Act* would enable lesbians, gays and bisexuals to make medical decisions on behalf of a same-sex partner who is incapacitated, but this legislation has not yet been declared in force.

British Columbia adoption legislation was amended in November of 1996 to permit same-sex couples to adopt. The British Columbia government has now amended the definition of “spouse” in the *Family Relations Act* and the *Family Maintenance Enforcement Act* to accord to same-sex couples the same custody, maintenance and support rights and responsibilities as those accorded to heterosexual couples, and to allow same-sex couples to register agreements relating to cohabitation and property division. The British Columbia government has recently announced that it will be reviewing all provincial legislation with a view to eliminating discrimination against same-sex couples.

The Surrey School Board is being challenged in court for banning lesbian and gay school resources.

British Columbia is taking steps to add “gender identity” to its human rights legislation to explicitly protect transgendered people from discrimination.

Manitoba

Manitoba included “sexual orientation” in its human rights legislation as a prohibited ground of discrimination in 1987. To date, the government has taken no steps to recognize same-sex couples equally under provincial law, although in 1995 the Manitoba Court of Appeal ruled in Vogel v Manitoba that it is discriminatory for the government to deny equal workplace benefits to its lesbian and gay employees.

New Brunswick

New Brunswick amended its human rights legislation to prohibit sexual orientation discrimination in 1992. The New Brunswick government has extended workplace benefits to lesbian and gay provincial employees. Provincial legislation does not yet accord equal family law rights and responsibilities to lesbians and gays.

Newfoundland

The *Human Rights Act* of Newfoundland does not yet prohibit discrimination against lesbians, gays and bisexuals. The Government of Newfoundland has publicly committed itself to amending the legislation to prohibit sexual orientation discrimination. A Newfoundland Court has ruled that “sexual orientation” must be read into the Newfoundland *Human Rights Act*, but this decision has been appealed by the government. The appeal is on hold pending resolution by the Supreme Court of Canada of a similar case involving the Alberta human rights legislation.

Nova Scotia

Nova Scotia amended its human rights legislation to prohibit sexual orientation discrimination in 1991. The Nova Scotia government has extended workplace benefits to lesbian and gay provincial employees. Provincial legislation does not yet accord equal family law rights and responsibilities to lesbians and gays.

Northwest Territories

The human rights legislation of the Northwest Territories does not yet prohibit sexual orientation discrimination, although lesbians, gays and bisexuals working in areas of federal jurisdiction are protected by the recent amendment of the *Canadian Human Rights Act*. The government of the Northwest Territories has extended equal workplace benefits to lesbian and gay government employees.

The government of the Northwest Territories is conducting a review of its family law legislation. The recently formed lesbian, gay and bisexual rights organization Out North testified in support of changes to the definition of “spouse” to include same-sex couples.

Ontario

“Sexual orientation” was added to the Ontario *Human Rights Code* in 1986. The *Code* still contains an “opposite sex” definition of “marital status”, although this definition was ruled unconstitutional by a human rights tribunal in 1992.

The Ontario Government introduced Bill 167 in 1994; this Bill would have amended the definition of “spouse” in 79 provincial statutes to include those in same-sex relationships, but the legislation was defeated on June 9, 1994.

The Ontario government has extended equal workplace benefits to gays and lesbians.

The *Substitute Decisions and Consent to Treatment Act* has been amended to permit lesbians, gays and bisexuals to make medical decisions on behalf of a same-sex partner who is incapacitated.

Ontario Courts have ruled that the definition of “spouse” in provincial adoption legislation must be extended to permit lesbians and gays to adopt their partners’ children.

The Ontario Court of Appeal has also ruled that spousal support provisions must be extended to include gays and lesbians. This decision is currently under appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada.

Prince Edward Island

Prince Edward Island human rights legislation does not yet prohibit sexual orientation discrimination. The Prince Edward Island government has recently announced its intention to review its *Human Rights Act* to address issues relating to patronage; community initiatives are planned to lobby for amendments to prohibit discrimination against lesbians, gays and bisexuals during the review process. A letter from the Premier

of Prince Edward Island indicates an intention to include “sexual orientation” in the legislation.

Québec

Québec amended its human rights legislation to prohibit sexual orientation discrimination in 1977. Until 1996, article 137 of the Québec *Charte des droits* permitted discrimination on the ground of sexual orientation in certain areas such as insurance and pension plans. This provision was repealed by Bill 133 in June of 1996. No steps have yet been taken, however, to require the equal recognition of same-sex relationships.

Saskatchewan

Saskatchewan included “sexual orientation” in its human rights legislation as a prohibited ground of discrimination in 1993. Same-sex benefits have been extended to employees in some provincial Crown corporations, but no other steps have yet been taken by the government to recognize same-sex couples equally under provincial law.

Yukon Territory

The Yukon Territory amended its human rights legislation to prohibit sexual orientation discrimination in 1987. The government of the Yukon Territory has extended equal workplace benefits to lesbian and gay government employees. Other territorial legislation does not yet accord equal family law rights and responsibilities to lesbians and gays.

Adapted from material by EGALE (Equality for Gays and Lesbians Everywhere), Ottawa, Ontario.



TWO-SPIRITEDNESS

Chapter One focuses on the concept of two-spiritedness and presents historical and contemporary information on Aboriginal lesbians and gay men.


The term, “two-spirited,” has a number of meanings within several different contexts. For instance, in contemporary times, with the advent of lesbian and gay liberation, “two-spirited” means Aboriginal people who identify themselves as gay or lesbian. The terms, “gay” and “lesbian,” are European in origin. Therefore, “two-spirited” is preferred because it is more culturally relevant to Aboriginal lesbians and gay men.

When the Europeans came to Turtle Island they brought with them their religions, their values and their way of looking at the world, which adversely affected Aboriginal communities including our sexual expression. We have come to believe that two-spirited First Nations people are disgusting and perverse. We learned that before colonization that to be “two-spirited” was a gift, which had promise and potential. Two-spirited people were respected and honoured, and were visionaries and healers in our communities. We have rediscovered that we continue to have a spiritual place in our world.

Aboriginal culture is recognized for its emphasis on balance and harmony in all of creation. No one element, force, or impulse dominates the others. The term “Two-Spirited” originates from the First Nations recognition of the traditions and sacredness of people who maintain a balance by housing both the male and female spirit.

Some of our Elders teach us that two-spirited people have special place in our communities. We believe that two-spirited people have specific duties and responsibilities to perform. These include counselling, healing, being pipe carriers, visionaries (seers), and conducting oneself in accordance to our belief, which states to respect all life.

A white man wrote of the Crow Indians in 1859, “... males assume the dress and perform the duties of females, while women turn men and mate with their own sex.”¹ Most and likely every Aboriginal nation on Turtle Island exhibited same-sex behaviour.

 Written by Deschamps, Gilbert, & Sheila Wahsquaonaikezhik, 2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations

¹ Denig, Edwin T., “Biography of Woman Chief,” in *Gay American History*, ed. Jonathon Katz (New York: Crowell, 1976), p. 308.

Sue-Ellen Jacobs (University of Washington) studied written records from the last few centuries for references to gays and lesbians in American Indian tribes. Based on historical evidence that comes from recorded material; out of ninety-nine tribes, there were references to Gay culture in eighty-eight of them, of which twenty made specific references to Lesbianism. “Eleven tribes denied any homosexuality to the anthropologists and other writers. All the denials of gay presence came from East Coast tribes located in the areas of heaviest and longest contact with those segments of white Christian culture that severely punish people who admit to Gayness.”²

Jacobs found twenty-one tribes that mention exact offices held by gay persons. In twelve of the twenty-one, gay transvestites were the medicine people or shamans of the tribe. Among the Illinois, Cheyenne, Crow and Dakota, they were essential for high spiritual ceremonies, in three they served a special function at funerals, and among the Winnebago, they were oracles. Among the Crow two-spirited men were responsible for cutting down the tree which is used for the Sun Dance ceremony. This is a respected and vital position to hold in the ceremony.

Jonathon Katz, author of *Gay American History*, has collected the names Aboriginal people have used to designate their gay members. Each tribe had or continues to have special names for gay men and lesbians, that refer to cross-dressing and special tribal offices rather than to casual homosexual relations. The Navajo call their gay priesthood Nadle, the Winnebago say Siange, the Oglala Sioux call gay magic men Winkte, the Omaha and Ponca both say Mingu-ga, the Zuni say Ko’thlama, the Ojibwe use A-go-kwa, The Inuit say Choupan, the Kodiaks call theirs Ke’yev, the Absaroke of Montana use Bo-te, which means “not-man, not-woman.” These are just a few of the scores of names for two-spirited people among various Aboriginal nations.

Coming together in the urban setting has allowed us to look at our sexuality from political perspectives, which allows for the empowerment of two-spirited people. Organizations such as *2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations* have been founded and give validity to the vital role, which two-spirited people have within Aboriginal communities. Through the decolonization process, we as two-spirited people are striving to reclaim our traditional positions within our Nations and are taking our rightful place.

² Grahn, Judy, ed.; *Another Mother Tongue*; (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984); p. 54.



WE ARE PART OF A TRADITION

*A Report to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples
by Susan Beaver, Executive Director, 2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations
June 25, 1992, at the Native Canadian Centre of Toronto.*

2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations

In January 1989, First Nations queens, queers, lesbians and gay men met for the first time in Toronto as a community. With only a minimal number of things in common, we set about establishing ourselves as an organization and as a community. We called ourselves “Gays and Lesbians of the First Nations.” For some, it was the first opportunity to meet other First Nations people. We established our vision:

To forge a link between our sexual identities and our identities as members of the First Nations’ community;

To provide a safe environment for our members to interact and share with each other;

To strengthen and share our cultural knowledge (especially as it relates to Two-Spirited people);

To encourage a positive image and self-image of Native lesbians and gay men by reinforcing that traditional cultural knowledge.

At our 1991 Annual General meeting, the membership laid down the European terms “lesbian” and “gay” and embraced the tradition of two-spirited people. Hence we are now known as “2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations”. As an organization and as individuals we have gained strength from knowing that we once held a sacred and special place in the spiritual and political life of our Nations. We intend to honour that tradition and reclaim that place in society.

Two-Spirits: The Tradition

The Hummingbird Society, Winkte, Berdache, Ogokwe, two-spirited, the basket and the bow: These are all symbols and words used to describe the sacred people known as lesbians and gay men. First Nations scholars such as Paula Gunn Allen and historians such as Walter Williams have taken on the task of documenting the existence of homosexuals in First Nations societies and cultures before the Europeans reached Turtle

Island. It is well known that before the Europeans, most indigenous societies had names for homosexuals and far more than just identifying us, these names reflected recognition of the sacredness of two-spirited people. We were respected and vital parts of our societies. We were medicine people, warriors, healers and visionaries. It is said that two-spirited people will walk where everyone else is afraid to and we will go where no one else will.

Our existence was used to justify the belief in our barbarism as primitive peoples. Where that history began we now live with today. Homophobia is not indigenous to this continent: Tolerance of diversity is.

We are part of a tradition. A tradition that includes respect. We are part of a tradition that saw many two-spirited people slaughtered by the “explorers.” We are part of a tradition that saw lesbians with black triangles and men with pink triangles sewn onto their clothing rounded up and sent to their deaths in concentration camps in Nazi Germany. We are part of a tradition that saw woman-centred religions suppressed by patriarchal Christianity.

