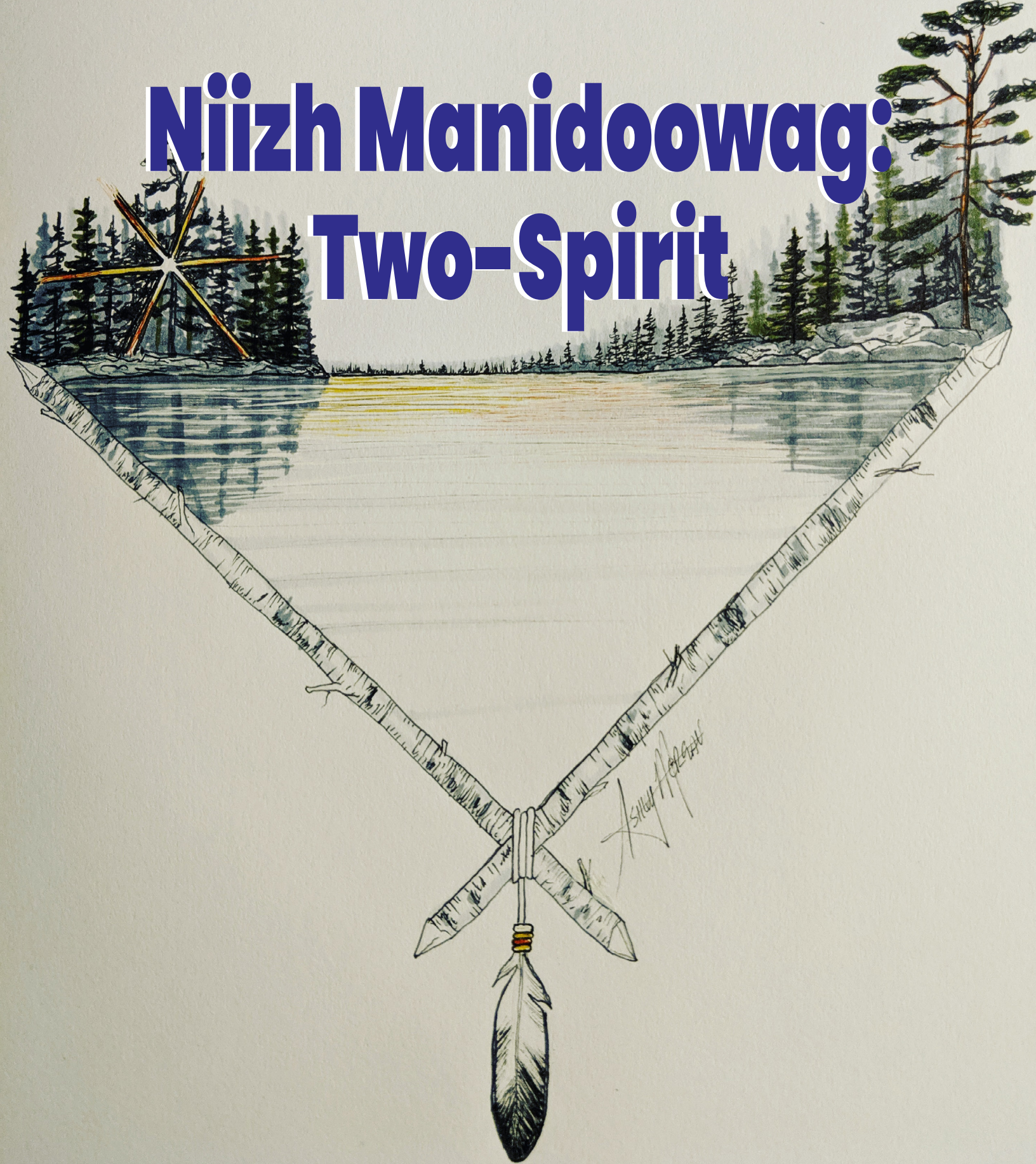


# Niizh Manidoowag: Two-Spirit



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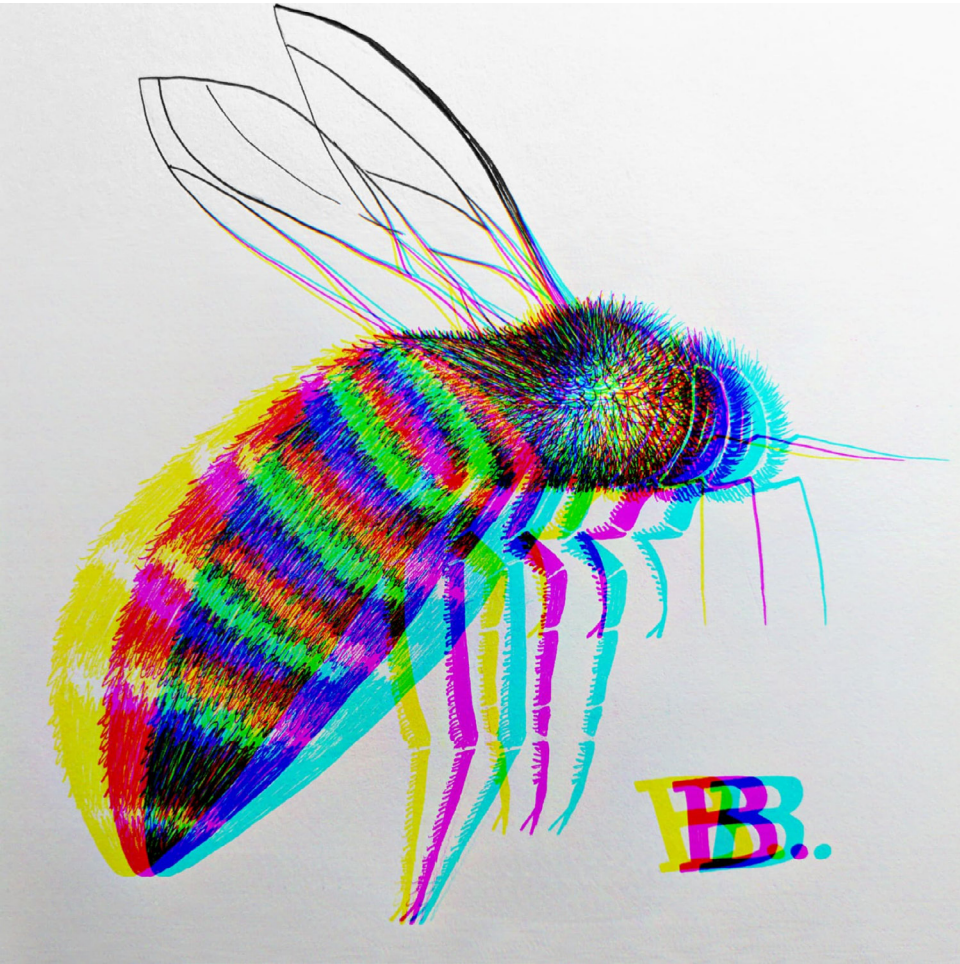
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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

**To support ETFO members in integrating Indigenous perspectives, worldviews, and content into their learning and instructional practices, ETFO works with its members, allies, and collaborating Indigenous Peoples and/or organizations to develop authentic and relevant resources and professional learning opportunities.**

## Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario Equity Statement

It is the goal of the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario to work with others to create schools, communities, and a society free from all forms of individual and systemic discrimination.

To further this goal, ETFO defines equity as fairness achieved through proactive measures, which result in equality, promotes diversity, and fosters respect and dignity for all.

## ETFO's Equity Initiatives

ETFO is a union committed to social justice, equity, and inclusion. The Federation's commitment to these principles is reflected in the initiatives it has established as organizational priorities, such as: ETFO's multi-year strategy on Anti-Black Racism; Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Questioning education; and addressing First Nations, Métis, and Inuit issues. ETFO establishes its understanding of these issues within an anti-oppressive framework.

The Federation ensures its work incorporates the voices and experiences of marginalized communities, addresses individual and systemic inequities, and supports ETFO members as they strive for equity and social justice in their professional and personal lives.

## Definition of an Anti-Oppressive Framework

An anti-oppressive framework is the method and process in which we understand how systems of oppression such as colonialism, racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, classism, and ableism can result in individual discriminatory actions and structural/systemic inequalities for certain groups in society. Anti-oppressive practices and goals seek to recognize and dismantle such discriminatory actions and power imbalances. Anti-oppressive practices and this framework should seek to guide the Federation's work with an aim to identify strategies and solutions to deconstruct power and privilege in order to mitigate and address the systemic inequalities that often operate simultaneously and unconsciously at the individual, group and institutional or union level.





# Preamble

This publication centres on Indigenous perspectives, specifically the voices of two-spirit people. The purpose is to engage in learning both from and with Indigenous Peoples about the historical and contemporary realities for two-spirit or Indigiqueer folx, that may also identify as LGBTQ+. This resource seeks to create space for students to see themselves reflected in their classrooms, affirm their experiences, and celebrate two-spirit voices. ETFO acknowledges the ongoing impacts of colonialism and is committed to providing culturally relevant and responsive resources for members.

