

1990 ADOPTION OF TWO-SPIRIT TERM

(20-30 minute session)

Grade: 5 to 8

Learning Outcomes & Lesson Focus

Students will:

- Identify the meaning of the term "Two-Spirit"
- Identify the origins of the term "Two-Spirit"
- Identify notable figures and organizers behind this term and its adoption
- Identify the events that occurred and lead to the creation of the term "two-spirit"

Lesson Focus

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

- Identify the meaning and origin of the term "Two-Spirit"
- Define the term "two-spirit" and other terminology associated
- Describe where the term "two-spirit" came from and the notable figure(s) responsible for the creation of this term
- Understand the importance of "two-spirit" in relation to Pride



Resources

Lesson Materials/Supplies

- Internet access for students to research history and events

Audiovisual

- Two Spirits, One Voice (Egale Canada)
<https://egale.ca/awareness/two-spirits-one-voice/>
- What Does "Two-Spirit" Mean" video
<https://www.them.us/video/watch/geo-neptune-explains-two-spirit>

Print/Publications

- Two-Spirit Community
<https://lgbtqhealth.ca/community/two-spirit.php>
- Two-Spirit
<http://www.phsa.ca/transcarebc/gender-basics-education/terms-concepts/two-spirit>
- Links to Manitoba Curriculum - Kindergarten to Grade 8 - Physical Education/Health Education - Human Sexuality
https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/phys_hlth/hs_k-8/
- Manitoba Teachers' Society: @2LGBTQIA Lesson Plans -
<https://www.mbteach.org/mtscms/2018/04/17/lgbtq-lesson-plans/>
- *** CPHS Pride organization resources, if available, can be the primary resource for any research being completed by the students



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Notes to Teacher

The use of the term Pride, even outside the context of Gay Pride or the LGBTQ2+ (GSRD) 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

- LGBTQ2+: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, 2-Spirit
- 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 being 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.

The Two-Spirit term is one that brings an aspect of intersectionality, a concept which might be new for students. The term brings the characteristics of sexual, gender and relationship diversity with a perspective of the Indigenous communities. One consideration is that the term applies to those communities, and not to non-Indigenous LGBTQ2+ (GSRD) persons. It might be necessary to discuss the issues of “appropriation” if this term is used outside of Indigenous peoples.

Key Term

- Indigequeer
- The term “lindigequeer” (now more often spelled as Indigiqueer) was created in 2004 and is used to acknowledge that not all GSRD Indigenous people feel that two-spirit describes their identity. In other words, this is a term sometimes used alongside or to refer to the Two-Spirit identity; more often it is a term used by some GSRD Indigenous people who do not self-identify as Two-Spirit, or by those who identify as both.

Suggestions for Instruction

- Begin by asking if any of the students have heard of the term “two-spirit” or if they know where it originated from
- Write down on the board any ideas or answers that the students have regarding the definition of this term
- Discuss with students the definition of the term “two-spirit” and where this term originated from
- “Two-Spirit” refers to a person who identifies as having both a masculine and a feminine spirit, and is used by some Indigenous people to describe their sexual, gender and/or spiritual identity. As an umbrella term it may encompass same-sex attraction and a wide variety of gender variance, including people who might be described in Western culture as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transsexual, transgender, gender queer, cross-dressers or who have multiple gender identities. Two-spirit can also include relationships that could be considered poly.
- Before colonization, Two-Spirit people were included and respected as valued community members, often holding revered roles such as healers, matchmakers, and counsellors, among many others. As part of the colonization process, there has been an attempted erasure of Two-Spirit people. The western religious values and belief systems that were imposed on Indigenous people condemned any sort of sexual or gender diversity, and Two-Spirit people were killed or forced into assimilation and hiding. One of many lasting impacts of colonization on Two-Spirit people, is an increased level of homophobia and transphobia within many Indigenous communities, which can often cause Two-Spirit people to leave their home communities (and subsequently, their families, land, and culture). However, the role of Two-Spirit people in Indigenous communities is now being reclaimed, and it is becoming increasingly recognized that homophobia and transphobia are in direct contradiction with most traditional Indigenous values.



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Suggestions for Instruction (continued)

- Provide students with an introduction to the history of the term “two-spirit”, highlighting notable figures and organizers behind the creation of the term
- The creation of the term “Two-Spirit” is attributed to Elder Myra Laramée, who proposed its use during the Third Annual Inter-tribal Native American, First Nations, Gay and Lesbian American Conference, held in Winnipeg in 1990. The term is a translation of the Anishinaabemowin term niizh manidoowag, two spirits.
- Two-Spirit people may also use terms from their Indigenous language to describe same-sex attraction or gender variance, such as winkt (Lakota) or nàdleehé (Diné). Some Indigenous languages do not have terms to describe sexual identities such as gay, lesbian, or bisexual. Many Indigenous languages are verb-focused, and describe what people do rather than how they identify.
- The term “Two-Spirit” comes from the Ojibwa words niizh manitoag (two-spirits). It was originally chosen to distance Native/First Nations people from non-Natives as well as from the words “berdache” and “gay”.
- Two Spirit individuals are seen as being two identities that occupy one physical body. Within different communities, Two Spirit individuals were often involved in performing work that was generally associated with both men and women. Having the spirits of two genders was considered a special gift and people with this gift often held highly respected positions within their communities
- Describe to students the impacts of colonization in relation to the history of the term
- Show the students the “What Does “Two-Spirit” Mean” video
- Discuss the video with the students and ask for their reactions and feelings after watching it

Suggestions for Assessment

Observation

Teacher Assessment: Checklist

Observe whether the student can identify what Two-Spirit means and where/when the term originated.

- Yes
- No

Observe whether the student is able to describe the history of the term “Two-Spirit”

- Yes
- No

Paper and Pencil Task

Teacher Assessment: Inventory

Have students write a reflection on the films/documentaries watched and what they believe the issues presented are. Some topics/questions that should be addressed within the reflections are as follows:

- 1) Do you recall the first time you heard the term “Two-Spirit”? If you have never heard this term prior to the video, why do you think that is the case?
- 2) What did you learn from the two videos that you maybe did not know before?