Our Experience

Take some examples: You grew up on the reserve, with your language, with alcohol. Maybe your father fucked you or maybe he fucked your brothers. Maybe you grew up in a foster home where the only people you knew as parents abused you in too many ways to remember. Maybe you grew up relatively happy, experiencing the wandering years of adolescence. Maybe you grew up with one single piece of knowledge that could not, nor cannot be disputed or suppressed or cured: You are different. Maybe it is a feeling that won't go away. Maybe it is something you know but can't name. Maybe it is something you express only in secret because you know the repercussions of being found out are too large and overwhelming for you to contemplate. You don't know who you are, but you know people think it's wrong. Heterosexual experiences are rarely talked about, never mind yours.

We often grow up without a language to describe ourselves: Lesbian, gay or queer are used as curses and insults. With the influence of the Church and Europeans, two-spirited is a tradition pushed so far away, only a few remember it and even fewer honour it. You receive no support and you see no role models and you are left to find your own way. Maybe your life is threatened because people “know” or maybe it's just your sanity that is in danger.

You grow up knowing that the reserve is no place for you.

Lesbians and gay men find themselves in cities built on racism and fed on the oppression of everyone who is not heterosexual, white and male. “Fucking dyke!” is shouted at you from across the street. A white man comes up to you and mutters “squaw.” Your friend is beaten up on the street and you don't know if it's because the attacker didn't like Indians or fags.

We are not likely to turn to many organizations that are supposedly responding to the needs of a community. Our issues of safety are much more sensitive. We know that if we walk into an organization in the “lesbian and gay community” we may not be welcome because our traditions are too foreign and our skin is too brown. We cannot walk into a Native organization as easily as other people because we don’t know whether we’ll be sneered at or accepted. We only know that it is a risk.

We, as the two-spirited community, must heal. We must re-learn that to be two-spirited is an honour. We have grown up with the single message that lesbians and gay men are sick. We are in the process of rebuilding a positive self-image as a result of this past. And if, as in the larger First Nations community, two-spirited people suffer from suicide, substance abuse and short life spans, then we must recognize this as symptom of a very different illness.

We, as two-spirited people, identify ourselves very strongly as members of the First Nations. We take an interest in the future of our Nations and wish to play an active role in that future.

Two-Spirited Women and Two-Spirited Men

As a two-spirited woman of the First Nations, you become aware of “triple oppression”: You are lesbian, female and Native in a society dominated by a world that does not honour women or indigenous peoples and by a world that says your sexuality is non-existent, a phase, a threat or a sin against god. The church has made sex dirty and women evil. We are expected to marry a man or suffer the consequences of our willfulness. As lesbians, we understand our sexuality in a social, political, historical and cultural context.

As two-spirited men, you know there is not room for your life on the reserve. Your sexuality is not tolerated and many men leave to find urban centres where they can express themselves. Many men live a dual life: Bisexuality on the reserve is more common than you think. If you are one strong enough to be who you are, you are ridiculed, harassed and only sometimes understood as again being “different.”

“Sexual Orientation”

Our sexuality has, in the European tradition that we have all experienced, been viewed as a psychological neurosis that can possibly be cured, is the result of a dominating mother and weak father, is a choice we make, is a sin against god, a threat to all that is “moral” and “good” about our world and now maybe it’s genetic.

We did not choose our sexuality; our sexuality chose us. The Creator made us different and the Creator made us special for a reason. Our lives are radically different from “straight” Native people. We understand that as Native people, we have been oppressed and do not enjoy Canada as one of the best places in the world to live. We also understand that heterosexual Native people enjoy more privilege in this society than we as

two-spirits do. To be two-spirited is more than who you sleep with. We are a community in and of ourselves. Our ways of talking, interacting with each other, ways of seeing the world and how we experience life are different from other First Nations people.

Heterosexual people marry who they wish and it is celebrated, sanctioned and, indeed, promoted like any other propaganda. Our relationships are radically different: We do not wish to be seen as a heterosexual couple except for the sexes of the partners. We are free to define our relationships as monogamous or non-monogamous, SM or vanilla or however we choose. In Ontario, it is against the law to discriminate against someone on the basis of their sexual orientation. This is; however, the only law that protects us: Most laws in Canada discriminate against us in the assumptions made about who they are addressing, the language used and the “values” they seek to reinforce.

Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome

AIDS can not be translated into most Aboriginal languages and is in some places known simply as the disease with no name.

Facts about AIDS

- ❖ “AIDS” is not a white man’s disease.
- ❖ AIDS is not a gay plague.
- ❖ AIDSphobia and AIDS hysteria has been created by a homophobic, ill-informed media.
- ❖ AIDS is not the same as HIV.
- ❖ AIDS can be found in every gender, sexual orientation, economic class and culture.
- ❖ You can’t get AIDS by touching, hugging or dry kissing some who is HIV+ or who has full-blown AIDS.
- ❖ The leadership of First Nations communities continues to live in denial and has refused to admit that our people are dying of AIDS and have consistently failed to respond.
- ❖ First Nations people are susceptible to the transmission of the HIV virus because of such realities as alcohol abuse, IV drug use, high rates of STD’s and teenage pregnancies.
- ❖ There are no “high-risk groups” when it comes to AIDS; there is only high-risk behaviour.

- ❖ People living with AIDS live in inadequate housing and well below the poverty line.
- ❖ *Women are diagnosed HIV+ later than men, if at all, or posthumously.*
- ❖ *Women live shorter lives than men do after diagnosis.*
- ❖ *Women, because of their economic status and as primary care givers for children, are denied access to adequate health care.*
- ❖ *Women of colour have transmission rates of HIV six times higher than that of white women.*
- ❖ **AIDS is not a punishment from god for living life the way you do.**
- ❖ AIDS has affected the two-spirited community, but it has not affected us because we are gay or promiscuous or because we desire it. It has affected us because we are human beings susceptible to illness and disease.
- ❖ We wish to assert that people who are HIV+ are members of the First Nations community and, as such, deserve understanding and respect.

In closing I would like to say that 2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations demands that our Aboriginal leaders be role models in their universal acceptance of all First Nations people

In all of their complexity

With all of their issues.

Nya:wenh



OGOKWE: TWO-SPIRITED MEN IN A HISTORICAL CONTEXT

In 1801, in Manitoba, a Saulteaux Ojibwe who was called “Berdach” by the local French, single-handedly held off a Lakota Sioux war party and saved his people. His own people knew him as “Ozaw-wen-dib” (Yellowhead). When his band was attacked he told the others to escape and not to worry about him. “...As he feared no danger. He then faced the enemy, and began to let fly his arrows.”³ The Indians, the traders remarked, often

³ Williams, Walter; *The Spirit and the Flesh: Sexual Diversity in American Indian Culture*; [Boston: Beacon Press, 1986], p. 68

spoke of Berdach's feat of bravery. In Ojibwe, a berdache was called "Ogokwe" or "wise woman."⁴

Because the Judeo-Christian tradition is so dominant, it is often viewed as "the arbiter [i.e., judge] of 'natural' behaviour"⁵ in humans and anything else is seen as unnatural or abnormal. This perspective ignores the great diversity in traditions around the world past and present. Canadian society has very rigid notions around gender and sex roles that are based on anatomy and limit gender to female and male. However, historically, among many Aboriginal nations and cultures, there were often more than two genders.

In many Aboriginal societies, two-spirited men were physiologically male but did not fill the community's ordinary male role, and were often non-masculine in character. "This type of person is often stereotyped as effeminate, but a more accurate description is androgyny. Such a person has a clearly recognized and accepted social status, often based on a secure place in the local Aboriginal mythology. They had special ceremonial roles in many Aboriginal religions, and important economic roles in their families. They performed some women's work, and mix together much of the behaviour, dress and social roles of women and men. Berdache gained social prestige by their spiritual, intellectual, or artistic contributions, and by their reputation for hard work and kindness. They often interceded in conflicts between women and men, because their character is seen as distinct from either sex. They were not seen as men, yet they were not seen as women either. They occupied an alternative gender role that was a mixture of diverse elements.

To Aboriginal people, the institution of another gender role meant that the berdache were not deviant. The institution of Berdachism was a way to embrace these individuals into the community without insisting that they change or stigmatizing them. This cultural institution legitimized who they were.

Communities often assign power to that which does not conform to the conventional. The unconventional is often imbued with negative power, i.e., sin, pollution, and taboo. In this way, cultures deal with the unexplainable. The misunderstood is often viewed as a threat. However, some cultures deal with the mysterious by removing them from the realm of threat and to sanctify them. The berdache's role as a mediator was also between the physical and the spiritual. *Aboriginal cultures took what Western cultures view as negative, and made it positive.* Aboriginal people correctly perceived that two-spirited people have spiritual powers and unique skills and insights. Whereas in Western culture such people have been stigmatized and their powers wasted.

In 1997, the term, 'berdache', is considered by many as derogatory and obsolete. What will become of the Aboriginal institution formerly known as Berdachism remains to be seen? Today we have two-spirited men at powwows dancing in jingle dresses or women's fancy dance outfits. There are two-spirited organizations cropping up all over Turtle Island. One may hope that these are the first steps towards reviving our long lost tradition and reclaiming our sacred place within our Nations.

⁴ Translation provided by Nazareth Therriault of Winnipeg, Manitoba

⁵ Williams, p. 1



NATIVE PEOPLE, TWO-SPIRITEDNESS & THE EFFECTS OF COLONIZATION

A phenomenon exists amongst traditional Aboriginal people that is not equaled in the Western world; it is related to sexual orientation. In this article we shall briefly explain the history behind, what is called two-spiritedness, a neologism (new expression) that describes the co-existence of male and female spirits within the same person.

When the first White colonists arrived on Turtle Island several centuries back, they saw some men dressed in the traditional costume of women. More detailed observations revealed that these men not only performed some of the duties traditionally performed by women, but also had an important position within the community. They were medicine people, visionaries AND warriors. They were honoured and respected. However, the Christian colonists found this to be abnormal, for it was not a part of their vision of the world. The book of Leviticus in the *Holy Bible* explains to Christians why they ought to condemn the person that today is called gay. At the beginning of colonization Aboriginal people did not share this perception of individuals destined to be different. They were, simply, one of many beautiful and unexpected parts of the Creation we must love and respect. This is well documented in the book entitled *The Spirit and the Flesh: Sexual Diversity in American Indian Culture* by anthropologist Water L. Williams. He largely explains two-spiritedness amongst Aboriginal men, although there are two-spirited women.

It is known that this phenomenon existed in approximately 100 First Nations. Although the majority of Aboriginal communities are now Christian, many people insist that Aboriginal people have always been Christian. A schism presently exists, and conflicts at many levels occur amongst these two different worldviews. Today two-spirited Aboriginal people are victims of homophobia, violence, exclusion and death. Although complex and multifactorial, this change is in part caused by the religious denomination present within the community, and also because of rapid socioeconomic and political changes in a world that was once simpler and easier to explain.

The growth and development of Aboriginal AIDS service organizations in Canada have been filled with controversies from both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal individuals. While certain governments deny the existence of the urban Aboriginal population, other Aboriginal people deny the existence of two-spirited people. However, the existence of *2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations* disproves this; they are the largest Aboriginal AIDS organization in the country, and they have credibility and a significant budget.

 by Marcel DuBois

Meanwhile, traditional Aboriginal people remind us the two-spiritedness did indeed exist. Still, the debate continues.

It is in the spirit of our Elders and our beliefs in balance and wellness to reclaim the role of two-spirited people within and without our communities. The sharing of ideas amongst Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people can only have a positive impact, which shall resonate here and abroad!