Over the past few years, the term Indigiqueer has become a way in which some 2SLGBT+ Indigenous people self-identify. Indigiqueer gained popularity through use by queer Indigenous writers and artists such as [Joshua Whitehead](#), [Billy-Ray Belcourt](#), [TJ Cuthand](#), though some may identify as one identity or both. Joshua Whitehead describes his identity as a “braiding of two worlds” and that Indigiqueer “is his way of making a space, land, and ceremony for that identity” (CBC [Unreserved](#), December 15, 2017).

It is essential to listen to how a person chooses to, or chooses not to, voluntarily self-identify.

Assumptions about someone’s identity should not be made within our own understandings and/or biases towards Indigeneity, gender, and sexuality.

This resource will support conversations in the workplace and in the classroom as both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples continue to grow in relationship with one another. This resource provides a starting point and some shared language to begin building capacity, as well as providing [culturally relevant and responsive](#) learning materials that reflect the lived experiences of two-spirit (2S) people and communities for all students.

This resource is designed to highlight the history and the experiences of two-spirit people within the Indigenous context. Those who identify as 2S, may or may not also identify as LGBTQ+. These identities should be valued, affirmed, and acknowledged. Further, it is important that two-spirit and Indigiqueer folx are not seen as monoliths. Complexities of class, race, faith, ethnicity, disabilities, to name a few, makes folx rich and diverse in their intersectional identities and lived experiences.



# Artist's Statement

## Taanishi Boozhoo Hello!

Nimoo Nipow Dishinihkaashoon, lii loo dodem my spirit name is Night Hawk.

My name is Ashley Moreau and I am a proud 2S Michif maker of things originally from Eagle River, Ontario in Treaty 3 territory; however, I have lived in Gitchi Gami (Thunder Bay) on the north shore of Lake Superior since 2005 with my wife, dogs, ferrets, and for the last four years we have opened our home to foster children. My Michif blood comes from the Red River settlements and into the great lakes. I also have root ancestors from Qu'Appelle, Duck Lake, Fish Creek, and Penetanguishene. The ingredients that made my Métis self are mostly Plains Ojibwe, Swampy Cree, and Cherokee with French Michif. It's important to me to identify who I am and who claims me. I'm a Métis Nation of Ontario citizen, and am Métis on both sides of my family. On my mom's side, I'm related to the Parthenay, Carriere, Ducharme, and Dion families from the Red River settlements including Ste. Rose du Lac, York factory, St. Boniface, St. Norbert, St. Vital, and in and around the Manitoba border. On my dad's side, I'm also Michif and related to the root ancestors of Moreau, Dusome, Chevrette, and Clermont with Menominee, Ojibwe, and Cree Michif from Red River Settlements, as well as the Penetanguishene region. My Cherokee blood comes from Chief Oconostota from the wolf clan, from Old Chota, Tennessee.

Growing up queer in the middle of Northwestern Ontario has given me a different understanding of myself and the role I play in pollinating and advocating for my 2SLGBTQIA+ community. I hold a deep connection to my culture and have always been deeply rooted in nature; my art stems from teachings and life experiences along my path. It is an honour to be asked to contribute to this resource that will put much needed conversations into the classroom and maybe help a struggling youth, as I was there once too.

Marsii



# An Approach to Developing This Resource

ETFO members across Ontario continue to embed Indigenous perspectives into their classrooms. Their intention is to do so in a good way, to not further create harm and work in a way that allows students to see themselves reflected in the classroom. Historically, this has not been the experience for many in the public education systems. The current approach to teaching history, the curriculum, and contemporary issues, using culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy, is to include authentic voices, multiple perspectives, and to work with an anti-oppressive lens. This is what educators and education workers are looking for, resources like this one, to support the work they want to do and to support the students in their classrooms and communities.

This resource has been created with the [ETFO Anti-Oppressive Framework: Primer](#) as a guide, modelling for educators, education workers, and communities at large, how to work towards dismantling oppression and removing systemic barriers.

**It is crucial that the Indigenous Education Lead in a school board is one of the first people that ETFO members connect with when seeking support in planning for learning experiences rooted in Indigenous education.**

By 2016, an Indigenous Education Lead was in place in every school board across Ontario. Some school boards had similar roles already in place, but this ensured a lead in every board to support the Indigenous Education Strategy in [Ontario](#).

It is also important, with this resource, to connect with members of the school board's equity team for resources and community supports, if working with the 2SLGBTQ+ or Indigiqueer community.

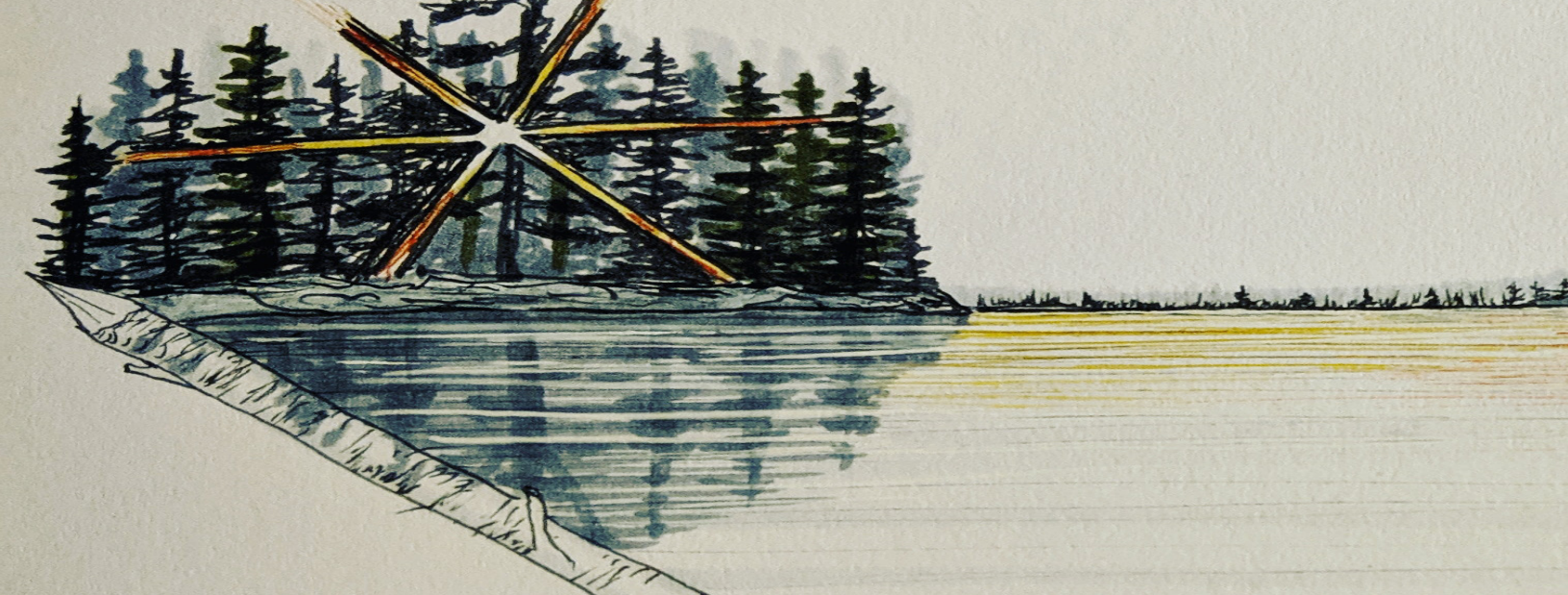
Relationships should be the foundation for any work with respect to sovereignty, liberation, or equity-seeking communities, ensuring that particular voices are centred and that a trauma-informed framework is applied throughout the duration of the work.

ETFO resources always begin in relationship and model the building and nurturing of those relationships on a learning journey. Writers, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous met to assess current understandings, resources, and schema that each writer brought to the team. As a group, goals were set, questions were asked, and intentions for the project were established. Writers were then paired with mentors from the two-spirit community, including two people well versed in sharing knowledge, connection to the community, and engaged in activism.

This particular resource is grounded in storytelling with the writers and mentors sharing their own stories, positionalities, and journeys. Storytelling creates connections in the mind, in the heart and in relationships. Understanding identity is a lifelong journey.

Along the journey, writers were committed to deepening their own learning. This included research, being in conversation and collaboration with mentors, receiving feedback, and making adjustments to the work and their own understandings as they expanded their knowledge base. Critical feedback from the mentors was paramount to being respectful of the voices to be centred.

At the core of Indigenous Education, is relationships. One cannot do the work alone; it takes community, and this resource is a reminder



of the work that goes into relationships and respectful partnerships between Indigenous Peoples and non-Indigenous Peoples.

Throughout the resource you will meet the writers, witness their learning in action and moments of vulnerability along their paths leading them to this point. As well, along the way, pertinent questions will be posed for one to consider as they move through the document and throughout their planning moving forward.

