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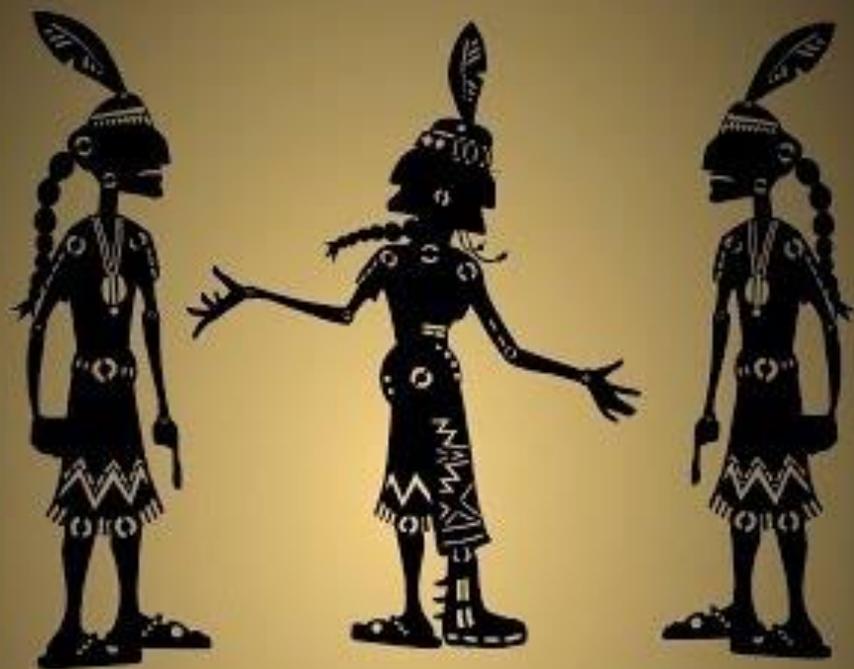
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# Two Spirit 101

— By Jackie Malstrom —

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# Historical Context

## Reclaiming our Identity:

- The term “two-spirit” was adopted by native people in the early 1990s as an umbrella term and an alternative to Western labels.
- LGBTQ2-Spirit native people throughout North America are reviving the two-spirit role and its traditions.
- National and regional Two Spirit gatherings, societies and powwows have continued to grow.
- Two-spirit organizations have begun to have a presence in local LGBTQ pride parades
- Since the beginning of the two-spirit movement scholarship into the traditional identity has increased



# Historical Context

## Before Colonization:

- Majority of tribes recognized third or fourth genders
- Were often name givers, medicine people, mediators, adoptive parents, storytellers and keepers of oral traditions, warriors and more.
- In some tribal cultures, Two Spirit people were seen as blessed for having both a male and female spirit.



We'Wha a famous Zuni two spirit

# Historical Context

## After Colonization:



### “Kill the Indian and Save the man”

- Boarding schools
- The Civilization Fund Act of 1819
- The Indian relocation Act of 1956

### Forced Conversion and Religious Indoctrination

- Placing children in boarding schools or mission schools
- Punishments for those practicing native traditions or speaking native languages
- Targeting medicine people
- Gender Binary

### Effects of Historical trauma

- Homophobia
- Substance abuse
- Suicide
- Internalized Oppression
- Domestic abuse

## Risks

- 20-40% of all homeless youth identify as LGBTQ
- 65% of 400 homeless LGBTQ youth reported having been in a child welfare placement at some point in the past.
- 63.5% of LGBTQ students reported feeling unsafe at school because of their sexual orientation, while 43.9% felt unsafe because of their gender expression.

# Risks

In the first ever study looking at the [rates of violence and the outcomes against lesbians, bisexual, and Two-Spirit American Indian and Alaska Native women](#) found that 85% have experienced sexual assault and 78% were survivors of physical assault. Of these survivors 70% reported being sexually assaulted by someone they knew, 63% by a stranger, and 53% by both. Thirty-eight percent of these relatives have experienced both sexual and physical assault by strangers and people they knew. Abuse often began in childhood with 76% reporting they were 18 or younger and assaulted by someone 5 years or older.

The authors cited other alarming statistics finding that one-third of Two-Spirit men in Canada have been “gay bashed.” In the U.S., 45% of gay, bisexual, and Two-Spirit men reported sexual or physical assault by someone other than a partner versus only 2% of straight and cis Native men.

In a study by the [National Gay & Lesbian Task Force in 2011](#), 46% of Two-Spirit people reported being rejected by family and 45% suffered family violence. Homelessness is a common issue for Native transgender people, as well as experiencing discrimination in shelters. Fifty-five percent reported being harassed by shelter staff, 29% were turned away, and 22% were sexually assaulted by residents or staff.