TWO-SPIRITED PEOPLE 101

In the Anishinaabe tradition the Creator gave each person and culture roads to walk – Black, Yellow, Red and White. The Anishinaabe were given the Red Road to walk. Anishinaabe society is based on the clan system. There are seven clans. Each man, woman and child has a voice in his or her clan and community because the Anishinaabe is a democratic society. Thought and knowledge are core values.

Within this system two-spirited people hold an important and honoured position. They are considered gifted because of their duality (i.e., male and female spirit).

The present for the Anishinaabe is embodied by disruption and chaos. Whatever happened to the Anishinaabe nation happened to two-spirited people as well, so that the nation and gay and lesbian people suffered as one. The faces of deception arose along with disrespect for harmony with nature and humanity. Aboriginal people offered kindness to the newcomers, but they wanted it all, in seeking their new empire. Even the gifts given by them were diseased. Kindness and gifts were given in order to take what was not theirs.

Therefore, the two-spirited person had to hide to survive. They had to dress as regular men and women, and were persecuted by the Christian churches for their two-spiritedness. They were silenced by the “morality” of the church and also by their own relatives, i.e., other Aboriginal people. The history of this period is not even accurate because Anishinaabe people would lie to white historians to get rid of them. Two-Spirited people became isolated as individuals from both community and nation because they did not dare tell anyone. They would even disappear.

During this entire period two-spirited people forgot who they were, their own teachings, ceremonies, rituals, functions and roles. Now, today, they want this back. Today’s generation is called the “Seventh Generation.” They ask themselves, “What are we to

✍ by Naz

leave those yet unborn?” Now they are trying to help restore the balance so the unborn can take it even further.

Furthermore, the goal is to come home with our knowledge and resources to reclaim the right to the Balance. We must drop ill feelings (both men and women) toward each other and to come together as one.

Two-Spirited people are strong dreamers. The dream interpreter in a community should be prepared to share his/her knowledge of dreams so that the young can relearn this art. A person is the present, with a past to learn about, and a future to reach into.

Knowledge should not be hoarded by anyone, including community leaders or those with special functions. It must be shared in order to help the healing process. In relation to the creation, in all of nature man/woman is at the centre, even amongst animals. Two-Spirited people are both man and woman. They understand both the male and female side, and were put here to create balance by furthering the knowledge of both sides. Two-Spirited people played major roles in ceremonies. Some earned positions by running ceremonies, but for the benefit of everybody, especially the unborn.

There is internalized racism and homophobia. These do not come just from straight people. The two-spirited people are responsible too. All four races have met on Turtle Island in full circle after seven generations. The question is, “Now, what are we going to do?” Part of it is regrouping and starting to work together now. Leadership means **action** not position.

Thus we have to “retrace our steps” and “pick up the bundles where they were left”, i.e., before the church’s influence.



TWO-SPIRITED IN TWO WORLDS✍️

“Berdache was never used in any Native communities!” says Wesley Thomas (Diné), a graduate student in anthropology at the University of Washington. “I get irate when I hear Native Americans use the B-world to describe themselves. The *berdache* concept is not of Native cultures. It gives no meaning to our histories.” In fact *Berdache* derives from an Arabic word, *berdadj*, which was used to describe male slaves who served as (anally receptive) prostitutes. Anthropologists popularized the term to represent a transvestite Native American man who functioned in a feminine role.

✍️ C. Thomas Edwards (Cree)

These roles varied within each Nation, for example, We'wha (1849-1896) lived his life as a female member of the Zuni Nation and was accepted by his peoples as a *lbamana*. It is not clear whether We'wha was sexually active or merely took on the social roles (and look) of a woman. Thomas describes himself as *n'dleeb*-like, which is Diné (a.k.a. Navajo) for “being in a constant state of change.” When he is in the greater Native American circle, Thomas identifies himself as Two-Spirit[ed], while in Western society, he calls himself gay—but momentarily—in order to be understood.

The original meaning of these words has been lost to our Nations. Homophobia was taught to us as a component of Western education and religion. We were presented with an entirely new set of taboos, which did not correspond to our own models, and which focused on sexual behaviour rather than the intricate roles Two-Spirit[ed] people played. As a result of this misrepresentation, our Nations no longer accepted us as they once had. Many Native Americans had to come to terms with their sexuality in urban settings separate from our cultures. We had to “come out” in the Western world. But the journey into the mainstream left many of us lonesome for our homes.

In 1988, contemporary Natives coined the term *Two-Spirit*. It refers to “a Native American who is of two spirits, both male and female.” The term doesn't necessarily have a sexual meaning; some transgendered heterosexuals identify themselves as Two-Spirit but not as gay. Naming ourselves distanced us from colonial words like *berdache*. Based on histories from anthropologists and elders, we were able to gather stories of our roles in the indigenous cultures as healers, teachers, and leaders. Many of us embody this history through our work as health educators in Native communities.

The mid '80s saw a push, produced by dire need, for recognition of our Two-Spirit identities. The AIDS epidemic decimated Native American men who had sex with men. In the last two years alone, the number of cases has increased 63 per cent among Native men and women [in the United States]. It was necessary to exhort our communities to recognize the specter that AIDS posed, and to relate the epidemic to other diseases such as smallpox, tuberculosis, and pneumonia, which have wiped out whole Nations, even in the recent past. In New York City, Curtis Harris worked exhaustively to provide the first AIDS services for Native Americans east of the Mississippi. At the same time, he worked to sensitize Natives to issues of sexuality. Through the purge of AIDS, Two-Spirit people came to relate their identities to their own communities.

We still share this knowledge through an annual forum called the International Two-Spirited Gathering, which occurs in various locations throughout the U.S. and Canada. Indigenous Two-Spirit people come from all over the continent to socialize and share histories in a safe, sober, and healing environment. As we learn through these gatherings, our identities are constantly renewed. It is a process that binds us to each other and to our diverse cultures.

The gathering is not an educational forum for learning about the Two-Spirit concept. It is restricted to Native Americans, due to infiltration by confused non-Natives searching for identities, and New Agers claiming to be Native in their past lives. Due to this sort of cultural theft, Anguksuar, a.k.a. Richard LaFortune (Yupik, Eskimo), and organizer of the first gathering, issues an admonition: “We are taking a risk in letting you know about

many diverse cultures. While we hope that you can benefit from our knowledge, we are wary of cultural appropriation and we expect you to respect our place, as this continent is our home. This is your responsibility.”

While we have been changed by you
this is not us
it is not you.
and so we begin again.

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MANLY HEARTED WOMAN

According to the American Indian scholar, Paula Gunn Allen, among the Sioux were women who were known as “*manly-hearted women*.”⁶ They functioned as warriors and sometimes married other women. Allen says, “Among the Cherokee they’re known as Beloved Women who were warriors, leaders, and influential council members. But among the Cherokee, all women had real influence in tribal matters until reorganization was necessitated by American removal attempts.”⁷

“It might be,” Allen says that “some Indian women could be seen as ‘dykes,’ while some could be seen as “Lesbians,” if you think of “dyke” as one who bonds with women in order to further some Spirit and supernatural directive, and “Lesbian” as a woman who is emotionally and physically intimate with other women. (The two groups would not have been mutually exclusive.)

The “dyke” (we might also call her a “ceremonial Lesbian”) was likely to have been a medicine woman in a special sense, She probably was a participant in the Spirit (intelligence, force-field) of an Entity or Deity who was particularly close to earth during the Goddess period though that Deity is still present in the lives of some American Indian women who practice Her ceremonies and participate actively and knowingly in Her reality. Signs of this Deity remain scattered all over the continent [Turtle Island]: Snake Mound in Ohio is probably one such holdover, La Virgin de Guadalupe is another. There are all sorts of petroglyphs, edifices, and stories concerning some aspects of Her and Her signs are preserved in much of the lore and literature in many tribes.”⁸

⁶ Allen, Paula Gunn, “Beloved Women: Lesbians in American Indian Cultures,” *Conditions* 7, 1981, p. 67

⁷ *ibid.*, p. 67

⁸ *ibid.*, p. 81

In Katz's *Gay American History*, a detailed account of such a "ceremonial Lesbian", a Kutenai Indian in Montana in the early 1800s, appears. The Kutenai people valued hunting above everything else, she achieved a great reputation as a courier, prophet, guide, warrior, healer, peace mediator, as well as hunter. She changed her married name, Mme. Boisverd, to one in her own language, *Kauxuma Nupika*, "gone to the spirits." After returning to her tribe after a year's absence, she said that while living among the whites she had magically changed her sex. After that she only wore men's clothes, gambled, warred, and "took wives" just as men did.

"Gone to the Spirits" having lived a shaman's life, died in the warrior/shaman way; that is, she was nearly impossible to kill. She died when set upon by a Blackfoot ambush, she did not falter until a number of shots had entered her body, and when Blackfoot warriors slashed her with knives the cuts were said to have healed themselves. Her chest was finally opened and the lower part of heart was cut off, only then did she die. It was said that, "No wild animals or birds disturbed her body, which is said to have gradually decayed."⁹

Such stories are many in the lore of American Indians says Allen, pointing to a crisis in the life of the initiate that results in her "death" or deathlike trance, and then "her visit to the Spirit realms from which she finally returns, transformed and powerful. After such events, she no longer belongs to her tribe or family, but the Spirit teacher who instructed her."¹⁰

⁹ Katz, Jonathan, *Gay American History*, p. 298, quoting Francis Simon

¹⁰ Allen, "Beloved Women", p. 82



HOMOPHOBIA

The term “homophobia” implies fear or dislike of homosexuals and lesbians. But the working definition goes far beyond, to active dislike reflected in verbal and physical violence. Homophobia ranges from attitudes and actions such as:

- ❖ Not confronting a homophobic remark for fear of being identified with gay men and lesbians
- ❖ Avoiding mentioning to friends involvement with a gay rights organization because of fear of being thought to be gay/lesbian
- ❖ Feeling repelled by public displays of affection between gay men or lesbians, but accepting the same affectionate displays between heterosexuals.

In its worst forms, homophobia has led to beatings, popularly referred to as “gay bashing,” and murder.

For many gay men and lesbians, fear of homophobia is as intrusive and traumatic as a woman’s anxiety about the possibility of sexual harassment and rape. It can limit career choices, opportunities and promotions as well as social relationships and emotional health.

Homophobia refers to individual negative attitudes and personal prejudice. The term itself recognizes that homosexuality is not the problem. The problem is prejudice and fear, which may translate into hatred of gay men and lesbians. Homophobia literally means “fear of same”. This term originates from psychology and was used as a label for those persons who were seen to have an “irrational fear” of homosexuality in themselves and others.

Today, many people use the term to define “anti-gay” and “anti-lesbian” prejudices. Some suggest that “homophobia” is an inaccurate term because it implies a form of uncontrollable mental panic. Some argue that “homophobia” conveys neither the intense hatred some people feel toward gay men and lesbians nor the violence of the behaviour sometimes directed against them. In this sense homophobia bears more resemblance to racism or anti-Semitism than to “phobias”.

The danger is that by explaining all anti-gay and anti-lesbian feelings in terms of psychological constructs, other reasons, such as political and religious, may be ignored.