## Meet the Writers

### Ama Richardson

Ama Richardson identifies as a non-Indigenous, first-generation settler Canadian, and an educator of 14 years. Ama's previous work in the areas of social justice, anti-oppression, anti-racist education, and Indigenous focused education has always been in partnership and in collaboration with community. Currently, Ama works as a member of a centrally assigned Special Education Steering Committee on anti-racism, equity, and anti-oppression, co-representing the Toronto District School Board Deaf and Hard of Hearing Itinerant department.

*"My objective is to continue my own learning while actively taking responsibility for contributing to the dismantling of systemic inequities in our schools. I am thankful for this*

*opportunity to continue to deepen my learning from two-spirit perspectives and to contribute to ongoing professional learning in support of improved educational experiences for all students."*

### Robert Durocher

Robert Durocher (he/him) is French and Métis from Ontario, an experienced educator in resource development, instructional coach/leader with respect to Indigenous education, identifies as queer/gay and is currently working and living in Tkaronto. Robert's lived experience, healing journey through the Arts and intersectionality is shared throughout the document supporting the content as it unfolds.

*"As I continue on my journey of learning to unlearn and relearn, I continue to engage in care, creativity, and joy as a means to healing the ways in which heteronormative colonial violence and structures impact me. My wish for those reading my story is that when talking about 2SLGBTQ+ and Indigenous Peoples, is that you do so in a way that shares truths, but also shares our joy, beauty, creativity, and survivance. I have made myself vulnerable to share parts of me with you, and this vulnerability goes beyond my time writing this. It is a gift to you, please honour it in good ways."*





# Introduction

In April of 2021, the [MMIWG2SLGBTQIA+ National Action Plan: Final Report](#) was released. The report notes that the impact of colonization, specifically on the erasure of two-spirit people, directly coincides with the attempted erasure of language, culture, and traditions such as the potlatch, the Sundance, and other ceremonies. Eurocentric beliefs did not include gender identities outside of the binary. The impact of this narrowed perspective on spirituality is immeasurable. Since this time, two-spirit individuals have been further marginalized and continue to work to reclaim their identities, their hearts, and their spirits. There is an incredible amount of work to do in unlearning, and relearning about the diversity of Indigenous Peoples on Turtle Island, this resource is just one tool to support the two-spirit community in classrooms and community.

In the Spring of 2021, the [ETFO Anti-Oppressive Framework: A Primer](#) was released, in addition to the revised [ETFO Equity Statement](#). The primer establishes “common terminology, proactive strategies, and accessible tools to further develop understanding. ETFO is committed to removing individual and systemic barriers in order to allow members to feel safer and fully participate in their workspaces.” This resource models the process for taking an anti-oppressive approach and applying it to the work being done everyday. In this resource, two-spirit voices will be centred and space created to explore ways in which people can better unpack

their own biases, power, and privilege to create a more inclusive learning/working environment moving forward.

## Why do we list 2S first in the acronym?

Harlan Pruden, addresses this question in the article, *Visibility Matters: Listing of Two spirit and/or Indigenous First* (2017). Indigenous Peoples are the First Peoples on Turtle Island. Contextualized in this way, two-spirit, Indigenous people have a history that predates non-Indigenous identities. Two-Spirit individuals, Elders and knowledge keepers are working to reclaim, restore, and revitalize pre-contact, nation-specific teachings, roles and responsibilities.

***“The Two Spirit movement is about the reclaiming and restoring of traditional Indigenous ways, while challenging the western (foreign) frameworks, concepts, or identities of LGBTQIA\*.”***

(Pruden, 2017)

## Resisting a definition of the term Two-Spirit

[‘Two-Spirit’](#) (i.e., two spirit, 2-Spirit, 2S) is an English term originating from a vision experienced by [Dr. Myra Laramée](#) in 1990. The term, two-spirit was introduced, and adopted at an LGBTQ+ gathering in Winnipeg, Manitoba.





Some resources state that activist [Albert McLeod](#) coined the term in 1990, but it was Myra who the vision first came to, “having the ability to be neutral through the lens of having both feminine and masculine spirit.” The term two-spirit has a diverse range of expressions, depending on the individual, community, cultural, or linguistic context. The English term is a translation of the Anishinaabemowin term, *niizh manidoowag* (niizh-two, manidoo-spirit) which refers to a person who embodies both masculine and feminine spirits. However, different nations and cultures offer definitions and understandings, in a variety of languages, to capture meanings of the variety of pre-colonial, complex roles of two-spirit people. There is no one way to prescribe usage of the term. To try and encapsulate all that is included in the translation from an Indigenous language to English is limiting. For example, some Indigenous people may use the term to identify sexual orientation while others may use it to indicate an embodiment of two spirits (masculine and feminine), and still others may identify with all of the above, or another more culturally specific understanding. In this way, it is clear that any discussion of the multiple, complex meanings of the concept two-spirit must be Indigenous-centred, nation specific, while grounded in Indigenous worldviews, ways of knowing and being. Additionally, an understanding of any meaning of [two-spirit](#) is both deeply personal and individual, and grounded in cultural context. It needs to be explicitly stated, **the term two-spirit is specific to Indigenous Peoples only.**

As stated above, there is no one way to define the term two-spirit. Two-Spirit people and their roles predate colonial impositions, expectations, and assumptions of sex, gender, and sexual orientation. Where colonial worldviews often frame concepts as linear, compartmentalized, categorical, and hierarchical, Indigenous worldviews tend to be understood as non-linear, reciprocal, (w)holistic, relational, and independent of Eurocentric perspectives and framings. **As such, identifying as two-spirit is a decolonizing act of resistance in and of itself.**

Historically, and traditionally, two-spirit people assumed a variety of important roles within their communities. For example, two-spirit people may be mediators, medicine people, healers, social workers, or land protectors. The role of a two-spirit person varied amongst different nations and communities; however, across nations, these roles were consistently highly valued and considered as gifts to the people who embodied them.



According to Indigenous scholar Harlan Pruden (Nēhiyo/Cree), two-spirit is an organizing strategy which can be used to “...organize the Indigenous Peoples of Turtle Island who embody diverse sexualities, gender identities, roles and/or expressions...”<sup>1</sup> and who may or may not exclusively identify with western conceptualizations of gender and/or sexual orientation. They assert that two-spirit is a gender analysis, as opposed to a sexual orientation analysis, although two-spirit can refer to gender, sexual orientation, or both. It is also described as a concept and not an identity for some, signaling the necessity to understand its meaning on an individual level and within a specific cultural context.

As is the legacy of Eurocentricity, this colonial perception/framing of traditional two-spirit people permeated colonial policies and practices, including the residential school system, which served to assimilate or eradicate Indigenous ways of being. As is the case with many traditional, historical, Indigenous ways of knowing that have been intentionally interrupted and forcefully silenced, the advent of the term two-spirit offered an opportunity for sovereignty, to reclaim and reconnect with traditional understandings of these valuable, gifted roles within society as determined by the community and the person.

*“It is sacred and is more than just words – it is a spirit/heart language (if you know what I mean). When Two-Spirit is used it invokes our sacredness and reminds us that we have always been here, and we will be always be here. As a result, with Two-Spirit comes a great responsibility, to those who use it, as we walk and work in a sacred way with and for our people.”*

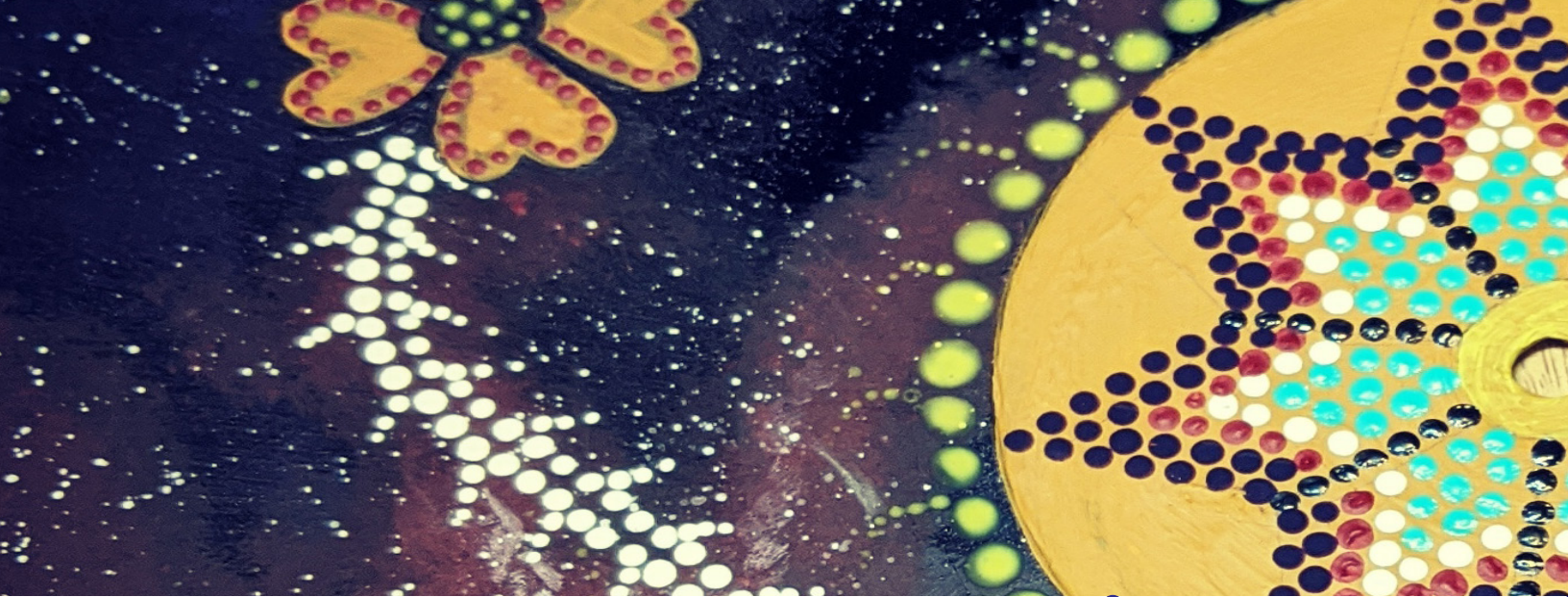
[Dr. Myra Laramée](#)

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<sup>1</sup> Pruden, H. (2019). Two-Spirit Conversations and Work: Subtle and at the Same Time Radically Different. In *Transgender: A Reference Handbook* (pp. 134–136). ABC-CLIO Greenwood.