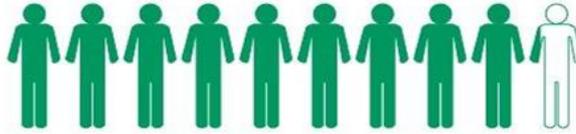
Deerinwater, Jen. “Reflections, Centering and Working for Wellness for Two-Spirit Women.” *Two Spirit Journal*

# Family acceptance

## Youth Believe They Can Be A Happy LGBT Adult

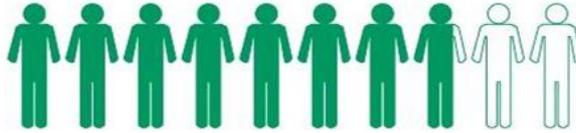
*Level of Family Acceptance*

**EXTREMELY accepting**



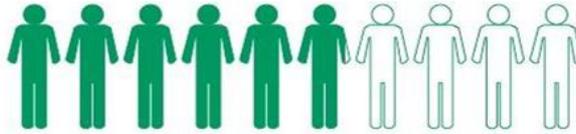
92%

**VERY accepting**



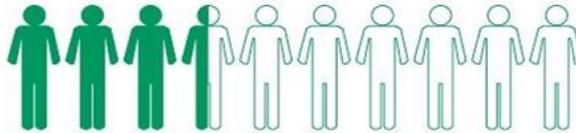
77%

**A LITTLE accepting**



59%

**NOT AT ALL accepting**



35%

## Family acceptance

Many parents feel conflicted when they learn that their child is LGBTQ. They are unsure how to react. They may feel disappointed, concerned and don't know how to help their LGBTQ child. They may respond cautiously since they don't want to encourage their child's LGBTQ identity, but they also don't want to push their child away.

## Coming out

Coming out is not a single action; it is a process of coming to terms with being LGBTQ and sharing one's identity with others you trust. This process happens many times over the course of a lifetime.

Many factors affect the coming-out process. There are many reasons why someone might be out some places but choose to stay closeted other places.

Sharing information about someone's LGBTQ identity without their permission is sometimes referred to as "outing" them, and this can be very harmful and should be avoided. Always check with the youth on what they are comfortable with.

It is not only a risk to their safety but a violation of trust.

# Setting the example

## “What’s your pronouns?”

- You can’t know what pronouns people use by looking at them
- It’s better to ask instead of assume
- Gender-neutral pronouns such as they/them/theirs (and others) are grammatically correct and valid
- Pronouns may shift or change as someone learns more about their own identity and themselves

# Setting the example

- Asking youth what their preferred pronouns are and consistently using them correctly .
- Be a resource
- It's possible some youth will be learning about this for the first time, make it a good learning opportunity for them.
- Correct homophobic behavior you see.
- Use inclusive language.
- Be conscious of your biases
- Support youth who come out to you
- Research and educate



# Setting the example

- Connect with local Two Spirit societies/Native communities in your area
- Find online communities
- Attend cultural events
- Encourage inclusion



"All Young People , regardless of sexual orientation or identity, deserve a safe and supportive environment in which to achieve their full potential."  
Harvey Milk

**TAKE A PEER**

Homophobia	Questioning	LGBTQ	Sexual Orientation	Bisexual
LGBT History Month	GLSEN	Ally	Gay	
Take the Quick Quiz True or False?	Take the Quick Quiz True or False?	Take the Quick Quiz True or False?	What is a GSA?	
Gender	The Trevor Project	No Name-Calling Week	GLAAD	It Gets Better Project
Gender Non-Conforming	Gender identity	Transgender (TG)	Lesbian	Cisgender

BE THE *best* version OF YOURSELF

Compassion - Kindness - Acceptance - Friendship - Bullying - Prevention

ALLY

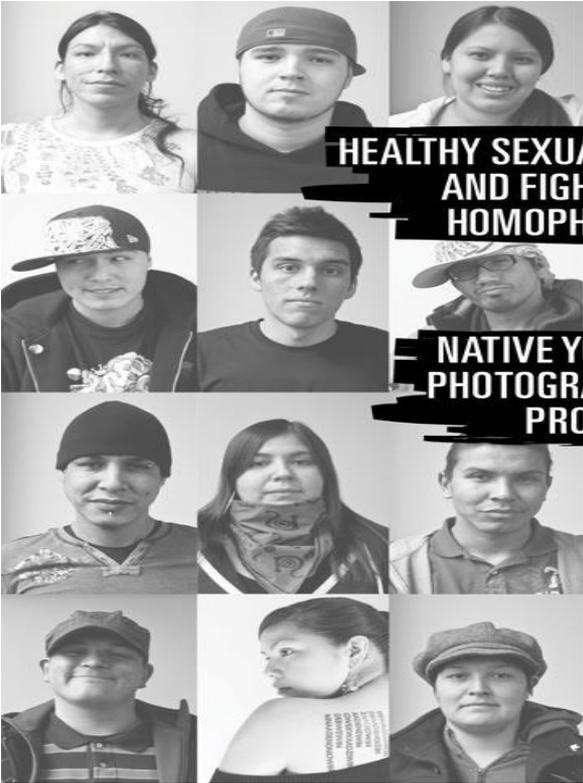
DONT ASSUME I'M STRAIGHT  
DONT ASSUME I'M GAY  
DONT ASSUME ANYTHING AT ALL JUST ACCEPT