DISCRIMINATION AGAINST TWO-SPIRITED PEOPLE

Homophobia, like racism or sexism, is a pervasive and deeply rooted popular attitude that creates barriers. It has a long, complex developmental history over many centuries and across many cultures. Homophobia is based on the dislike of gays or on the fear of being gay or of being thought gay. It is characterized by negative attitudes and behaviours toward gays and lesbians, and is expressed in a variety of ways, from pejorative remarks and humour, which reinforce stereotypes, to discriminatory and violent behaviours. Homophobia is perpetuated by pervasive stigmatizing myths and misinformation. Every Canadian is influenced by it.

Most Canadians have grown up in an environment which develops and sustains homophobia. Homophobic remarks are commonplace. Lesbian and gays are objects of both suspicion and derision. Media images, although improving, tend to be negative and demeaning. Many Canadians feel it is their right to discriminate against gays and lesbians, and many others condone it.

The link between AIDS and homosexuality is so firmly established in the minds of the general public, the media and many health care workers, that their response to a person with AIDS is very often inseparable from their response to homosexuality. This link is a reflection of our cultural attitudes toward disease and toward stigmatized and marginalized groups within society.

The association of disease with deeply held cultural values and beliefs is not something new. Societies have always linked disease, especially sexually transmitted disease, to sinfulness, depravity and deviance: health is evidence of virtue as disease is of depravity.

“Cultural beliefs about the relationship between disease and socially stigmatized groups have also affected the way in which science has shaped our response to AIDS. Collection and dissemination of epidemiological data has reinforced the prevailing belief that AIDS is caused by risk *groups* rather than by risk *behaviour*.”¹¹

The Ontario First Nations AIDS and Healthy Lifestyle Survey, which was completed in 1993, contained a section that explored views of homosexuality in various Aboriginal communities (i.e., on-reserve). In the Survey it was stated that:

¹¹ *HIV/AIDS -- A Canadian Public Health Perspective*, Canadian Public Health Association; March 1993; p. 120

“The majority of respondents felt that homosexuality was wrong, and perceived their family and community to support this view.”¹²

This statement is indicative of the pervasiveness of homophobia in First Nations’ communities. It has been our experience at *2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations* that many of our members have been forced to leave their home communities due to intolerance of sexual diversity and, in many cases, at very young ages. Many adolescent two-spirited people arrive in large urban centres with an inadequate education to find employment and many are forced into the sex trade as a means of survival. Thus the affects of racism and homophobia often leads to high risk and self-destructive behaviour.

Some may internalize the homophobia that surrounds them and begin to question their sexuality and blame themselves for their infection. Many experience great anxiety over infecting others. HIV can threaten their ability to develop or maintain healthy, sexual and intimate relationships with others.

HIV has taken so many lives within the gay community that the communities themselves are in a chronic state of crisis, grief and burnout. Having already cared for so many who are infected or who have died, partners and friends often lack the inner strength and resources to provide care, or they do so at great personal cost to themselves. One study found that gay men who have experienced a large number of losses because of HIV or AIDS develop symptoms of traumatic stress response: demoralization, sleep problems, recreational drug use and heavy use of psychological services.

Gay men who have lost a partner to HIV disease will often not turn to traditional sources of bereavement support because of the stigma of HIV or the fear that they will not be accepted. Dealing not only with the death of a partner, but with multiple losses in the community, they may not know where to look for support except within a community that is itself coping with unresolved grief.

Rejection by one's own cultural group can be psychologically devastating.

“Two-Spirit[ed] People . . . have experienced homophobia resulting in rejection from family and community. Some individuals experience internalized homophobia, and an inability to accept their own sexuality due to judgemental attitudes from society in general. Lack of acceptance produces ramifications of substance abuse, sexual, mental & physical abuse, no family or community support, internalized racism, sex trade, language barriers, low self-esteem, shame, fear, guilt, lack of work experience/education, lack of safer sex negotiating skills, sexual identity crisis and lack of peer counselling. This scenario has produced isolation which may result in suicide.”¹³

¹² Myers, Ted; Calzavara, Liviana M.; Cockerill, Rhonda; Marshall, Victor W.; Bullock, Sandra L.; *Ontario First Nations AIDS and Health Lifestyle Survey*, 1993; p. 42

¹³ McLeod, Albert, and Peterson, Treasure; *Care and Treatment of Aboriginal People with HIV/AIDS (Manitoba Aboriginal AIDS Task Force)*, Winnipeg, March 1993

Mental health professionals, paraprofessionals and volunteers may not be sensitive to cultural differences; therefore, they may be unable to give appropriate services and supports.

“Because of cultural, social, political, geographic and language differences between Aboriginal peoples and mainstream Canadian society, Aboriginal peoples living with HIV, their families and caregivers have distinct mental health needs. Many Aboriginal peoples living with HIV will not seek out services--either because of discrimination in the formal health system, their own mistrust of the system or because the services are culturally inappropriate. They require services that are culturally sensitive and community-based.

“Aboriginal peoples living outside Aboriginal communities turn for services to Indian and Metis Friendship Centres, other community-based organizations -- such as the 2-Spirited People of the 1stNations -- and family physicians.”¹⁴

The affect of racism on Aboriginal peoples in Canada has been well documented. This oppression has resulted in many social ills that plague First Nations people today. Poverty, substance abuse, violence and suicide are all part of the reality for Aboriginal people. As in the larger First Nations community, two-spirited people suffer from the same adversities. However, these problems are compounded as many two-spirited people are rejected and ostracized by their own communities. In a world that does not honour indigenous people, two-spirited people suffer “triple oppression” -- as Natives, as homosexuals, and in the case of two-spirited lesbians, as women.

In many cases, the internalization of negative stereotypes about two-spirited people has led to self-destructive behaviour. Although information has been widely available in the Gay and Lesbian community on high-risk sexual behaviour which leaves one vulnerable to HIV infection, many of *2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations*’ clients who are HIV-positive have indicated that they have only just recently been infected. This would suggest that, although two-spirited people are aware of the potential risks of unsafe sex, many do not take precautions. In other instances, many two-spirited people who have been involved in high-risk behaviour do not get tested. The possible reasons for not doing so could be lack of knowledge regarding where and when they should get tested, denial that they are at risk, and fear and mistrust of medical institutions or what they perceive are “white” organizations. Nevertheless, it can be reliably said that there is a strong correlation between racism in Canadian society and the ever-increasing seroprevalence rate among two-spirited people.

Two-Spirited people are not likely to turn to many organizations that are supposedly responding to the needs of a community. Our issues of safety are much more sensitive. Many two-spirited people living with HIV/AIDS do not use the services of the various HIV/AIDS organizations because many have inadvertently been treated insensitively or have been victims of blatant racism.

¹⁴ *Ending the Isolation -- HIV Disease and Mental Health in the Second Decade*, Health and Welfare Canada 1992; p. 49-50



CHRISTIANITY AND HOMOSEXUALITY: GOD CARES ABOUT OUR LOVE NOT OUR SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Many heterosexuals talk as though their heterosexuality were a badge of righteousness. You'd think they'd achieved it after much struggle. They judge harshly those who find themselves attracted from the beginning to the same-sex and condemn them as willfully evil. Since homosexuals can't or won't choose to be like us, they argue, they should fight their impulses to express their love in a human way, that is, physically, and remain celibate forever.

The magazine *Canada Lutheran* had a recent article by the pastor of a Lutheran church in Toronto. Like the Pope and others, he said the church should welcome gays but demand from them a chastity required of nobody else. His reasoning is intriguing: "I end with an admission: I have sexual desires for many women. But this does not give me the right to act on my desires. To act on my desires, even with consent, is wrong. Just as I have to control my desires for women, so must gays control their desires for persons of the same sex." Just to reach such absurdities if a married person who is free to express his sexuality can be compared with someone for whom all sexual expression is forbidden--is to realize the depth of hypocrisy involved.

For such people, all homosexual acts are wrong and perverse by nature. What's more, even though many both in and outside the churches would deny it, the fact that in our society so far AIDS has struck down more homosexual men than any other group is seen, if not as divine retribution, then, at the very least as a potent sign that any same-sex expressions of love are wrong. The flaws in logic and the essential injustices in this whole condemnatory approach to an important minority in our midst are obvious. Yet, as my recent mail has clearly shown, many who think themselves to be not just reasonably intelligent but also pious and devout hold this position with an intensity bordering on hate.

A column on Nov. 21 in which I argued for acceptance of committed, homosexual unions by the churches has brought a spate of abusive, rancorous letters. Seldom has so much ignorance and spite lurked under the guise of virtue and true religion. For example, one furious Anglican (who has also written to his bishop about me) was typical of all those who, in spite of the facts, keep repeating the lie that homosexuals are a threat because they always prey on children. The distinction between pedophiles (who can be either homosexual or heterosexual) and the majority who want a fulfilling adult relationship is one he can not or will not make.

The Bible-quoters were well represented too. One woman was typical when she wrote: "Are we to forget God's commands? It seems churches are making their own rules . . . and not following what the Lord has said. No wonder the world is in such moral decay. We don't change God's rules to suit ourselves. You either listen to them or you don't. It's that simple. And He says: 'Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; that is detestable.'" (Leviticus 18:22) She went on to say that the day her church changes its attitude to homosexual love, "I will stay home and read God's word for myself."

I only hope she will read all of it and not just the verses confirming her view! For example, Leviticus demands the death penalty for breaking a long list of "God's rules." No church today supports putting spiritualists, mediums, parent-curses or adulterers to death. Yet, it's there "in the book." A similar ignorance and lack of logic permeated the missives of a number of people who condemned anal sex as "unnatural" and the chief cause of AIDS in the Western Hemisphere.

Not all male homosexuals engage in anal sex. Nor is it by any means a practice totally restricted to gay men, according to various studies I have examined. In some cultures, it's a normal feature of married sex, either as a form of birth control or simply as a variant mode. In any case, it's not homosexual activity that causes AIDS. The virus that does cause it can be transmitted through unprotected anal sex, through unprotected vaginal sex, through using contaminated needles, or through received contaminated blood in a transfusion. The fact that the Red Cross or other medical supplies have inadvertently given patients tainted blood is a tragedy, but it doesn't make blood itself or its transmission a cause of AIDS. What's more, even a limited amount of reading should enlighten us about the fact that in other parts of the world the usual mode of passing on the virus is in heterosexual intercourse. Worldwide, those who have caught the virus in this way far outnumber homosexuals afflicted with it.

Religion can't condone all gay sex any more than it can bless everything heterosexuals do. The real point is God doesn't care what our orientation is. It's how we treat others that counts. Ethically, the criteria are: genuine love and full mutuality. Christians should be among the first to acknowledge that.

(By Tom Harpur, reprinted from *The Toronto Star*, Sunday, December 12, 1993.)



THE IMPACT OF HOMOPHOBIA & OTHER SOCIAL BIASES ON AIDS

“It’s a white man’s disease.” “We don’t have a gay problem on our reserve.” “It’s something that only happens in the big cities.” These are some of the attitudes that exist in Indian country when the topic of AIDS comes up. These statements are a direct result of homophobia and other social biases that exist in Aboriginal communities. The following article will deal with this issue.

Stigma and discrimination are the enemies of health in Aboriginal communities. Stigma and discrimination are tragic effects of the AIDS epidemic, causing unwarranted suffering and undermining efforts to prevent the further spread of HIV.

The connection of homophobia to HIV/AIDS and the general identification of AIDS as a gay disease, continue to hinder efforts to address this crisis not only for two-spirited people, but also for women and all other Aboriginal people. The depth of hostility toward homosexuality in Aboriginal communities helps explain the reluctance of our leaders and communities to address this important issue. It is our belief that just as AIDS-Related Stigma is the reason for the uninspired response to HIV/AIDS, so the problem of homophobia is the undeclared cause of the spread of AIDS-Related Stigma within our communities.