# Resurgence and Survivance

Contemporary reclamation of two-spirit roles is embodied and celebrated not only through the academic work of two-spirit scholars, but also through the stories of artists who remind us that two-spirit people have always been, and continue to be, present and valued members of communities. Artists, like [Kent Monkman](#) (Cree), challenge negative, victimizing colonial portrayals of Indigenous Peoples and offer images and stories of pride, creativity, intelligence, and wit. Documentaries and first-person narrative films, such as [First Stories – Two Spirited](#) (NFB, 2007), [Face-to-Face with Jack Saddleback](#) (Chalkboard Media, 2015), [Two Spirits in Motion](#) (2 Spirits in Motion Society), and [COMING IN Stories](#), (Marjorie Beaucage) offer personal stories of diversity, roles, relationships, responsibilities, culture, discrimination, community, intersectionality, and [survivance](#). Autobiographical books, such as, *A Two-Spirit Journey: The Autobiography of a Lesbian Ojibwa-Cree Elder* ([Ma-Nee Chacaby](#), 2016) also shares diverse stories of lived-experience of two-spirit people, offering access and opportunities for continued learning, understanding, inclusion, and celebration.

Storytelling is a relational act of survivance, connecting the past, present, and future, within Indigenous ways of knowing and being. Visual artists, writers, filmmakers, and other storytellers offer opportunities for students to connect with and share their voices and lived experiences, both in and out of the classroom. As educators and education workers, it is critical that we learn

from, and with, two-spirit colleagues, community members, scholars, artists, and students to ensure support and opportunities are available for the success and well-being of all students.

## Storytelling as a Pedagogical Framework

*“...the ways that people understand two-spirit as rigidly defined, or as a container for multiple distinct understandings of gender, sexuality, and community roles, are impacted by the places they are, the history of the term, and the state of Indigenous knowledges within the settler-colonial present.”*

Marie Laing  
[Urban Indigenous Youth: Reframing The Spirit](#)

Writers of the resource were paired with a mentor from the two-spirit community to sit down and explore, for the purposes of breathing life into the topic, “What does it mean to be two-spirit?” Each of these mentors brings to the resource a unique perspective shaped by diverse experiences that highlights storytelling as a pedagogy; their stories help us **to get closer to understanding an identity outside of oneself through connecting to the stories of those who live it.** There is no “one way” to be two-spirit. The differences in the mentors’ personal narratives reinforce Marie Laing’s idea of two-spirit as being that “container





for multiple distinct understandings” of what it means to be *gender-diverse*. Their stories are gifts to those of us who come to this learning earnestly wanting to understand about what it is to be two-spirit.

Storytelling as pedagogy is not new for Indigenous Peoples. Traditional stories have been passed down through generations since time immemorial; it is how history, traditions, and language have been preserved and transmitted throughout time on Turtle Island. From a spiritual standpoint, it is believed that stories tend to manifest themselves at the very moment a person is called on to receive them. It is an Indigenous understanding that the Creator makes sure of this. It may explain how a reader has come upon this resource today.

Often, it is within the stories of others that a reader finds themselves, it is why readers are drawn to particular narratives in newspapers or books. Protagonists can be the role models readers may not have in their own lives and model the ways in which they may approach their own crossroads. Such is the power of story.

Indigenous youth, who may be reflecting on their own gender identities or simply looking for community, may find themselves in a classroom of an educator or education worker reading and working through this resource at a time when they most need it; a classroom sharing stories they can relate to, with questions, and challenges. The mentors’ stories illustrate the traditional view of two-spirit people as a gift. This is in stark contrast

to the messages that mainstream society tends to convey with regards to those who do not conform to gender binary.

## Meet the Writer

### Robyn Michaud-Turgeon

Robyn Michaud-Turgeon, spirit name, North Star, is an anishinaabe-kwe from Sagamok Anishnawbek, bear clan.

*“This project has been a very personal one for me as I come to understand my own personal identity as a two-spirit person, and what this means for me. In my research exploring the various narratives from the community I was very relieved and emboldened to find that the term ‘two-spirit’ is a safe container for many different ways one may express their personal gender identity.”*

*May we do these voices justice in our work on this project.”*

## Meet the Mentor

### Laureen “Blu” Waters

Laureen “Blu” Waters. *“Tansi. Mahihkan indodem. Ahtahkakoop Eskasoni indoonjiba.*

*Hello my name is Earth Song. I'm from the wolf clan, my family is from Ahtahkakoop, Saskatchewan and Eskasoni First Nation and I'm Ayahkwêw.”*

*I am telling you where my roots lie, telling you what my clan system is, who I am within the clan systems, and then giving you my identity of who I am as a two-spirit person, “Ayahkwêw” means “neither man nor woman.” I am a gender-diverse person.”*

Laureen “Blu” Waters is an Elder who is both Cree and Mi’kmaw. Blu is widely known and respected for their knowledge of two-spirit teachings, and they are heavily involved in advisory work on many committees and boards. Currently, Blu is the Elder on Campus at Seneca College, as well as a traditional knowledge advisor at Sir Sanford Fleming College. Blu’s story is one of resilience in the face of adversity, and it illustrates the importance of traditional knowledge of two-spirit identities for gender-diverse Indigenous youth.

Raised by their maternal grandmother, Blu and their brother benefited from the traditional Mi’kmaq teachings shared with them by this powerful matriarch. Of particular importance to both Blu and their brother were the teachings about, and acceptance of those in the community who carried both the male and female spirit within them, a concept that is now often referred to as two-spirit. Both children were encouraged and supported by their grandmother to express their gender identity however they needed to.

Being raised with both a foundation of acceptance and a cultural understanding of gender identity and gender expression was a significant protective factor for Blu as they navigated significant traumas including the murder of their grandmother and involvement with the child welfare system which has, and continues to have, a harmful impact on the lives of Ontario’s Indigenous children, families, and communities.

Blu went on to become an Elder and an advisor on two-spirit identities and traditional teachings. They have helped many Indigenous people of all ages navigate their journey with identities while also teaching about the historical significance of two-spirit people and the important roles they

have played in Indigenous communities since time immemorial. Blu explains how, in many pre-contact communities, when groups of travelers would arrive upon an Indigenous settlement the leaders would ask specifically to talk to the two-spirit person in the community. As two-spirit people carry the spirits of both male and female beings within them, they were traditionally seen as having a broader perspective on issues and thus able to see things through both masculine and feminine lenses. In traditional Indigenous communities, gender roles were very distinct, so if there were individuals who were skilled at both roles, they would be seen as a gift to their community.

Blu feels that more people need to be aware of the value that was traditionally placed on two-spirit people as it runs counter to mainstream society’s presentation of gender diversity as a liability. It only makes sense that someone who possesses the best of both gendered identities would be seen as having unique abilities that should be celebrated and shared with their community. Blu is a perfect example of this.

