

# 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 the LGBTQ+ community face discrimination from both mainstream society and from within their own communities.
- **Ontario:** First Nations, Métis and Inuit trans people report high levels of poverty, homelessness and forced migration.<sup>1</sup>
- **Health and Safety:** Indigenous gender diverse people 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 have been linked to the youth suicide epidemic.<sup>3</sup>

## TWO-SPIRIT

*Coined by Myra Laramée 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 and Gender Diversity

- As a group that exists at the intersections of homophobia, transphobia and 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 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](#).

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## Supporting LGBTQ+ and Two-Spirited People

- NWAC recognizes that by not responding to gender diversity and working towards inclusivity within communities, we risk replicating the oppression of that community and becoming complicit in this erasure. This enables the marginalization of Indigenous women who face multiple barriers.
- NWAC is working to build relationships with LGBTQ+ and Two-Spirited communities and allies to ensure we are creating safe spaces for Indigenous gender-diverse people to voice their needs and truths.
- NWAC is designing an engagement strategy to gain a better understanding of how to advocate for queer, trans, non-binary and Two-Spirited Indigenous people.



**TO LEARN MORE PLEASE CONTACT:**

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