It is the aim of this article to explore the connection between homophobia and AIDS-related stigma and to suggest some solutions to this problem.

Two-Diseases, Two Responses

In 1976 there appeared a mysterious new illness that was striking veterans who had attended a Pennsylvania American Legion convention in Philadelphia. In the New York Times an article describing these events appeared on the August 3, 1976 edition. It was on the front page the following day. The story appeared on the front page of the Times on the next day as well, when the paper printed a photo of President Gerald Ford holding an emergency meeting in the Oval office to discuss the government’s response to the outbreak.

Four and a half years later, in 1981, another mysterious illness appeared in the United States. In the beginning, it was identified among homosexual and bisexual men in major U.S. cities, and was dubbed Gay-Related Immune Deficiency, or GRID. When it was later discovered to be proliferating among intravenous drug users and immigrants of African descent who had migrated from Haiti, the term GRID was abandoned. By 1983, the disease had become the largest epidemic of a previously unknown illness in the United States in 150 years. Unlike Legionnaire's Disease in which approximately 10% of those diagnosed with the illness eventually died, the condition that had now become known as Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome, or AIDS, showed every indication of being universally fatal. By the end of 1982, two years into the epidemic, and with 634 of cases of AIDS reported—most of them in New York City—The New York Times had printed a total of only six articles on the epidemic, none of them on the front page. This is in contrast to the 33 articles—11 of them on the front page—that The New York Times had printed during the first 30 days of the Legionnaire's Disease outbreak. President Ronald Reagan made his first public mention of the word "AIDS" on May 31, 1987, nearly seven years after the illness had first appeared in the country. On that date, AIDS had been diagnosed in over 36,000 men, women, and children in the United States, had claimed over 20,000 Americans.

AIDS-Related Stigma

The term "AIDS epidemic" not only depicts the spread of a fatal disease in our communities, but it has also represents an outbreak of stigma. An epidemic of blame has happened simultaneously with the emergence of this disease.

AIDS-Related Stigma
refers to the extreme stigmatization, prejudice, and polarization that has characterized the public response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

With the advent of AIDS in North America, we have seen the appearance of another social condition that is called *AIDS-Related Stigma*. It has been posited that AIDS-Related Stigma takes three central forms. The first category of AIDS-Related Stigma can be called fear of the disease itself.

During the first months of the AIDS epidemic it was not known how the disease was spread. When the disease first appeared, many individuals were afraid of contact with a toilet seat, a bite from a mosquito and other casual contacts. Later the epidemic came to be identified with specific groups, which originated the second category of AIDS-Related Stigma, which comprises a range of reactions related to the fear and hostility aimed at those who are perceived as being most affected by and responsible for the disease. Gregory Herek describes it as "symbolic AIDS stigma,"¹⁵. This pertains to the passing-on, or transference, of fears and anxieties about the disease to those whom the disease seems to hit hardest—and those who, it is thus presupposed, are the most to *blame* for making the disease a threat to society.

¹⁵ Herek, Gregory M., "Illness, Stigma, and AIDS," in *Psychological Aspects of Serious Illness: Chronic Conditions, Fatal Disease, and Clinical Care* (Hyattsville, Md: American Psychological Association, 1990), pp. 107-150.

In the case of HIV/AIDS, the process of **symbolic stigma formation** is relatively easy to determine. The population groups that were initially most affected by the AIDS epidemic were explicitly defined by government epidemiologists and the media, in part as a way to lessen fears of the disease by limiting it to specific groups. It was homosexual and bisexual men—or men who have sex with men—that came to be viewed as the group that was at the centre of the spread of HIV/AIDS. As a result, a strong link was established between AIDS and the gay and bisexual men who appeared to be its most frequent casualties. Its emergence in the gay men’s community prompted links to largely taboo social behaviours. Media reports on AIDS were encapsulated in one brief phrase, “gay plague.” This set into motion a series of associations that have permanently tied attitudes about the epidemic to a community of men whose sexuality falls outside the society’s mainstream and, therefore, acceptable sexual behaviour.

Symbolic Stigma Formation
is the lessening of anxiety about a disease by limiting it to special groups or specific behaviours.

Later, immigrants and so-called foreigners were depicted as being hard hit by the epidemic, and, in particular, Haitian immigrants. Thus, the foundations were established for shifting some of the fear and anxiety about the disease to members of ethnic minority groups. This originated a now widespread phenomenon called **race-related HIV/AIDS stigma**.

The term, **risk groups**, plays an important role in the history of the AIDS epidemic, because it has become a catch-phrase illustrative of the extent to which our society has unconsciously struggled to contain the epidemic by linguistically (i.e., using language) confining it to definable subsets of society. The term “risk group” has been contrasted throughout the epidemic with the term “general public”—as if members of the disease’s risk groups were not a part of the general public. What has been particularly disastrous about the course of the AIDS epidemic is the fact that through pure chance it initially affected groups that were already widely stigmatized. Even now, in the United States, the only comprehensive government AIDS initiative is named after a child—Ryan White—who, a true hero, was also considered an “innocent victim” by virtue of the fact that he contracted HIV through a contaminated blood transfusion.

The grouping of AIDS with specific populations meant that members of society who were already marginalized had to deal with double stigmatization through their association with AIDS. This made it more difficult for communities to organize effective responses to the epidemic. It also made worse unconscious feelings of guilt, responsibility, and rejection already widespread within those communities in most need of support in order to avoid often self-destructive behaviours that could lead to viral infection.

An important third category of AIDS-Related Stigma is *the fear and hostility related to the specific behaviours that transmit HIV/AIDS*. Anal intercourse, the sharing of infected needles in intravenous drug use, heterosexuals engaging in sex with multiple partners (i.e., outside of marriage or a monogamous relationship): these behaviours (which are perceived as wholly voluntary) were easier to criticize and dismiss, either as punishment for immoral or offensive behaviour, or as conditions that its affected populations have somehow asked for or deserved.

There also exists a social taboo against the free and open discussion of many of these issues—such as human sexuality and homosexual behaviour. This makes it even more difficult to provide effective prevention education to those most at risk for HIV infection. It also creates the barriers in dealing rationally with the epidemic. The association of HIV/AIDS with specific behaviours also serves to expand the range of those regarded as “risk groups.” Society perceives not only gay men and intravenous drugs users as socially irresponsible, but extends this stigma to the sexually active, the sexually adventurous, and sex trade workers as well. This establishes another finite set of individuals from who it is easy for people to feel a sense of removal and disassociation.

Gregory Herek (1990) suggests that because HIV and AIDS have so frequently been seen as associated with stigmatized communities and behaviours, a polarity has developed. This polarity is between, whether to look at HIV as a virus that does not discriminate against those it affects; or, to cling to the “symbolic representations” of the disease and those it affects (i.e., an “us versus them” view), as a way to lessen personal fears about AIDS without confronting them. This second choice can apply to individuals who have difficulty in dealing with HIV/AIDS and so transfer feelings of fear and hostility onto those whom they see as affected by the epidemic. It can also apply to individuals who have negative or fearful reactions to the disease’s stigmatized groups, and who use the disease as a way to justify or unleash those feelings. There are also middle grounds to these two approaches, such as approving of AIDS prevention and care only for the so called “innocent victims” of the epidemic—or endorsing HIV prevention but not treatment for those who have become infected with the virus as result of their own actions.

The combination of AIDSphobia, fear of the groups affected by AIDS, and fear of the behaviours that lead to infection, have created the highly problematic social phenomenon of **AIDS-Related Stigma**.

The Consequences of Fear

The frequent results of AIDS-Related Stigma, of prejudice, discrimination, and hostility, have been equally destructive to those who have or are at risk for the disease, both at the community and national levels. It is now nearly two decades since we first encountered the disease. However, our responses still suggest that we have learned nothing about the disease and that we have not made any progress in developing effective strategies for dealing with this ailment. The ongoing presence of AIDS-Related Stigma continues to cause people to use a symbolic understanding the origins and conditions of AIDS instead of practical ones. The result is a response to the epidemic that ineffectively confronts the imaginary causes and agents of AIDS, rather than the real ones.

The concept of “risk groups” creates in public’s mind links to communities who are most affected by AIDS, rather than to specific risk behaviours that transmit the disease. This creates a false sense of security of one’s being less at risk when one is not a member of a “risk group.”

AIDS-Related Stigma's linking of AIDS to "risk groups" manifests itself in terms of a false public viewpoint, that supporting AIDS education and prevention is equivalent to endorsing stigmatized behaviours such as homosexuality or injection drug use, and giving these marginalized groups "special rights." Harm reduction strategies to prevent HIV infection among substance abusers (i.e., needle exchange programs) are often viewed as ways to support drug-use behaviour, rather than trying to save lives.

These assumptions and confused ideas have caused a great many tragic consequences for people infected and affected by HIV/AIDS. This has ranged from open hostility to ambivalence about the disease and those affected. In fact, due to the social prejudices and misconceptions that must be overcome in arriving at an unbiased and rational vision of HIV/AIDS, ambivalence towards the epidemic is often as damaging as an openly malicious one.

Homophobia & HIV/AIDS

The progress of the AIDS epidemic and the resulting stigmatization of APHAs (Aboriginal People Living with HIV/AIDS) has been characterized by the continued association with gay and bisexual (two-spirited) men. In most other countries AIDS is, for the most part, a heterosexual illness.

AIDS-Related Stigma has had dire consequences for two-spirited people. The effects of being both homosexual and Aboriginal are devastating. Two-spirited people face discrimination from inside and outside their communities. Problems of identity formation in the face of intense prejudice make being either homosexual or/and Aboriginal more than enough for one individual—particularly two-spirited youth—to cope with. Self-destructive behaviour among two-spirited youth in the forms of substance abuse, suicide, unsafe sexual practices, are very extensive.

HIV/AIDS has maintained its hold on the public imagination in its relation to gay and bisexual men. Research has shown that this tenacious connection to gay and bisexual men is due to two facts:

- 1) Since the beginning of the epidemic when it was called GRID (Gay-Related Immune Deficiency), AIDS has been firmly associated in the public consciousness with gay and bisexual populations and their behaviours.
- 2) This perception coincides with a fundamental and deep-rooted homophobia that permeates practically all social attitudes toward sexuality and sexual behaviour.

Homophobia has never been addressed through an open, public dialogue in the Aboriginal or mainstream societies. Furthermore, a social consensus condemning homophobia has never been formed in the same way that a consensus has been formed condemning racism, sexism, and other forms of discrimination. Thus, this underlying

problem of homophobia is problematic in the context of HIV/AIDS education, prevention, and support.

“The unaddressed issue of homophobia remains the unseen cause of the rapid increase of AIDS-Related Stigma within Aboriginal communities. The issue of homophobia in the Aboriginal communities is met with indifference and aversion by most of our social services agencies, leaders and even AIDS educators. However, AIDS remains fundamentally grounded in the image of **gay disease** and **gay plague**. This view greatly hampers the efforts of Aboriginal communities to create their own effective response to AIDS in view of the distorted homophobic perspective in which most cases of HIV/AIDS are still viewed. As a result, this correlation between AIDS and homosexuality can drastically impair the ability of non-gay individuals to personalize the idea of risk of HIV-infection, even if they are a high risk of contracting the virus. One major study of heterosexual adolescents found that those who viewed AIDS as a gay male disease, and who were more homophobic, were also least likely to see themselves as being at risk and to take precautions in their own sexual behaviour.¹⁶

HIV/AIDS has led to a significant increase in violence towards gays and lesbians, by providing a justification for individuals to act out on their homophobic feelings through the outlet of AIDS-Related Stigma. Homophobia is so pervasive a fact of life in Canadian society that it can be seen in personal attitudes, governmental and private institutions, and is reinforced by our laws.