*“If we can teach youth to look in the mirror and say, “I am a beautiful gift and I have skills and abilities to bring to other people, it makes them feel included. There is a place for them, as a beautiful gift.”*

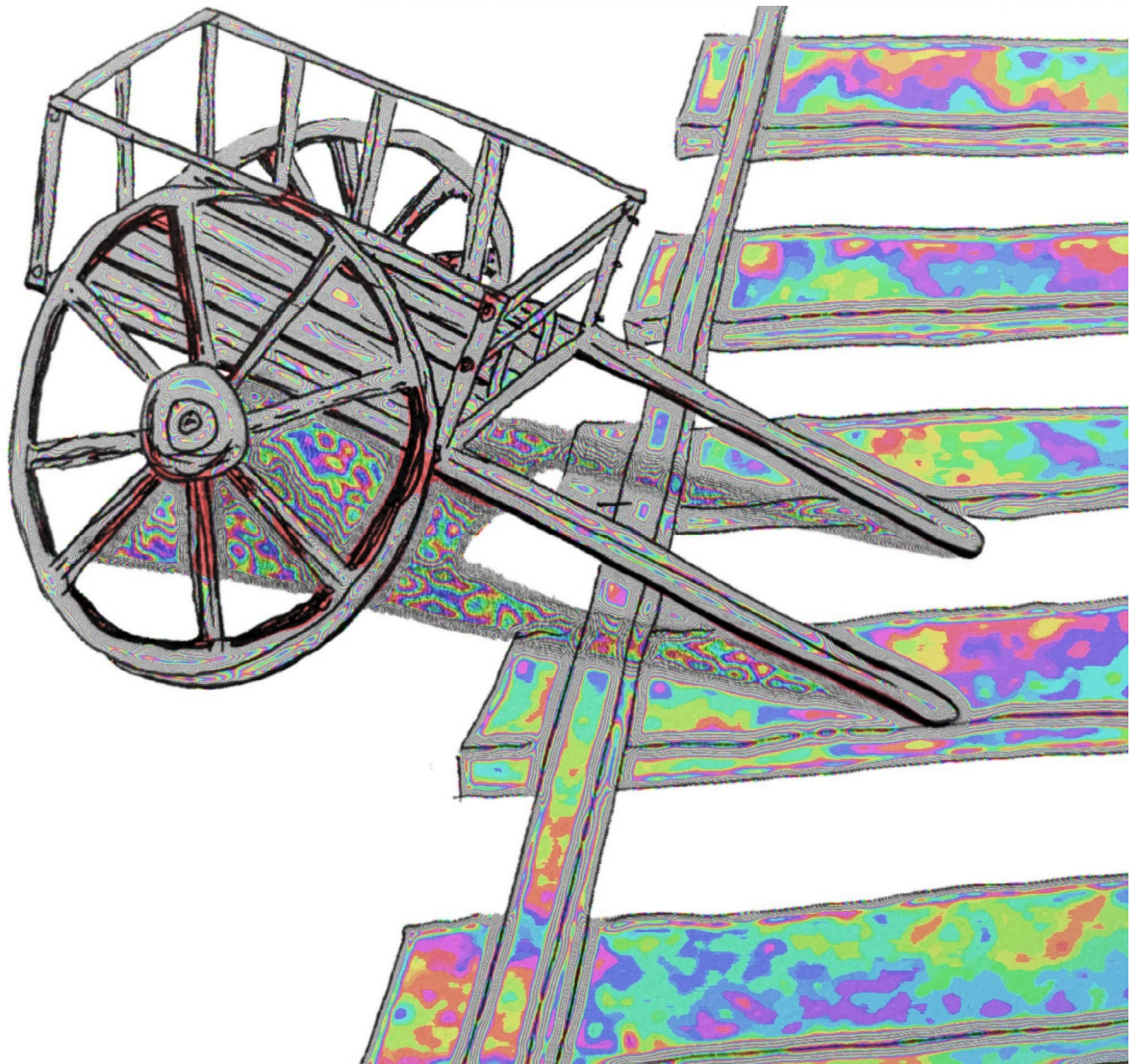


*"What is one thing that you would like educators and education workers to learn or do differently moving forward?"*

*Be open to hearing a different perspective.* Be open to hearing that perspective and then respect it. We do not have to be in agreement with someone else's viewpoint, but we need to honour the variances that are out there. We are all human beings. We all have the right to be included and accepted, not excluded and isolated. The more that we communicate with each other, the more that we are open to *relatability*.

*"What is one thing that you would like students to learn or do differently moving forward?"*

*Be humble.* I think of the Grandfather Teaching of *humility*, which teaches us that no one person is greater than the other. Why would we want to harm someone else instead of supporting someone? Being gender diverse is not a choice. It is who you are. We are not to harm others; we are here to help one another.





# Education Toolkit

This section of the resource aims to provide ETFO members with an entry point for including two-spirit perspectives in their classrooms, to unpack their own biases while doing so, and to operationalize the *ETFO Anti-Oppressive Framework - The Primer*, in the context of understanding two-spirit identities and lived experiences. This resource will highlight some of the seven components of an anti-oppressive framework centring two-spirit people.

## Meet the Writer

**Natalie Diotte** (she/her) is an experienced educator in curriculum development with the Durham District School Board. Her work is culturally responsive with relevant pedagogy in mind while connecting authentically to the Ontario curriculum. She continues to learn more about her own Indigenous heritage as she engages in the learning and unlearning of the complex history in Canada from a variety of perspectives.

*"I am a cisgender, heterosexual, white-presenting woman with Indigenous ancestry, but who has absolutely profited by my societal positioning. I too, have a long way to go in terms of my own unlearning. This toolkit is intended as a resource to support ETFO members looking to expand the diversity of conversations within their communities to include two-spirit perspectives and voices."*

*With the development of this resource, I want to hold space for two-spirit peoples as an ally, to amplify their voices, and to support learners seeking an entry point to conversations about two-spirit people."*

## Meet the Advisor

**Ash Moreau** is a two-spirit, Métis person from Treaty 3, currently living in Thunder Bay, ON. Ash has been an integral partner for the development of this resource, and is passionate about social equity for Indigenous Peoples, two-spirit peoples, and Indigiqueer people, encompassing intersectionality as it pertains to those unique voices.

Ash discussed the collective trauma created by colonialism, the diaspora that it has created and continues to create for both Métis and two-spirit peoples, and the challenges that those communities face. In their youth, Ash struggled with their identity, and faced a variety of obstacles because of being marginalized from their community, but also within the community at large. Ash carries strength and resilience. They have overcome obstacles and are not only surviving, but thriving today.

Ash is talented in a variety of ways, and many of those talents directly relate to their experience as a Métis, two-spirit person. Ash is inherently



driven by generational and traditional teachings of making and creating things from the land. They are land-based in the sense that they find a profound connection to nature vital to their journey. Resourcefulness, art, and craftiness are integral components of Ash's identity, and they are deeply rooted in their Indigenous ancestry, further amplified by their journey through life.

Ash has been a two-spirit activist since 2006 and has contributed to a variety of important projects relating to their Indigeneity, and to creating equity for two-spirit and Métis peoples. Ash has contributed to Fierté Canada Pride (FCP) the National Association of Canadian Pride organizations. Ash also chairs Thunder Pride, an organization designed to support members of the 2SLGBTQ+ community in Thunder Bay. Ash continues to use their gifts and their voice to empower others. On a daily basis, Ash is doing the work to encourage progress and healing, unlearning and re-learning within those communities. It is an absolute privilege to listen to Ash, to unlearn and relearn from them, and to be able to share some of those teachings and wisdom with you in this resource.

## Highlights from the Interview

Ash explored and shared with the writer, what it means to be two-spirit, and how that relates to classroom teaching, inclusivity, and general progress for Indigenous and 2SLGBTQ+ communities. Ash emphasized that the term two-spirit is not easy because defining and categorizing are inherently colonial, and are not a reflection of how Indigenous Peoples would choose to embrace the concept of being two-spirit. In fact, much of the rejection that two-spirit people face from Indigenous communities stems from colonization and the harsh indoctrination of Christian teachings. It is vital to acknowledge, however, that each person's journey is unique and that their understanding of being two-spirit is valid and could be different from others' experience.

Ash described their own two-spirit identity as being distinct from other categorizations under the LGBTQ+ umbrella because being two-spirit is tied to spirituality, and is distinct from a person's sexuality.

The term "Indigiqueer" for example, stands alone from two-spirit nature as it relates to the intersectionality of being Indigenous and Queer. Two-Spirit People encompass an energy that allows them to tap into both traditionally feminine and masculine energies. Ash described their own feelings as "being split" in the sense that they are comfortable in traditionally female gender roles such as mothering and nurturing, but are also comfortable assuming traditionally male roles.

A two-spirit person is able to honour both spirits. Ash gave the example of wearing a skirt when drumming. Generally, women wear skirts during traditional ceremonies in Indigenous communities. As a two-spirit person, Ash wears pants and is accepted because they are honouring masculine energy by doing so. Conversely, a two-spirit person could choose to wear a skirt in a traditional ceremony, and thus would be honouring feminine spirit while doing so. Expression of self is closely tied to the nature of being two-spirit and is not definitive. A two-spirit person is able to harmonize both masculine and feminine as they feel those spirits flow through them.

The concept of two-spirit, in Indigenous circles, is not about the label, but about the journey. **The term is not for non-Indigenous people to claim, as it is tied to spirituality.** Appropriation of the term has been more common in recent years, as the term itself has been used in dialogue more frequently. It is important to present two-spirit identity as a powerful component of Indigenous culture, and to be clear that although it is currently categorized as part of the 2SLGBTQ+ umbrella, that it is unique in this regard.



