



Key Historic Event: Two-Spirit & Indigenous Pride (20 to 30 minute session)

Cluster of Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- Identify and explain the history behind the term “Two-Spirit”
- Appreciate Indigenous representation across First Nations
- Reflect on the impact that colonization has had on 2SLGBTQIA+ people within Indigenous communities

Lesson Focus

As a result of the learning activities within this lesson, students will be able to:

- Explain the concept of “Two-Spirit” and other Indigenous terminology
- Identify important Two-Spirit public figures and Prides

Resources

Lesson Materials/Supplies

- Internet access for students to research history and events
- Native Women’s Association of Canada (<https://nwac.ca/>)
- CPHS Two-Spirit lesson plan (<https://cphs.ca/for-teachers/education-resources/>)

Audiovisual

- Historical video shorts
 - [Two Spirits, One Voice by Egale.](#)
 - [First Stories - Two Spirited by the National Film Board of Canada.](#)
- Films: First Stories – Two Spirited, and Fire Song.
- [Documentary about being gay in the Inuit community.](#)

Print/Publications

- ***CPHS Pride organization resources, if available, can be the primary resource for any research being completed by the students



Notes to Teacher

The use of the term Pride, even outside the context of Gay Pride or the 2SLGBTQIA+ communities, is sensitive due to its connection with religious or other beliefs. It will likely be necessary to acknowledge that there are both positive and negative connotations to the term pride. It might be necessary to provide lead-in knowledge to the students which introduces that discrimination and harm has taken place based on who people “love” or “are attracted to”.

Acronyms

- 2SLGBTQIA+: Two Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, Asexual. The "+" at the end signifies that the acronym is inclusive of all other sexual orientations and gender identities that are not explicitly listed.
- GSRD: Gender, Sexual, and Relationship Diversity
 - There are many versions of acronyms for this community with letters being added, removed, or reordered based on who is represented and how. There is no perfect or authorized version for use in education; rather, being aware of any local cultural sensitivities can assist in utilizing culturally competent language.
- 2-S and Indigiqueer terminology can be discussed as well using the Native Women’s Society of Canada’s booklet, with emphasis placed on the diversity of terminology and identities across many different Nations.

Colonization of Indigenous Nations and Queer Pride

When observing indigenous queer and 2-S artists and Pride History, colonization of Indigenous Nations resulted in the assimilation of Indigenous culture, intended to silence them. Indigenous Nations now often reclaim terminology to raise awareness about 2-S culture and reclaim those cultural traditions.

Suggestions for Instruction

- People can have different gender and spiritual identities as well as orientations. Gender identity includes how someone may feel about being a man, woman, or both/neither, while gender expression involves how someone presents their gender identity in public. People may also have a spiritual identity that considers their religion or sense of spirituality (how they feel about having a sense of spirit within



them). Orientation includes how someone may wish to have a partnership, such as the gender identity of who they are a partner with.

- “Two-Spirit” is a translation of the Anishinaabemowin word “niizh manidoowag”, which refers to a person who embodies both a masculine and feminine spirits
- Traits embodied by Two-Spirit people include gender variance, specialized work roles, same-sex attraction, and spiritual identity
- Not all people who are indigenous and queer identify as 2S: Terminology varies depending on the indigenous nation. The history of 2S and other indigenous queer terms are preserved by indigenous knowledge keepers who preserve their nation’s culture.
- Some Two-Spirit terms from Indigenous languages:
 - “niizh manidoowag” — word for “Two Spirit”, coined in 1990 at the third annual Native American/First Nations Gay and Lesbian Conference in Winnipeg
 - “qaigajuariit”—Inuktitut—word for lesbian
 - “angutauqatigiik”—Inuktitut—word for gay
 - “mnedokwé”—Potawatomi— “spirit woman”
 - “aayahkwew”—Cree—”neither man nor woman”
 - “onón:wat”—Mohawk—”I have the pattern of two spirits inside my body”
 - “nádleehee”—Navajo—”one who transforms”
 - “wikte”—Lakota—”to be as a woman”
 - “nekm”—Mi’kmaw— gender neutral pronoun
 - “ininiikaazo”—Ojibwe—women who choose to function as men; one who endeavors to be like a man
 - “ikwekaazo”—Ojibwe—men who choose to function as women; one who endeavors to be like a woman
- The Indigiqueer Identity: from the Native Women’s Association of Canada – terminology definitions, concepts including Knowledge Keepers, the term “Indigiqueer”, background on gender fluidity, connection between gendered language and colonization that occurred and repressed Indigenous queer culture, further discuss drag, further discuss the Two-Spirit Veterans, etc.
 - “Indigiqueer” is a term that can be used to help describe people who identify as both indigenous and queer: It is a fluid label that can help capture the spectrum of how the indigiqueer person thinks of their identity
 - “Indigiqueering” can also refer to the perspective where coordinators and researchers can work towards using the rich history of indigenous cultures



maintained by Knowledge Keepers, to help preserve Indigenous queer / Two-Spirit knowledge and help those with 2SLGBTQIA+ identities

- o [There are indigiqueer groups and circles that serve to advocate for members of this intersectional culture.](#)
- By the turn of the 19th century, less accounts of Two-Spirit people were being recorded. This was a result of colonization, Christian missions, and instruments of cultural assimilation (including the residential school system). All these factors worked to silence Two-Spirit traditions in some Indigenous communities.
 - o European colonists considered two-spirit people homosexuals, however, historically, Two-Spirit people didn't easily identify as either homosexual or heterosexual
 - o Use of two-spirit or other indigiqueer terminologies for identity can help reclaim indigenous culture from colonization, as these terms acknowledge gender fluidity and fluidity in sexual identity.
 - o Other Resources and Archives: [The first Two-Spirit Archive in Canada launched in Winnipeg in 2019](#). Newsletters and historical documents can be reviewed to learn more about the history of 2S pride.
 - o [Perspective as a Two-Spirit Metis leader \(Margaret Froh\)](#).
 - o Indigenous and Inuit Pride: First Pride in Iqaluit, Nunavut occurred in 2014
 - Controversy throughout 2014 as gay Inuk community members raised a Pride flag in Iqaluit to protest the Sochi Olympics
 - [Still a struggle to acknowledge and celebrate the gay Inuit identity.](#)
- Some potential field trip ideas and classroom activities:
 - o Ken Monkman art exhibits (frequently in Montreal, QC)
 - This art speaks closely to colonialism and how it disrupted and oppressed indigenous culture
 - o Virtual: Indigenous Toronto PowWow dancer Nenookaasi Ogichidaa (she/they)
 - Understanding that many members of the indigiqueer community share their knowledge, skills and perspectives in Canada

Suggestions for Assessment

Observation

Teacher Assessment: Checklist



Observe whether the students can identify a few of the Two-Spirit terms from Indigenous languages

- Yes
- No

Paper and Pencil Task

Teacher Assessment: Inventory

Have students draw out how Indigenous families were affected by colonization and prevented from having their identities. Students can demonstrate a “before and after”, indicating one as the oppression faced, while the other is modern day where Indigenous 2SLGBTQIA+ members celebrate their identity using art and their own methods of expression. This can be done through visual art or as a written piece, depending on the students’ preference.