AIDS continues to challenge us as to how to address it, especially when it comes to taking strong action to prevent the illness through education and prevention, despite the fact that it is well known to our leadership what a potential threat it is to Aboriginal people. Hostility and ambivalence toward homosexuality can explain this lack of initiative and community will in a way that AIDS linkages to racism, sexism and prejudice against substance abusers cannot. Thus it is only by openly and sincerely addressing the underlying issue of homophobia that pervades our attitudes towards HIV and AIDS, can we start to face this epidemic with the clear focus and objectivity that it needs.

(Based on the article “The Impact of Homophobia and Other Social Biases on AIDS” A Special Report by Public Media Center)

¹⁶ Bruce, K., J. Shrum, C. Trefethen, & L. Slovik, “Students’ Attitudes About AIDS, Homosexuality, and Condoms,” *AIDS Education and Prevention*, 2, no. 3 (1990): 220-234.



ABORIGINAL VIEWS REGARDING SEXUALITY[✍]

Traditionally, Aboriginal people have had very open views and wide acceptance of sexual practices or orientation. Sex had been seen as a very normal expression of a person's *Spiritual, Emotional, Physical* and *Mental* being.

Sexuality was perceived as much more than just a means of reproduction; it was also seen as a special gift from the Creator that was a means of sharing ourselves with our partner.

Sexuality brought other gifts, as well. Children were brought into this world through sex and were seen as the ultimate gifts from the Creator. If we were blessed with a child, we were to protect and raise that child using the gifts of *Kindness, Honesty, Sharing* and *Strength*. Parents never owned their own children; they guided and protected them, as the children learned to walk their own path.

As children grew and developed through the different stages of life – the Infant, Youth, Adult and Elder – they would be prepared for each stage through special ceremonies such as a *Berry Fast* (girl) or *Vision Quest* (boy). These ceremonies were guided by the individual's sexual development and were always celebrated.

Traditionally, a person's sexual orientation also brought gifts of vision and understanding. People who were ***Two-Spirited*** (i.e., homosexual) were considered to have a great gift of vision that went beyond most people's abilities. Because of the nature of the *Two-Spirited* person, it was believed that they could understand and help solve problems that both women and men may have individually or between each other. They possessed the ability to see an issue from both perceptions. *Two-Spirited* people were not only considered normal, but a vital and much needed part of the natural world and of the community as a whole.

Often times, if children seemed to be developing the gifts of a *Two-Spirited* person, they would be taken aside at an early age and received special teachings that would assist them in developing their gifts. This person would be given much love and respect. Their gifts, as a *Two-Spirited* person, would be celebrated.

[✍] McLeod-Shabogesis, Perry; *The Medicine Wheel: A Healing Journey*; The Union of Ontario Indians, 1995

It was not until after contact with the Europeans in North America, and subsequent domination, that we began to let go of our traditional views and respect for sexual expression and the special gifts that sexuality brings. It is important to regain our traditional views and expressions to use all of the gifts that we have received from the Creator.



CURRICULUM ON TWO-SPIRITED PEOPLE

Introduction

There exist many barriers to education for two-spirited people, the most prevalent of which is homophobia. Many two-spirited people's education is cut short by the need to escape a hostile community. Also, in some cases, learning is hindered by the day-to-day struggle for survival in an unfriendly environment.

Many two-spirited youth escape to large urban centres where a gay/lesbian community exists. However, they may be ill-prepared to find work and as a result become street-involved in order to survive. Eventually, frustration, loneliness and despair permeate their lives. Once hope is lost, tragedy quickly follows. It can take the form of physical illness, depression, addictions, violence and often death.

Self-sufficiency is predicated on having a wide range of skills. In order to obtain these skills being able to read and write fluently is essential. Becoming literate is the first step to freedom.

Learning is a difficult task. Making the material interesting and relevant is imperative. For most two-spirited people our history and place in the Aboriginal community remains hidden from us. Fortunately, there is an emerging collection of materials from a variety of sources on two-spirited people.

Title of Lesson: *Ogokwe – Two-Spirited people in Ojibwe culture*

Grade Level: Adult Learners

Subject: Two-Spirited people 101

Honouring two-spirited people

Objectives: An introductory level presentation on two-spirited people using material developed by Nazareth, a two-spirited Anishinaabe from

Auden, Ontario, who has been studying two-spirited people for nearly 30 years.

To discuss the role of two-spirited people past, present and future.

To provide positive and affirming information on two-spirited people and to foster self-esteem.

To stimulate an interest in learning and provide further motivation to become literate.

To broaden the definition of two-spirited beyond our sexuality to include other functions in the Aboriginal community including spiritual, educational, keepers of traditional information, etc.

Cultural Concept

In the Anishinaabe tradition the Creator gave each person and culture a road to walk, i.e., Yellow, White, Black and Red. The Anishinaabe were given the Red road.

The Creator also made two-spirited people. Each community and/or clan has at least one two-spirited person who is a part of their circle. Within a two-spirited person there is a balance to be made between man and woman, each looking at each other's quality. Two-spirited people are man/woman people, having qualities of both. They are gifted people because of this duality or "two-sidedness." They are seen as extraordinary individuals and are given respect and honour. Respect is an attribute that is given back and is never kept.

Cultural Lesson

The lesson begins with the reading of the above statement on two-spirited people. Then write the two known names of two-spirited people in the Anishinaabe language: *Gizhe-manido-kwe* which means *an extraordinary, God-like person* (this name must be earned and its meaning is not yet completely understood); the other is *Ogokwe* which means *wise woman or person*, and it used for gay women or gay men. It is important to stress that each First Nation has its own way of describing two-spirited people. According to Nazareth, the researcher of this material, he has never heard two-spirited people describe negatively among Aboriginal people. Derogatory terms for Aboriginal gay and lesbian people such as "fag" or "queer" are derived from European culture and are foreign to our people.

Next discuss how one knows they are two-spirited:

1. You can be born that way, i.e., you "know" from birth;
2. Through a dream a person can realize the two-spirited role he/she will play in life.

3. Sometimes the community/clan initiates a two-spirited person because it needs a *Gizhe-manido-kwe*. It should be stressed that this person must pay attention to their male side as well as female side or they will not be balanced.

In conclusion discuss the roles, functions and attributes of two-spirited people. They include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. They are highly regarded by the community at all levels. No important function took place without a two-spirited person there,
2. A major role was diplomacy. Two-spirited people were highly respected as negotiators.
3. Teachings from Elders long ago included teachings about two-spirited people. Most other peoples have lost these teachings, but the Red people have hung on to them.
4. Intuition and perception are part of their attributes.
5. As intellectuals, two-spirited people are always pursuing knowledge and to learn how to best use what resources there are.
6. As mediators, they arranged marriages, meetings, etc. They always tried to stop people from creating thicker barriers by being miserable with each other.
7. Matchmakers: they make lifelong matches, and even become part of the family.
8. Shamans and Healers – some, not all two-spirited people fulfill this role, but all try. They work hard and earn these positions with the strong support and encouragement of their community and/or clan.
9. They give secret power names to people. For example, Crazy Horse was a power name and he was gay. This does not happen as much now.

Student Activities

- I. Class discussion: the class would be invited to talk about their impressions about two-spirited people.
- II. The class would be asked to write a paragraph on the presentation and include any information and/or teachings they may have heard about two-spirited people.
- III. Bring in an Elder to talk about two-spirited people.
- IV. Show video on Dr. Terry Tafoya (Taos Pueblo/Warm Springs), who is a two-spirited clinical psychologist and storyteller.

Discuss the obstacles that now confront two-spirited people in contemporary times. How can we overcome these obstacles? Prepare a list.



Anti-Homophobia Work Plan Model for Aboriginal Communities

ACTIVITY	RESOURCES (WHO IS RESPONSIBLE)	DATA SOURCE	COMPLETION DATE	ANTICIPATED RESULTS
1 STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING	STAFF, STEERING COMMITTEE	WORKPLAN	TBA	WORK PLAN APPROVED
2 LITERATURE REVIEW & DOCUMENT SEARCH, & INTERVIEWS	STAFF	2-SPIRITED PEOPLE OF THE 1ST NATIONS; CENTRAL TORONTO YOUTH SERVICES CENTRE FOR LESBIAN & GAY RIGHTS IN ONTARIO; NATIVE ELDERS		ANTI-HOMOPHOBIA RESOURCE MATERIALS & TRAINING MODULE
3 DEVELOP ANTI- HOMOPHOBIA STRATEGY	STAFF, ELDER	COMMUNITY CONSULTATION, ELDER		ANTI-HOMOPHOBIA STRATEGY
4 STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING	STAFF, STEERING COMMITTEE	RESOURCE MATERIALS & TRAINING MODULE		APPROVAL OF MATERIALS & TRAINING MODULE

5	OUTREACH TO NATIVE COMMUNITIES & ORGANIZATIONS	STAFF	ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY & ORGANIZATIONS	ESTABLISH A PROFILE WITH ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY & ORGANIZATIONS
6	SCHEDULE ANTI-HOMOPHOBIA WORKSHOPS	STAFF, ELDER	ANTI-HOMOPHOBIA STRATEGY, ELDER	ADDRESS HOMOPHOBIA IN ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY & ORGANIZATIONS & ELIMINATE BARRIERS TO SERVICES FOR TWO-SPIRITED PEOPLE
7	BOARD & STAFF TRAINING	STAFF	STAFF; ANTI-HOMOPHOBIA STRATEGY	PROVIDE STAFF WITH WAYS & MEANS OF ADDRESSING HOMOPHOBIA
8	COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS	STAFF, ELDER	ANTI-HOMOPHOBIA STRATEGY, ELDER	PROVIDE COMMUNITY MEMBERS WITH WAYS & MEANS OF ADDRESSING HOMOPHOBIA
9	YEAR END REPORT	STAFF	STATISTICS, EVALUATION FORMS, COMMUNITY FEEDBACK, FUNDING REPRESENTATIVE, PERSONNEL COMMITTEE EVALUATION	DETERMINE IF PROJECT OBJECTIVES HAVE BEEN MET OR NOT, OR EXCEEDED, IN ORDER TO EVALUATE PROJECT EFFECTIVENESS

The Relationship of Homophobia to Other Forms of Oppression

	Aboriginal People	Old People & Children	Poor People	Women	People of Colour	Gays and Lesbians
Isolation	Reserve system. Lack of response by police and social services to Natives.	High rises become ghettos. Separate medical care.	Housing projects. No access to transportation.	Need a man for protection. Women out alone at night are whores.	Gentrification. ^{fb} Lack of police and social services response to minorities.	Forced to stay closeted. Some neighbourhoods unsafe.
Emotional Abuse	Racist language. Called drunks. Languages ridiculed. Whites deny worth of culture.	Ignored. Ideas not listened to. Talked about while present as though they aren't in the room. Patronized.	Blamed for their poverty. Considered lazy.	Called names. Treated as sex objects. Called dumb.	Called lazy. Racist epithets. Ridiculed of other languages and cultures.	Viewed as sexual perverts. Public taunting.
Economic Abuse	Last hired. First laid off. Poor paying jobs. Illegal appropriation of traditional territory by government.	Low priority for government funding. Mail fraud schemes aimed at elderly.	Welfare regulations keep them down. Use fact that they need money to invade their lives.	Low-paying jobs, paid less than a man for the same work.	Last hired. Poor paying jobs. First laid off. Forced to work at the back of the shop.	Discrimination in employment.
Sexual Abuse	Residential school sexual abuse. Exploiting of Aboriginal women.	High incidence in care facilities for old and young people. Children exploited in pornography. Adults take advantage of children's trusting natures.	Less police protection.	Rape, incest, marital rape, pornography.	Pornography racist. No protection from rape. Seen as sex machines.	Accused of child molestation. Ridiculed as not being real men or women.
Privilege of Status	Banks view Aboriginals as poor financial risks. Different cultural views around ownership dismissed. Murders of Aboriginal women not investigated.	Non-incoming producing thus, non-productive, thus, not a part of the mainstream.	Middle-class values seen as most important.	Subservient to men. Bible used as a tool to keep women in their place.	Access to school and job. Assumption that white culture is the only that exists.	Heterosexuality is openly displayed. Open homosexuality considered flaunting.