# Laying the Groundwork

*“Every supportive adult can be a vital resource when supporting Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, and Intersex (2SLGBTQI) youth. Taking on the active role of an affirming adult can be vitally important compared to other lukewarm tolerances 2SLGBTQI youth may encounter. Healthy and affirming conditions must be fostered actively, and in doing so, all youth, regardless of identity, will benefit.”*

## Key principles:

- Foster optimal conditions for self-development
- Reinforce rights and denormalize violence and harm
- Be explicit about your support
- Recognize your influence, both direct and indirect
- Receive feedback with humility and accountability
- Commit to continuous learning

[\*Adults Supporting 2SLGBTQI Youth\*](#)

## Building Inclusive Communities

Students who identify as part of the 2SLGBTQ+ community are in need of safer spaces where they are respected. **Building Inclusive Communities** requires conscious efforts to create a space that both invites and welcomes individuals bringing their whole selves into the classroom and feeling confident to express their full identity. This is not limited to two-spirit people in the classroom. Students are looking for inclusive language and supports, people who are making efforts to acknowledge different ways of problem-solving, making mistakes, taking risks, consequences for actions and lack thereof. Building inclusive spaces is more than a few books on a shelf and a rotating bulletin board of posters.



## Considerations from the [ETFO Anti-Oppressive Framework: Primer](#) are:

1. *In what ways are inclusivity of identities and voices represented?*
2. *How are we building an inclusive community, where diverse lived experiences and multiple ways of knowing are taken up, respected?*

Humans are constantly assessing an environment for cultural safety, especially if one is not a part of the dominant culture in the classroom. Specific questions to assess your own workspace include: are diverse voices and faces only apparent during select months of the year through themes, events, or special celebrations (Pride, Black History Month, Asian Heritage Month, Orange Shirt Day, National Indigenous Peoples Day, etc.)? Are voices, faces, worldviews, and perspectives included in the workspace throughout the day, and over the year? For example, in learning activities, or discussing people in the community (i.e., doctors, nurses, trades people, librarians, community leaders) are various names included, faces, images posted? In a virtual environment, are a diverse set of resources available? Can a student see themselves on the walls of the classroom or school? In the bookshelves? On posters of community events, and in morning announcements? Are current day examples of two-spirit people included? While discussing [current events](#) in the community, popular [music](#), [shows](#), social media and influencers etc., are diverse identities being discussed intentionally with respect and pride, and not happenstance or hidden?

Representation is important to those being reflected in the classroom, but it is equally important to include diverse representation from communities that are not predominant in your particular school/classroom community, because they are our neighbours in the grocery stores, potential teammates on your team, or potential friends at the park.

Are Indigenous Peoples only spoken about in a historical context, or from a conflict or trauma-based perspective? Understanding and including the beauty of a culture, including language, local leaders, knowledge, resources, and community events is foundational, and sets the tone for

how comfortable a student will feel sharing their identity with you over time. This does not require one to be an expert in any culture or language other than their own; but students and families do notice one's engagement and efforts in learning about others, being open to new experiences and the [cultural humility](#) to make mistakes. If a family, co-worker, or student recognizes this space as "open," they will be more likely to engage and offer supports as well to enrich the program, perhaps through volunteering in the classroom, parent councils, or school events.

*"I have a very distinct memory of attending a board summit to support 2SLGBTQ+ students. In one of the breakout sessions, I listened to the journey of a trans woman who had successfully started her own dance studio, was in a wonderful relationship, and was by all accounts thriving. As she described her journey, she did so with confidence, authenticity, and compassion. During the Q&A session instead of focusing on the successes shared, students were focused on aspects of staying safe physically, and places that they were not feeling safe currently.*

*Two things resonated with me from that experience. Firstly, representation is so important. I know that most of those questions only happened because the students in that room were able to see themselves reflected in the person in front of them. Secondly, the more energy that we can dedicate to leveraging opportunities for 2SLGBTQ+ youth to see themselves as part of the school community, the better chance we stand at providing a safer space for those students to be themselves, and to feel empowered, safe, and valued in our schools."*

Natalie D.

# Unpacking Implicit Bias

As education teams continue to work towards creating safer and more inclusive spaces, we need to continue to examine our own implicit biases. Everyone has [implicit biases](#), and only by developing an awareness of oneself are we able to step into unlearning, unpacking, and appreciating the necessity of having an anti-oppressive lens towards the work that happens in a classroom or community.

A starting point when unpacking your own implicit bias is to seek opportunities with people who are already engaged in the work of anti-racism and anti-oppression. [Book clubs](#) and podcasts within professional networks, are made up of communities of educators, education workers, and non-Indigenous people working on understanding their lens and positionality in the world. Participating in book discussions aimed specifically at anti-racism, anti-oppression, Indigenous Education and Truth and Reconciliation are growing in popularity and provide the opportunity for deep discussions, learning, and ongoing unlearning.

It is important in **Addressing and Challenging Implicit Biases**, to recognize one's own unconscious use of language, longstanding beliefs, and assumptions, and then to take one step further, and interrupt these behaviours. This work falls solely on the person looking to create change. It requires oneself to immerse themselves in opportunities for conversation, education, and changed behaviours moving forward.

## Questions for consideration are:

1. How are we intentional in providing opportunities for students and groups to identify and interrogate their own implicit biases?
2. Are we addressing issues that arise in the classroom equitably?

In looking at oneself, it is important to question what biases one holds towards two-spirit people. Do I have pre-conceived ideas based on stereotypes, misinformation, or religious beliefs? Am I approaching my reflections with honesty and humility so that I can unlearn and do better?

Christianity and colonization impacted two-spirit people greatly. Indigenous communities are not immune to the discrimination of two-spirit people, this discrimination happens both inside and outside of Indigenous communities. The [residential school](#) system and Christianization of Indigenous communities indoctrinated values that forced children into binary boxes, stripping them of their teachings, gifts, and the legacy of ancestors' [contributions](#) to communities and history. Historically, two-spirit people were [warriors](#), healers, artists, active members in the community and respected, today, they continue to reclaim these positions. Colonization and first contact with the rigid understandings of gender, sexuality, and spirituality, instigated the vilification of the two-spirit identity and ways of being. Above all, this is compounded by their Indigeneity. A person's journey to reclaim their identities, complicated by the trauma of residential school, intergenerational legacies, racism, and discrimination, is not an easy one.

Highlighting two-spirit people in communities today, is essential for others to see beyond the trappings of binary thinking, stereotypes, and misunderstandings. [Barbara Bruce](#), an entrepreneur, academic and Michif speaker, shares their experience in business while incorporating their traditional teachings and ways of life. [Dr. James Makokis](#), season seven winner on the popular TV show, *Amazing Race*, is a family physician, previous national spokesperson and presenter for a variety of events and conferences. Dr. Makokis' advocacy work focuses on Indigenous youth and Indigenous health and transgender healthcare. Just two of many examples of two-spirit leaders on Turtle Island sharing their gifts with others. Including gender diverse individuals shows potential pathways and hope for students looking forward to careers and opportunities.



As an ally, it is important to self-assess for implicit bias, acknowledge, and address it. Cultural humility is necessary and flexibility in thinking for a growth mindset. Catching oneself in the moment, or when an issue is being brought to light by another colleague or student can be difficult. But, through the practice of cultural humility, recognizing the unconscious bias in practices and acknowledging it, models for others that change is possible.

*I grew up learning to hide who I was as it was 'safer.' Before heading off to Kindergarten in the local English-speaking town, my grandmother told me to say that I was a French farmer so people wouldn't bother me about being Métis - so I followed the advice - not understanding at the time the violence Indigenous Peoples experience. As I moved into my teenage years and was on the receiving end of homophobic violence I learned to hide, and unfortunately be ashamed of myself.*

Robert D.

### Suggestions for [Cultural Awareness and Cultural Sensitivity](#):

- connect with Indigenous Education Lead/Consultants in your organization or local Friendship Centre for learning opportunities being offered;
- create relationships and build and nurture these relationships over time to further create authentic partnerships for moving forward in your practice;
- engage in [cultural safety](#) training;
- participate in online [cultural safety webinars](#), specific to two-spirit, Indigiqueer peoples, or Online Indigenous Education [courses](#); and
- attend local speakers' events, two-spirit pow wows, and connect with community organizations supporting the two-spirit community locally.



## The Centring of Voices

***"Intentionally creating space for oppressed and marginalized people (e.g., racialized people, women, two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer+ folks, Indigenous Peoples, people with disabilities) to share, contribute, lead and to be heard. This also means that dominant groups (e.g., men, white people, able-bodied, heterosexual people, etc.) might need to step back and listen more actively."***

[ETFO Anti-Oppressive Framework](#)

A common misunderstanding with respect to centring voices, is simply to include more voices of a particular group in the space; or, by having a speaker, one can consider the box to be "checked." These ideas are parts to the whole; individually they can appear tokenistic. True collaboration with others, and scaffolding opportunities over time can feel empowering, meaningful, and can have significant impact in the work of disrupting discrimination and oppression.

Centring voices is about creating opportunities to give space for those who have historically experienced marginalization, to be the central force.

[Justice Murray Sinclair](#), said a child should be able to answer these questions: ***"Where do I come from? Where am I going? Why am I here? Who am I?"***



Centring voices is creating space for someone to be at the forefront, to lead in an authentic way, to voice their specific needs based on these core questions, and to chart their own path. For example, creating space for a student group to be led by their own initiatives, such as an Indigenous leadership group that wants to focus on a variety of Indigenous centred activities (e.g., two-spirit teachings, various nation teachings, types of crafts, cooking or training in leadership, public speaking, or student politics) would meet the needs of this particular group.