The HERO project, Cherokee Nation



*Answer*

# Setting the example



**HEALTHY SEXUALITY  
AND FIGHTING  
HOMOPHOBIA**

**NATIVE YOUTH  
PHOTOGRAPHY  
PROJECT**

**The Native Youth  
Sexual Health  
Network**  
*Healthy Sexuality and  
Fighting Homophobia  
Native Youth  
Photography Project*  
[www.nativeyouth  
sexualhealth.com](http://www.nativeyouth<br/>sexualhealth.com)



# TWO SPIRIT LOVED & ACCEPTED

**#WENEEDYOUHERE**



**PREVENT SUICIDE.**

**TO GIVE HELP OR GET HELP:**

- CALL THE TRUSTED HELPLINE FOR LGBTQ YOUTH AT 1.844.488.7384
- CALL THE SUICIDE PREVENTION HELPLINE AT 1.800.273.8255
- TEXT "START" TO 741741 TO CHAT VIA TEXT MESSAGE
- VISIT [WWW.WERNATIVE.ORG](http://WWW.WERNATIVE.ORG) TO LEARN ABOUT SUICIDE SIGNS AND PREVENTION RESOURCES
- TALK TO TRUSTED ELDER, HEALERS, FRIENDS, FAMILY MEMBERS OR HEALTH PROFESSIONALS



## Remember...

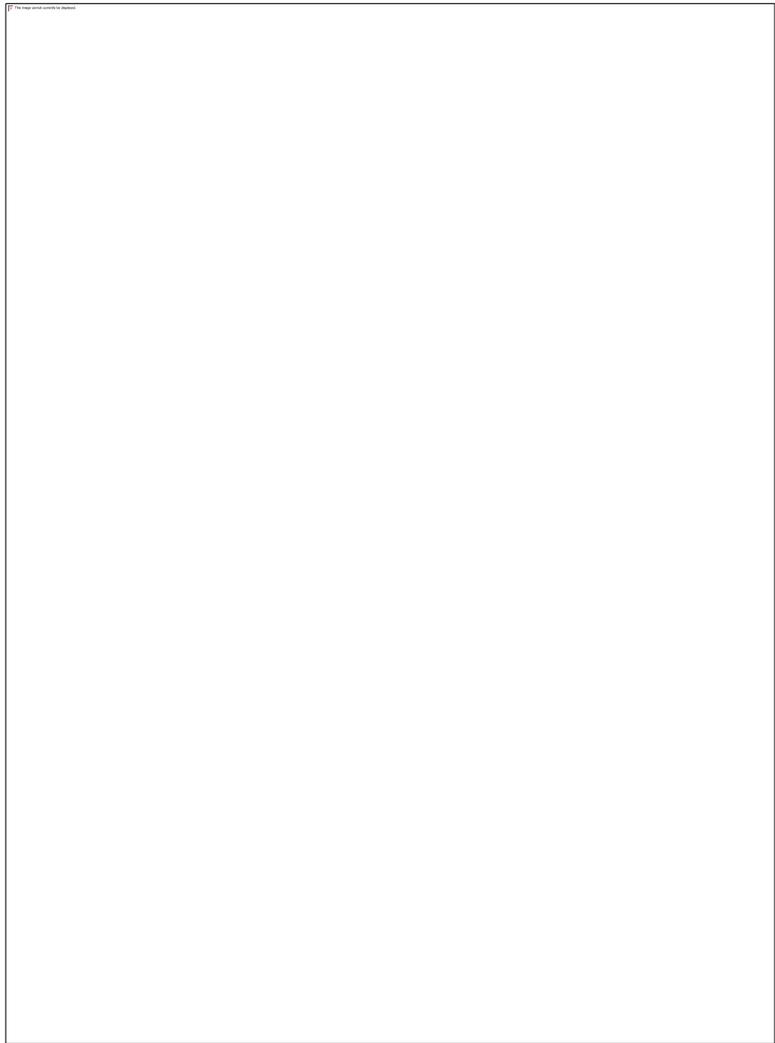
- That issues related to oppression are everyone's concern, not just the concern of those who are the targets of oppression.
- Making mistakes is part of the learning process  
Acknowledge and apologize for mistakes; learn from them.

**FEELING UNCOMFORTABLE  
IS A NECESSARY PART**



**OF UNLEARNING  
OPPRESSIVE BEHAVIOURS**

**Don't forget, Humor  
is good medicine!**



# Resources

- **Nativeyouthsexualhealth.com**
- **The Family Acceptance Project**
- **Northwest Area Indian Health Board- [www.npaihb.org/2slgbtq](http://www.npaihb.org/2slgbtq)**
- **We R Native - [wernative.org](http://wernative.org)**
- **Western States Center- Tribal Equity Toolkit 3.0, Indigenizing love: A Toolkit for Native Youth to Build Inclusion**
- **Native PFLAG - [nativepflag.org](http://nativepflag.org)**
- **Youtube- "What Is Two Spirit?"- Sexplanations**
- **Youtube- "Two Spirit"- Injunuity**
- **Youtube- "What does "Two-Spirit" mean? "- Them.**
- **Youtube- "BESE Explains: Two Spirit"- BESE**

Thank you!



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