^{fb} *Gentrification, n.*, the social advancement of an inner urban area by the arrival of affluent middle-class residents.

Threats	Police brutality. Attacks by skinheads.	Threat of violence. Complaints not taken seriously	Social workers threaten to terminate benefits.		Police brutality.	Police harassment
Using Children	CAS kidnapping of Aboriginal children		Welfare threatens to take children to gain compliance	Economic security bargained away in divorce for custody.	Less investigation needed to terminate parental rights.	Children taken away in custody battles.
Intimidation	Police harassment. Legal system stacked against Aboriginals.	Elderly fear being out at night. Easy targets.	Court system works differently for those who can't afford attorneys.	Police don't protect women, i.e., domestic violence.	Police stops and checks. More arrests.	Homophobia rarely challenged publicly. AIDS-Related Stigma.
Violence	Genocide, Trail of Tears, Oka	Spanking, mugging seniors. Sexually abusing kids.	Hospitals won't admit the critically ill. Slum buildings burn, killing people.	Battering. Rape.	Genocide, lynchings, police brutality.	Gay bashing, gay killings.



Lesbian and Gay Youth

The terms, homophobia and heterosexism, are relatively new to Modern English. These words came into use in the late 1960s when the women's movement and the gay liberation movement were beginning the struggle to end discrimination, a struggle that is still going on. Homophobia is defined as an "aversion to gay or homosexual people or their lifestyle or culture."¹⁷ Heterosexism defines an even more intrinsic prejudice. It indicates a deep-seated belief in the inherent superiority of one group, one form of behaviour. In this case, it is assumed that the only "natural" form of sexual relationship is that between two adults of the opposite sex.

For many people, homosexuality is a running joke. To be called a "fag" is one of the most insulting things that can be said to a young man. We are deluged with stereotypes about gay and lesbian behaviour. It is obvious why most people grow up thinking homosexuality is unnatural, immoral, and either frivolous or destructive.

The taunting of gay youth in schools is very common. It is well established in a dominant culture that fears homosexuality and favours heterosexuality.

The religious right has demonized homosexuals as unnatural and sinful. The traditional family values propagated by the conservative Judeo-Christian and other religions traditions, provides youth with a life path that involves getting married to the opposite sex and having sex to make babies. This life path does not leave any room for gay and lesbian expression.

Sexual health messages that target gay audiences tend to utilize underground, alternative media rather than mass media. The lack of mainstream messages and reliance on underground media may send a message to gay youth, families, heterosexual peers and everyone else that same-sex attraction and intimacy is deviant and rare.

Youth must conform to family, peer, school and work expectations. However, the moral conflicts of gay and lesbian youth are all together different. Gay and lesbian youth are expected to suppress their sexuality and choose social roles that run counter their very sense of identity.¹⁸

¹⁷ *The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Third Edition* copyright © 1992 by Houghton Mifflin Company. Electronic version licensed from INSO Corporation. All rights reserved.

¹⁸ *The Experiences of Young Gay Men in the Age of HIV*, Health Canada, 1996.

“[Gay] teens are exposed to a ‘double bind’ from parents and teachers; on the one hand, they are expected to be ‘honest’ and ‘truthful,’ while on the other they learn that their desires are ‘bad’ and should be hidden, [causing] an intolerable torment to their mental health”¹⁹

“Unfortunately, most do not consider the workplace a ‘safe environment’ in which to be gay. Here the monetary incentive to pass as heterosexual reigns supreme”²⁰.

For Aboriginal gay youth the prejudice they experience due to their sexuality is compounded by racism. Stereotypes abound about the macho “Indian” male warrior and the feminine “Indian princess.” The Aboriginal community has adopted many of these clichés created by the dominant culture.

Many Aboriginal gay youth are trapped in isolated communities and face many types of violence—physical, mental, spiritual and emotional. Many of these young people are forced to flee their communities. Quite a few end up on the downtown streets of Canada’s major cities and become involved in prostitution and the drug scene. They are filled with a sense of profound loneliness and all too often take risks that lead to them becoming HIV-positive.

The damaging effects of homophobia and heterosexism on gay youth are considerable. However, inroads have been made.

For example, the psychiatric community no longer considers homosexuality as a mental illness. Same-sex work benefits are being offered to many gay employees. The contemporary media is now beginning to show a greater diversity of gay experiences than in the past. Many of Canada’s provinces now protect gays and lesbians through human rights legislation. Advancements such as these help gay people feel more valued and valuable.

However, we cannot continue to punish and humiliate our gay youth and then wonder why they become alienated and self-destructive. It is the sacred duty of the Aboriginal community to instill our youth with pride and self-esteem regardless of sexual orientation.

¹⁹ Herdt, G. H., & Boxer, A. *Children of Horizons: How Gay and Lesbian Teens are Leading a New Way Out of the Closet*. Boston: Beacon Press.

²⁰ Ibid., pp. 227-228.



COUNSELLING LESBIAN, GAY AND BISEXUAL CLIENTS—FACT SHEET

- ◆ The most common estimate is that 10% of the population has a homosexual sexual orientation. Figures sometimes indicate that about 8% of females are homosexual, while up to 15% of males are homosexual. Any quantitative research is suspect due problems with sampling, self-reporting in a homophobic environment, heterosexual socialization, and the exact definition of the issue being studied, i.e., identification as a lesbian or gay person versus sexual practices.
- ◆ Between 14% and 25% of gay men, with 20% as a safe estimate, have been or are married. About half of these marriages have produced children, which means that approximately 10% of gay men are fathers.
- ◆ Almost 33% of all lesbians have been or are married. About half of these marriages have produced children, which means that approximately 16% of lesbians are mothers as a result of heterosexual relationships. The number does not include self-identified lesbians who decide to have children; the numbers for this group are not known.
- ◆ Individuals with a homosexual orientation, who are struggling with issues related to their orientation, are at risk for a broad range of problems. These risks apply to both males and females, of all ages, but youth appear to be particularly at risk.

Particular risks for youth include the following:

Depression and Suicide

Very large numbers of youth who are struggling with issues related to sexual orientation experience mild to severe depression at some point in time. Most studies indicate that these youth are 2 to 3 times more likely to attempt suicide than heterosexual youth, and a recent study indicated that young gay men are 6 times more likely to attempt suicide than their heterosexual counterparts. Between 20% and 35% of lesbian and gay youth attempt suicide, while more than 50% experience suicidal ideation (i.e., imagine or conceive). Estimates are that 30% of completed youth suicides are lesbian or gay youth.

Family Violence and Disruption

Up to 50% of all youth report negative parental responses when their sexual identity is revealed or discovered; of those youth who experience physical violence due to their sexual orientation, up to half report it at the hands of family members.

Running Away or Being Forced To Leave Home

Up to 25% of lesbian and gay youth whose parents react negatively are disowned or forced to leave home.

Homelessness

It is believed that between 20% and 40% of street youth are lesbian and/or gay. There are many risks associated with street life including: poverty, interrupted education, lack of employment and housing, poor nutrition, poor health status, prostitution, criminal involvement, anxiety and depression, pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, substance abuse, violence, susceptibility to exploitation, HIV infection and poor prospects for the future.

Substance Abuse

Lesbian and gay youth experience substance abuse problems 3 to 5 times as high as heterosexual youth. Adult lesbian and gay people also have substance abuse rates, which are substantially higher than their heterosexual counterparts. It is often assumed that substance abuse problems arise as a result of the prominence of the "bar scene" in lesbian and gay culture. While this may be a factor, other factors such as coping with anti-lesbian/gay discrimination and prejudice, depression and anxiety, homelessness, violence, exploitation, prostitution and criminal involvement are very significant. Lesbian and gay youth often begin substance abuse at a very young age.

HIV Infection

Research indicates that while the rate of increase of HIV infection among adult gay men has leveled out, young gay men continue to be at extremely high risk, and infection of this population continues to increase at an alarming rate.

- ◆ While some lesbian and gay youth require traditional therapy or psychotherapy to deal with the problems, which they are experiencing, many do not. Furthermore, traditional psychotherapy, by itself, is usually insufficient. Other important needs and issues include:
 - Positive, accurate information which challenges the myths and stereotypes about the causes of homosexuality and about lesbian and gay people.
 - The development of an understanding about the social causes of their personal problems.
 - Peer support.
 - Positive adult role models including health and social service providers, teachers, Elders, etc.
 - Assistance in dealing with families or family intervention.
 - Relevant, safer sex information.
 - A sense of history.
 - Information about films, reading materials where lesbian and gay people are visible in positive ways.
 - Knowledge about resources and the community.
 - Other practical supports such as assistance obtaining housing, welfare, education and training, employment, and life skills development.

- In the case of Aboriginal lesbian and gay youth, teachings about two-spirited people and affirming information about the roles and responsibilities of two-spirited people in the Aboriginal community and vice versa.

*Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Youth Program
Central Toronto Youth Services*



READING REFERENCES

The Sacred Hoop, Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions

Author: **Paula Gunn Allen**
Subject:: American Literature - Indian Author - History and Criticism
American Literature - Woman Author - History and Criticism
ISBN: 0-8070-2617-5 (pbk)
Year: 1992
Publisher: Boston: Beacon Press

Spiderwoman's Granddaughters

Author: **Paula Gunn Allen**
Subject:: Native American Studies
ISBN: 0-4499-0508-x
Year: 1989
Publisher: Fawcett Columbine
Content:: Native American scholar literary critic, poet and novelist, Paula Gunn Allen who is herself a Laguna Pueblo-Sioux Indian, became increasingly aware in her academic career that the writing of Native Americans, especially women, have been marginalized by the western literary canon. Allen set out to understand why this was so, and more importantly to remedy the situation. The result is the powerful collection of traditional tales, biographical writings, and contemporary short stories, many by the most accomplished Native American women writing today.

Grandmothers of the Light: A Medicine Woman's Source Book

Author: **Paula Gunn Allen**
Subject: Spirituality/Native American Studies
ISBN: 0-8070-8103-5 (paper)
ISBN: 0-8070-8102-7 (cloth)
Year: 1991
Publisher: Beacon Press
Content:: In *Grandmothers of the Light*, a collection of goddess stories from Native American civilizations across the continent, Paula Gunn Allen shares myths that have guided female shamans toward an understanding of the sacred for centuries.