Creating space for students to drive the initiatives with a supportive ally is both meaningful and transformative. Sometimes when a group is developed, volunteers create a schedule of meetings, events, and opportunities for the students, for example a Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) group, but neglect to create space for the students to drive and self-direct the work that they would like to see happening, can lead to disengagement. No community is a monolith.

Two-Spirit students may have different needs than others in a GSA. They also may experience discrimination due to misrepresentation, omission, stigmas, and bias within a GSA space. For two-spirit students, questions to centre their own voices may include; what does it mean to be two-spirit? What is my role and purpose as a two-spirit (nation-specific) person? It is important to see each person as an individual and recognize their independent voices. How do I share, teach, learn with, and from those around me?

*This is one of the reasons that storytelling is so powerful for me. I love to learn from other people. There is a comfort in knowing that there is a whole community of support for those who question their gender-based self-perceptions. From exploring others' personal vignettes, I was no longer worried that I may be using the term "two-spirit" in the wrong way, rather that, as an Indigenous person whose gender identity does not always conform to a binary, the term is a safe umbrella under which I can find refuge, acceptance, and a sense of community among a very diverse group of individuals.*

Robyn M.T.



# Trauma-Informed Practice

Being [trauma-informed](#) is a key consideration for protecting the interests of the Indigenous students involved in your programming or extracurricular activities. Being trauma-informed means being aware and conscious of the various experiences of trauma in others and how those experiences may be impacted by interactions, programming, and engagement between those involved. This does not require you to address, treat, or counsel. It simply means to be conscious of the work being done in the environment, (i.e., conversations, topics, guest speakers, anniversaries within the school, etc.) and address the potential impact for some students.

## Considerations:

- know your audience;
- know your presenters, guest speakers and facilitators and be familiar with their content;
- anticipate potential needs for supports from social workers, or members of the Indigenous education team, equity team, community liaisons;
- offer content warnings on advertisements or at the beginning of all presentations or sessions for content that may be triggering for some students;
- ensure that safety measures and resources are in place for students who may need support or follow-up to an event;
- provide an overview of content with students before jumping in;
- avoid trauma-centred learning, instead focus on factual learning and inclusive pedagogy; and
- discuss your planning with other teacher-leaders and connect with leaders in your community (Indigenous or 2SLGBTQ+).

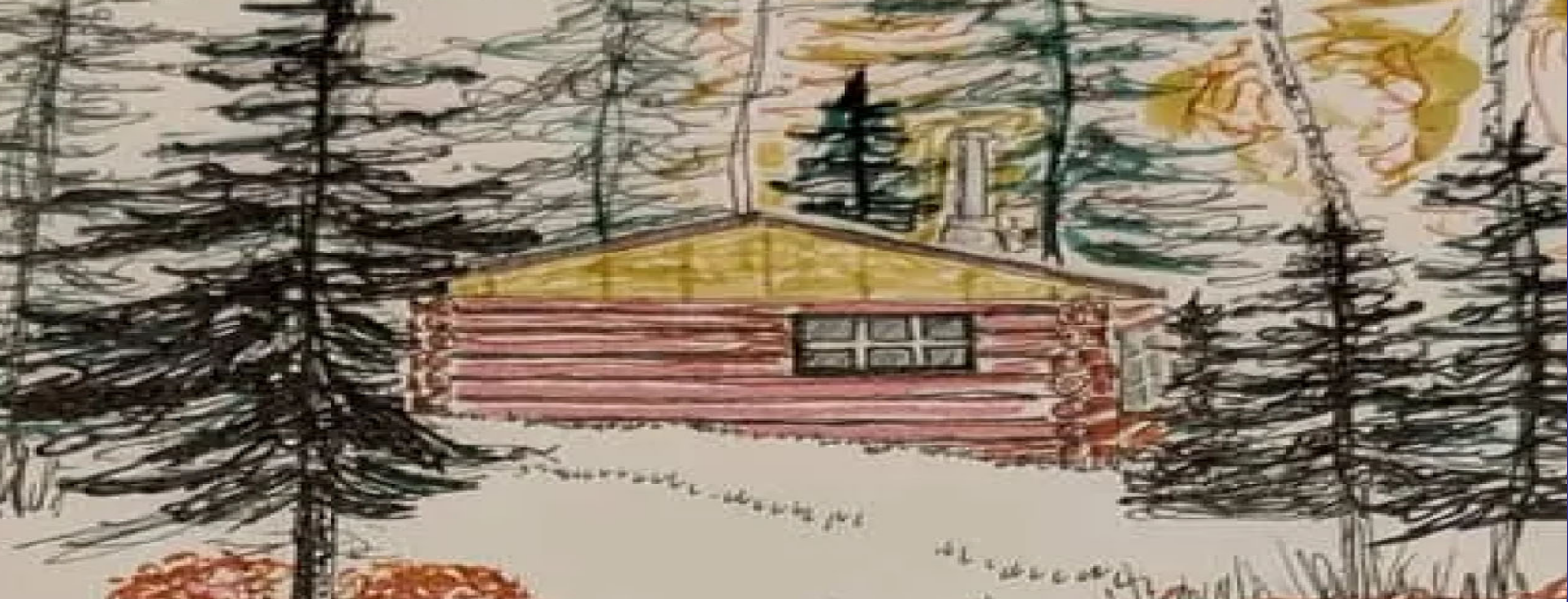
# Intersectionality

***"I am very proud to be a part of this resource which aims to amplify two-spirit voices. By capturing stories from various members of the community we will highlight not only how diverse these voices are, but also how the two-spirit identity manifests its gifts in myriad ways from one individual to the next."***

Robyn M.T.

Dr. Kimberlé Crenshaw describes [intersectionality](#) as the way that different social identities for a person intersect, compounding issues with respect to how some people may experience different barriers due to oppression (e.g., race, gender, class, ability, etc.). The complex layers of identity need to be considered when looking at systemic barriers, discrimination, or feelings of exclusion, and when auctioning for individual and systemic change.

The complexities of intersectionality need to be acknowledged and affirmed for two-spirit people. This includes the impact and legacy of colonization, residential schools, day schools, and the Sixties Scoop. It is also important to acknowledge the specific impact of toxic masculinity, cisgender normative expectations, lateral violence, and the long, complicated history that Canada has rooted in issues of human rights with many other race-based or faith-based communities over the last 150 plus years, many of which had their own cultural identities stolen or censored. Indigenous Peoples, due to colonization, displacement, and relocations over time, have become interconnected in many ways with non-Indigenous people, through the building of families and childrearing.



Understanding intersectionality asks each of us to look at an individual or ourselves and appreciate everyone's life experiences and be culturally aware of all that comes with various social identities. Being a two-spirit, Jamaican-Cree person will have experiences unique to their lived experience, distinct from a two-spirit, Métis, person with a disability, and so on. Barriers, stereotypes, and exclusion are real experiences and should be affirmed for students and colleagues. While gains are being made and the reclamation of two-spirit identity is on the rise, it is important to recognize that not all nations, communities, or families are inclusive of two-spirit identities and much work is still to be done. Loss of language, living in urban settings vs. in-community, cultural expectations, and blood quantum are all elements of divisiveness that can arise within groups and between as they begin to navigate working together in a school community. Understanding the complexities and keeping these factors (and others not mentioned) in mind as you create space, centre voices, and engage in authentic relationships moving forward is key.

***"Growing up, I also experienced the sounds of the fiddle and going for walks with my grandmother to collect plants to be made into teas and candies. After high school, I moved to Toronto to go to art school where I began a healing journey through creating visual arts and learning to validate my identities as a queer/gay, Métis (cisgender) male, while also understanding, that because of the way I look, I benefit from white privilege."***

Robert D.









# Supplemental Resources

Teachers can incorporate their planning and lessons with some of the following ideas and strategies. Select, modify, and augment depending on the students in your class, the social, emotional, grade levels of your students, how much background they have had in exploring social justice and identity issues, as well as the types of learning experiences they have engaged in.

**Content Warning:** Topics such as the Sixties Scoop, child welfare, residential school, racism, and acts of discrimination may be sensitive topics for discussion with some students in the classroom. Take necessary steps to prepare and inform students and families for the upcoming topics in the classroom.

## Primary/Junior

### Connecting Text and Identity

#### Suggested Texts ( websites and storybook):

**47,000 Beads** by Koja Adeyoha et al. Flamingo Rampant, 2017.

To purchase a copy, click [here](#).

**Ho'onani: Hula Warrior** by Heather Gale. Tundra Books, 2019.

To purchase a copy, click [here](#).

**Julián Is a Mermaid** by Jessica Love. Candlewick Press, 2018.

To purchase a copy, click [here](#).

**Mary Wears What She Wants** by Keith Negley. Balzer + Bray, 2019.

To purchase a copy, click [here](#).

**Purpose:** to initiate conversations about the concept of gender identity, community, family relationships, discrimination, self-advocacy, using a mentor text to guide conversations and learning.

