

# LGBTQ+ and TWO-SPIRIT



Native Women's  
Association of Canada

L'Association des  
femmes autochtones  
du Canada

## BACKGROUND

- Prior to colonization, Indigenous communities held distinct understandings of gender roles and sexuality.
- These were disrupted by colonization. As a result, many Indigenous people who are Two-Spirited and/or members of LGBTQ+ face discrimination both from mainstream society and from within their own communities.
- **In Ontario**, First Nations, Inuit, and Métis trans people report high levels of poverty, homelessness, and forced migration.<sup>1</sup>
- **Health and Safety:** Indigenous gender-diverse peoples also experience racism and transphobia when attempting to access health services.<sup>2</sup>
- **Youth:** As a group that is disproportionately affected by sexual violence, homelessness, poverty, and mental wellness, homophobia and transphobia has been linked to the youth suicide epidemic.<sup>3</sup>

## TWO-SPIRIT

Coined by Myra Laramee in 1990, the term "Two-Spirit" is a translation of the Anishinaabemowin term niizh manidoowag, 'two spirits'. Other nations have terms or understandings within their respective languages that reflect distinct understandings of gender and sexuality.

## INDIGENEITY & GENDER-DIVERSITY

- As a group that exists at the intersections of queer and/or transphobia as well as colonial racism, members of the Indigenous LGBTQ+ and Two-Spirited communities are disproportionately impacted by violence.
- Marginalization dramatically decreases both the availability and accessibility of supports and services, meaning that these members of our community also face additional obstacles to accessing basic services such as healthcare, housing, and employment.
- This is particularly true for Indigenous youth.

### Works Cited

- 1 Ayden Scheim et al. "Barriers to well-being for Aboriginal gender-diverse people: Results from the Trans PULSE Project in Ontario, Canada" *Ethnicity and Inequalities in Health and Social Care* (Vol. 6 No. 4, 2013)
- 2 See Ristock, J. et. al. (2010), "Aboriginal Two-Spirit and LGBTQ Migration, Mobility, and Health Research Project: Winnipeg Final Report". Additional sources also available.
- 3 EGALE Canada, "What you should know about LGBTQ Youth Suicide in Canada," [available online](#); Kristy Kirkup, "Discrimination against two-spirit indigenous people linked to suicide crisis" (30 April 2017) *CTV News*, [available online](#).

# LGBTQ+ and TWO-SPIRIT



Native Women's  
Association of Canada

L'Association des  
femmes autochtones  
du Canada

## SUPPORTING LGBTQ+ and TWO-SPIRITED PEOPLES

- NWAC recognizes that by not responding to the gender diversity within its community, we risk replicating the oppression of that community and becoming complicit in this erasure, enabling the marginalization of multi-barriered Indigenous women.
- NWAC is working to build relationships with LGBTQ+ and Two-Spirited communities and allies, and ensure we are creating safe spaces for indigenous gender-diverse peoples to voice their needs and truths.
- To that end, NWAC is designing an engagement strategy to gain a better understanding of how to advocate for queer, trans, non-binary, and Two-Spirited Indigenous peoples.



**TO LEARN MORE PLEASE CONTACT:**

**NWAC**  
**613-772-3033**  
**[reception@nwac.ca](mailto:reception@nwac.ca)**