When Someone You Care About is Gay

Author: **Jim Auer**
Subject:: Coming out
Publisher: Abbey Press, St. Meinrad, IN 47577 USA
Content: This pamphlet provides information on dealing with family members and friends who disclose their homosexuality.

A Gathering of Spirit, a Collection by North American Indian Women

Author: **Beth Brant**
Subject:: American Literature - Indian Author
American Literature - Woman Author
American Literature – 20th Century
Canadian Literature - Woman Author
Canadian Literature – 20th Century
Canadian Literature - Indian Author
Woman - Literary Collection
ISBN: 0-8896-1135-1 (pbk)
Year: 1988
Publisher: Toronto: Women's Press
Content: An anthology of writings by North American Indian authors, as well as two-spirited authors.

Gay American History, Lesbians and Gay Men in the U.S.A.

Author: **Jonathan Katz**
Subject:: Gay American History
ISBN: 0-4520-1092-6
Year: 1992
Publisher: A Meridian
Content:: This ground-breaking work is the primary source book for an accurate, fascinating historical account of American lesbian and gay men. Now with a new preface an updated bibliography, the collection remain the most complete and authoritative reference work of the homosexual experience in the United State. Here are reprints of rare and hard-to-find documents that represent over four hundred years of oppression, conflict, and struggle in the new world. Among its wealth of provocative material are a nineteenth century photograph of male-male dancing in the old west, a 1974 interview with a male homosexual victim of shock treatment, 1629 journal account of "sodomitical activity" among the first American Colonists, and an account of lesbianism in the life of blues singer Bessie Smith.

Living in the Spirit: a Gay American Indian Anthology

Author: **Will Roscoe**
Subject:: Homosexuality - Literary Collection
Gay writing American
Lesbian writing American
Indian of North American - Sexual Behavior - Literary Collection
American Literature - 20th Century
Homosexuality - United States
Indian of North American - Sexual Behaviour
ISBN: 6-3120-1899-1
Year: 1988
Publisher: New York: St Martin's Press
Content:: An anthology of two-spirited writings.

The Zuni Man-Woman

Author: **Will Roscoe**
Subject:: Social Life and Customs - Sexual Behaviour - Sex Role
ISBN: 0-8263-1370-1
Year: 1991
Publisher: University of New Mexico Press
Content:: The Zuni Man-Woman focuses on the life of We'wha perhaps the most famous Berdache (an individual who combined the work and traits of both men and women) in American history. Through We'wha's exceptional life historian Will Roscoe creates a vivid picture of an alternative gender role whose history has been hidden and almost forgotten.

The Man Who Fell in Love with the Moon

Author: **Tom Spanbauer**
Subject:: Fiction
ISBN: 0-06-097497-4
Year: 1991 hardcover; 1992 softcover
Publisher: Atlantic Monthly Press: 1991; HarperCollins Publishers: 1992
Content:: *The Man Who Fell in Love with the Moon* is an American epic of the old West for our own times...The narrator is Shed, or Duivichi-un-Dua, a half-breed bisexual boy who makes his living at the Indian Head Hotel in the little turn-of-the-century town of Excellent, Idaho. The imperious Ida Richilieu is Shed's employer, the town's mayor, and the mistress and owner of this outrageously pink whorehouse. Together with the beautiful prostitute Alma Hatch, and the philosophical, green-eyed, half-crazy cowboy Dellwood Barker, this collection of misfits and outcasts make up the core of Shed's eccentric family. And although laced with the ugliness and cruelty of the frontier West...the love and acceptance that tie this family together provide the true heart of this novel...

The Spirit and the Flesh: Sexual Diversity in American Indian Culture

Author: **Walter L. Williams, Ph.D.**
Subject:: Gays - North America
Sex Role - North America
Indian of North America - Sexual Behaviour
ISBN: 0-8070-4611-6 (pbk)
Year: 1988
Publisher: Boston: Beacon Press
Content:: An award winning and ground breaking work on two-spirited people. It contains anthropological information regarding the berdache and Native American "amazons" in North American Aboriginal cultures.

Two Spirit People: American Indian Lesbian Women and Gay Men

Editor: **Lester B. Brown, Ph.D.**

Year: 1997

Content: *Two Spirit People: American Indian Lesbian Women and Gay Men* includes a compilation of articles with topics on identity, social services and AIDS by both Native and non-Native writers/researchers. Considering the minimal literature on Two-Spirit people, these articles are an important addition to the social services literature, and the literature in general, in the cultural, historical and contemporary presentations of Native American sexuality and alternative gender roles. The AIDS articles in this publication include, Ron Rowell's article which discusses the needs and barriers of AIDS services in urban and rural areas, and DePoy, et al's presentation of an AIDS prevention program in one rural community. Brown summarizes this collection of articles in stating that, "The material provided in these papers presents a different perspective and provides a beginning to understanding the place of lesbian and gay Indians within American Indian cultures and within American society." Brown goes on to state that, "Hopefully, this beginning will prompt additional research and writing to help us understand these unique people ..."

Two Spirit People: Native American Gender Identity, Sexuality, and Spirituality

Editors: **Sue-Ellen Jacobs, Wesley Thomas and Sabine Lang**

Year: 1997

Content: *Two Spirit People: Native American Gender Identity, Sexuality, and Spirituality* contains the work of over 20 contributing writers/researchers both Native and non-Native. The editors describe their work as being "centered on locating data that would confirm (or disprove) earlier writing and more recent writing by anthropologists, historians and Native American scholars on Native American constructions of genders and sexualities."

Changing Ones: Third and Fourth Genders in Native North America

Author: **Will Roscoe**

Year: 2000

Publisher: St. Martin's Griffin: New York

ISBN: 0-312-22479-6



RESOURCE ORGANIZATIONS

Aboriginal Organizations

British Columbia

British Columbia Aboriginal HIV/AIDS Task Force

c/o Medical Services Branch, Pacific Region
540-757 Hastings Street
Vancouver, British Columbia V6C 3E6
Phone: (604) 666-8475, Fax: (604) 666-6024

BC Aboriginal AIDS Awareness Program

BC Centre for Disease Control
Division of STD Control
655 West 12th Avenue
Vancouver, British Columbia V5Z 4R4
Phone: (604) 660-2088
E-mail: lucy.barney@bccdc.hnet.bc.ca

Healing Our Spirit

Suite 100, 2425 Quebec Street
Vancouver, British Columbia V5T 4L6
Phone: 1-800-336-9726, Fax: (604) 879-9926
www.healingourspirit.org
E-mail: info@healingourspirit.org

Alberta

Kimamow Atoskanow Foundation

R.R. #1, Site 1, Box 133
Onoway, Alberta T0E 1V0
Phone: (780) 423-3138
E-mail: general@nativecentres.org

Yukon

Blood Ties Four Directions Centre

7221 – 7th Avenue
Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 1R8
Phone: (867)633-2437
E-mail: lcollings@yknet.ca

National

The Canadian Inuit HIV/AIDS Network

131 Bank Street, 3rd Floor
Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5N7
Phone: (613) 238-3977, Fax: (613) 238-1787
cihan@pauktuutit.on.ca

Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network (CAAN)

602-251 Bank Street
Ottawa, Ontario K2P 1X3
Phone: 1-888-285-2226, Fax: (613) 567-4652
www.caan.ca
E-mail: caan@storm.ca

Manitoba

Manitoba Aboriginal AIDS Task Force

C/O Aboriginal Centre
181 Higgins Avenue
Winnipeg, Manitoba R3B 3G1
Phone: (204) 957-1114, Fax: (204) 942-5308
E-mail: maatf@escape.ca

Northern AIDS Initiative Inc.,

307-83 Churchill Drive
Thompson, Manitoba R8N 0L6
Phone: (204) 677-8552, Fax: (204) 778-5538

Red Prairie AIDS Project

836 Lorne Avenue
Brandon, Manitoba R7A 0T8
Phone: (204) 727-1407, Fax: (204) 725-9555
E-mail: redprairie@yahoo.com

Ontario

2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations

43 Elm Street, 2nd Floor
Toronto, Ontario M5G 1H1
Phone: (416) 944-9300, Fax: (416) 944-8381
www.2spirits.com
E-mail: doe@2spirits.com or terry@2spirits.com

Ontario Aboriginal HIV/AIDS Strategy

43 Elm Street, 2nd Floor
Toronto, Ontario M5G 1H1
Phone: (416) 944-9481, 1-800-743-8851, Fax: (416) 944-0541
E-mail: strategy@2spirits.com

Quebec

Urban Aboriginal AIDS Awareness Project

c/o Native Friendship Centre of Montreal
2001 Boulevard St-Laurent
Montreal, Quebec H2X 2T3
Phone: (514) 499-1854, Fax: (514) 499-9436

First Nations of Quebec and Labrador Health & Social Services Commission

250, Place Chef Michel-Laveau,
Wendake, Quebec G0A 4V0
Phone: (418) 842-1540, Fax: (418) 842-7045
www.cssspnql.com
E-mail: gchastroux@cssspnql.com

Saskatchewan

All Nations Hope AIDS Network

Scotia Bank Building
1504 B Albert Street
Regina, Saskatchewan S4P 2S4
Phone: (306) 924-8424
E-mail: makan@sk.cympatico.ca

Atlantic

Healing Our Nations

45 Alderney Drive, Suite 607
Dartmouth, Nova Scotia B2Y 2N6
Phone: 1-800-565-4255, Fax: (902) 492-0500
E-mail: afnatf@unsi.ns.ca

United States

National Native American AIDS Prevention Center

436 – 14th Street, Suite 1020
Oakland, California 94612
Phone: (510) 444-2051, Fax: (510) 444-1593
<http://www.nnaapc.org/>
E-mail: information@nnaapc.org



GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Berdache:

A *berdache* is defined as a morphological male who does not fill a society's standard man's role, who has a non-masculine character. This type of person is often stereotyped as effeminate, but a more accurate characterization is androgyny. Such a person has a clearly recognized and accepted social status, often based on a secure place in the tribal mythology. Berdaches have special ceremonial roles in many Native American religions, and important economic roles in their families. They will do at least some women's work, and mix together much of the behaviour, dress, and social roles of women and men. Berdaches gain social prestige by their spiritual, intellectual, or craftwork/artistic contributions, and by their reputation for hard work and generosity. They serve a mediating function between women and men, precisely because their character is seen as distinct from either sex. They are not seen as men, yet they are not seen as women either. They occupy an alternative gender role that is a mixture of diverse elements.

Heterosexism:

het'er'ə'sex'izm (hèt'e-ro-sèk'siz'em) noun

Discrimination or prejudice against gay or homosexual people by heterosexual people.²¹

Homophobia:

ho'mo'pho'bi'a (ho'me-fo'bê-e) noun

1. Aversion to gay or homosexual people or their lifestyle or culture.
2. Behavior or an act based on this aversion.

[homo(sexual) + -phobia.]

— ho'mo'phobe' noun

— ho'mo'phobic (-fo'bik) adjective²²

Transsexuals (TS):

Transsexuals are extremely unhappy in the gender to which they are assigned at birth and change their gender roles and bodies in order to live as members of the “other” sex. Modern medical technology (synthesized sex hormones, electrolysis, plastic surgery) makes this much easier than it was in the past. About 50% of transsexuals are male-to-female and 50% are female-to-male. Many have sex reassignment surgery, in which their genitals are modified. Transsexuals identify completely as members of their new gender.

²¹*The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Third Edition* copyright © 1992 by Houghton Mifflin Company. Electronic version licensed from INSO Corporation. All rights reserved.

²²Ibid.