**Curricular connections:** Social Studies, Language Arts, Health.

#### Suggested approaches for inquiry and discussion:

As an opening activity, have students explore, and brainstorm items and events that make them unique and special. Predict what the story is about by discussing the cover and the images of the book.

Read the story, exploring key ideas of identity, community, family, gender expression, and the concept of two-spirit identities. To engage with the topic and provide opportunities to express their ideas, have students write journal reflections, create storyboards, explore through drama (tableaux and montages) about the book. Explore some of the following concepts:

How is gender explored in this story? What does it mean to be a boy, a girl? What does it mean to the main character?



How is the main character similar/different from me? How are their relationships similar/different from mine?

Think about the different feelings the main character experienced. Have you felt this way before? When/How? What did you do with these feelings?

What issues of teasing or bullying came up in the story? How did the main character deal with it? How would you deal with it?

## Primary/Junior

### *Celebrating All Families*

#### **Suggested Texts (websites and stories):**

Unaapik, Jesse, McCluskey, Mike and Kerry.

*Families*, Inhabit Media, 2017.

To purchase a copy, click [here](#).

**Purpose:** to explore with students the diversity in identities, families, relationships.

**Curricular connections:** Drama, Visual Arts, Social Studies, Language Arts.

#### **Suggested approaches for inquiry and discussion:**

Have students explore as an opening process, concepts of family. Sentence starters such as the following are suggestions:

- ➡ To me, a family is....
- ➡ My family makes me feel.... Because....
- ➡ What is special about my family is....

Using sticky notes, chart paper, jamboards, padlets, etc., are effective ways, both collaborative and interactive, to engage with students as a whole class or in small groups/pairs.

Read/share/show a variety of stories, images, and books that represent diversity of relationships, family structures and interactions and discuss with students all the different ways families can 'be.'

Brainstorm items and events that make them unique and special. Predict what the story is about

by discussing the cover and the images of the book.

As consolidation of exploration, have students create slide decks, story boards, or a series of drama tableaux/montages to show their thinking.

## Intermediate

### *Music is Medicine*

#### **Suggested Texts (video and article):**

[Interview with Shawnee Kish](#)

[Shawnee Kish TedX Grand Junction](#)

**Purpose:** to engage intermediate students to the concepts of self-care, healing, and two-spirit identity through the music of two-spirit musician, Shawnee Kish.

**Curricular connections:** Music, Language Arts, History, Health.

#### **Suggested approaches for inquiry and discussion:**

Students can read through the article on Shawnee Kish, as a whole class, in small groups or individually. They can reflect on queries such as the following:

- How have you approached challenges that you have faced in your life?
- What does self-care mean to you? How do you persevere through obstacles?
- How are your habits and behaviours connected to family, religion, culture, language, gender, race?

Students can record and share ideas through the use of journal entries, graffiti boards, sticky notes, chart paper, padlet, jamboard, etc.

After watching the video, have students share their learnings through exploring the following questions:

- How do you understand the concept of two-spirit through Shawnee's music and words?
- What does music offer Shawnee? What does music offer you? How can music connect to identities?





*Arthur Hanson*



Students can create independent or small group vision boards, slide decks, or create through drama movement their expressions of learning and understanding.

### **Examining Media and Challenging Gender Binary**

#### **Suggested Text (media):**

[\*First Stories - Two Spirited\*](#) by Sharon A. Desjarlais, National Film Board of Canada, 2007.

[Jeremy Dutcher](#)

[Dr. James Makokis](#)

[Lori Campbell](#)

**Purpose:** to explore terminology related to identity, gender identity, discrimination, two-spirit identities, and connection to community.

**Curricular connections:** Media Literacy, Language Arts, Visual Arts, Drama.

#### **Suggested approaches for inquiry and discussion:**

As a minds-on, brainstorm and share class ideas about gender, stereotyping, sexual orientation, and other identities. As a whole class or in groups, students can share and reflect upon their initial thinking by using visual organizers such as Venn diagrams, concept maps, or an organizer of your choice.

Questions students can explore when analyzing media are:

- Who is the target audience for this film?
- How is this media text portraying gender identity/gender expression, race, religion, two-spirit people, etc.? Is it upholding or challenging stereotypes?
- How does the individual challenge the gender binary?
- What impact does the representation of two spirit people in the media have?
- Are media helping or hindering with breaking down stereotypes? What evidence could you support your thinking?

Explore various media representations to give students ideas of what diverse representations can look like.

## Intermediate

### **Who Am I and Who Am I Not?**

#### **Suggested Text (Indigenous Artists):**

*This Land is My Land* by George Littlechild, Children's Book Press, 1993.

**NOTE:** The teacher should take time to intentionally choose a few pieces of art.

**Suggestions:** *Columbus First Saw, The Mountie and Indian Chief, This Land is My Land, A Dancing Bird Seeks Freedom, This Warrior Goes Dancing.*

**Purpose:** to explore terminology related to identity, gender identity, two-spirit identities, and reflect up on such identities within themselves and the larger society.

**Curricular connections:** Language Arts, Visual Arts, Drama.

#### **Suggested approaches for inquiry and discussion:**

Explore the work of a two-spirit artist. Students can explore the artworks and artist's statements, using potential prompts:

- How did the artist use the elements and principles of design?
- How does this artist challenge your pre-conceived ideas of Indigenous art?
- How do the images portray the artist's statement about the piece?
- What questions might you ask the artist?
- What might we learn about identity from these Indigenous art pieces?
- What connections can I make to previous knowledge or current issues in the media?

Independently or in small groups, have students explore their own identities through imagery such as an iceberg (emphasizing visible/invisible identities), flower petals (emphasizing parts of their identities that are more relevant than others), or spider web (with branches representing different legs of identities, some larger and longer than others).



Students can share their exploration of self and artists through journal entries and interviews with a partner.

To explore their internal and external selves, students can create self-portraits using text and images, with the guiding questions: How do I think people see me? How do I see myself? Does my public image match my internal self-image?



## Conclusion

In 2017, the University of Winnipeg held a conference, resulting in the report, [The Findings of CTC: Two Spirit & Queer/Trans People of Colour; Calls to Action, 2019](#). The conversations were grounded with the intention to discuss how these identities intersect. As a result of networking and collaboration, a separate set of Calls to Action (distinct from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada) came to be. These specific Calls to Action address the ongoing discrimination and marginalization of these specific peoples. Unfortunately, the 2015, [Truth and Reconciliation of Canada: Calls to Action](#) do not address the specific needs or concerns with respect to Indigiqueer or two-spirit peoples.

The Call to Conversation (CTC) Calls to Action categories include, Community, Education, Government, Arts & Culture, and All Our Relations. These Calls to Action, including those listed below, should inform and guide the work in supporting students, families, and colleagues moving forward.

# Education

***“We call on educators and education workers at all levels and working in all forms of education, including grades pre-K/K-12 in school systems, post-secondary (undergraduate, graduate) institutions, especially Faculties of Education, as well as community educational centres to:***

1. Organize more conferences or gatherings (with community collaboration and anti-oppressive content).
2. Develop a “101 Booklet” on 2S/QTPOC (two-spirit, queer, transgender, people of colour) history, colonial oppression, resurgence movements, rights, and issues to be used by, students, teachers, school staff, administrators, university instructors, Faculties of Education, professional development providers, etc.
3. Offer programming that includes 2S/QTPOC families (in partnership with 2S/QTPOC communities).
4. Participate in awareness-raising campaigns/activities highlighting resources available to 2S/QTPOC students, teachers, faculty, staff, administrators, institutional decision-making bodies, etc.
5. Provide clear guidelines/policy and training about what 2S/QTPOC inclusion means, how to be responsive to it and act inclusively.
6. Hire and promote 2S/QTPOC in all levels of the education system, including senior administration, and in community education positions.
7. Ensure existing spaces are safer for 2S/QTPOC and, wherever possible, work to create physical/virtual spaces that are designed by, and intended for, 2S/QTPOC.
8. Support 2S/QTPOC spiritual leaders, Elders, and knowledge keepers to teach about what was/is the role and value of 2S/QTPOC in community and in society.”

This abbreviated list has touched on much of the content in this resource thus far. You are able to find the fulsome list of Calls to Action [here](#).

Being an ally requires cultural humility, through listening, engaging in conversation and collaboration with others. Creating space for two-spirit students to honour and affirm their authentic selves, develop self-advocacy skills and voice, is rooted in cultural safety and belonging. Throughout history, students have been an integral part of the social change occurring in school communities, and the more comfortable those students are with expressing their truth, the richer the conversation and the more authentic the learning. It is our hope that this resource supports ETFO members and students in doing just that.

Being two-spirit looks different for every individual dependent upon intersecting social identities, life experiences, teachings, and sense of self.

***“For me, being two-spirit is a role. It is a responsibility. It’s coming to know and continuing to learn about my place within Indigenous communities.”***

Lori Campbell  
[Being Two-Spirit and trans in Canada: How colonization shaped the way we view gender diversity.](#)





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*Asma Hassan*