

Two-Spirit Toolkit



What does Two-Spirit Mean? (the “2S” in “2SLGBTQQA+”)

Two-Spirit is a word used by some Indigenous people to describe roles, responsibilities, and identities that are **beyond colonial understandings of gender and sexuality**. For many, Two-Spirit identity is deeply tied to self-expression, language, tradition, and/or ceremony, and often carries inherent responsibilities to the well-being of the land and community.

While Two-Spirit is an important collective term, we must recognize and respect its complexity and history. **Not all Indigenous people who are LGBTQQA+ identify as Two-Spirit**. It is a fluid and flexible term that lives and evolves alongside traditional teachings, spirit connections and modern understandings (Wabanaki Two-Spirit Alliance, 2026). Additionally, it is important to understand that as an identity specifically rooted in Indigenous culture, non-Indigenous folks cannot be Two-Spirit or claim Two-Spiritness.



“Two-Spirit is not just a term - it is a living, breathing expression of who we are, where we come from, and the responsibilities we carry forward.”



Dive into the [Wabanaki Two-Spirit Alliance Library](#) for more!

Connection to Language and Culture

The term Two-Spirit was created in 1990 by **Elder Myra Laramee** from a translation of the Anishinaabemowin *niizh manidoowag*, meaning *two spirits*. Indigenous Peoples on Turtle Island and around the world have recognized Two-Spirit peoples in Indigenous societies since time immemorial, under many names that are unique to each language group. Click the links to learn about Two-Spirit people from the perspective of different Indigenous groups in Alberta:



[Ojibwe and Plains Cree](#)



[Metis](#)



[Blackfoot \(Siksika\)](#)

Case Study: Amplifying Two-Spirit Teachings in the Oral Tradition

ARPA has had the privilege of amplifying teachings by (and related to) Two-Spirited peoples over the years, respecting natural law through paralleling the oral traditions used to pass down wisdom through generations of Indigenous Peoples. These teachings live in the Oral Knowledge Hub -- an evergreen resource of wisdom from Elders and Knowledge Keepers in video format.

Gabriel Taylor or Piitaki (Eagle Woman), a Two-Spirit Piikani and Kainai woman has shared about what it looks like to [create safe spaces for Two-Spirit and/or queer youth](#) through her experience programming with Trellis’s Iiyika’kimaat Youth Program. Elders Darryl and Linda Brass have shared stories highlighting [traditional gender roles of Two-Spirit folks within Blackfoot traditions](#), and about how [Indigenous perception of gender and Two-Spirit folks relates to health in community](#).



These teachings deepened our commitment to reconciliation, fostering understanding, and creating inclusive spaces within the recreation and parks sector.

Recreation, Parks, and Justice: Advocating for Two-Spirit Peoples

The “2S” in “2SLGBTQQA+ is listed at the forefront for a reason, recognizing Two-Spirit people as the first 2SLGBTQQA+ communities. In colonial contexts, Two-Spirit people today experience discrimination in the form of homophobia, transphobia, AND anti-Indigenous racism. This can affect so many parts of a Two-Spirited person’s life; from family and community support networks, access to social support, affordable housing, career stability, income, and health.

It is your duty, as it is all of ours, to learn about Two-Spirit Peoples, and **work to address the barriers they face to being able to participate fully, safely, freely, and as their truest selves** in all environments, including in recreation and parks spaces.

Edmonton 2 Spirit Society (E2S)

E2S has been supporting local 2-Spirit Peoples for decades. Through Indigenous oral traditions, we know that 2-Spirit People have been in Amiskwacîwâskahikan (“Edmonton”) for generations before colonization.

Through housing and health programming, educational resources, pow wows, and fundraising events, E2S is healing, educating, celebrating, and building community for local Two-Spirit peoples.



 [Check out E2S's work and legacy here!](#)

What Can You Do to Support Two Spirit Peoples in Alberta?

In the spirit of reconciliation, Two-Spirit people need local and systemic changes to address injustices, inequities and discrimination facing Two-Spirit, Indigi-queer and Indigenous communities.

The recreation and parks sector can play a role in advancing the movement through actions that foster healing, awareness, and systemic change. **Here’s how you can do it:**

Education & Awareness



- **Land Acknowledgements:** Incorporate meaningful land acknowledgements at events, facilities, and meetings.
- **Training & Awareness:** Provide staff with education on Two-Spirit Peoples, colonial history, and Indigenous perspectives on gender identity, gender roles, and sexuality.
- **Public Awareness:** Use public events and social media to share information about issues that impact Two-Spirit people, such as MMIWG2S+.

Support Healing & Cultural Connection



- **Indigenous-Led Programs:** Offer programs that center voices of Indigenous and Two-Spirit people like land-based healing, storytelling, and traditional knowledge-sharing.
- **Honoring Ceremonies:** Host or attend events that honor Two-Spirit people, such as Two-Spirit Pow-Wows, Drag Show fundraisers, and Red Dress Day (May 5).

Create Safe & Inclusive Spaces



Check out this resource on [2SLGBTQQIA+ inclusion in the workplace!](#)



- **Cultural Safety in Parks:** Collaborate with Indigenous communities to design and maintain spaces that are welcoming, safe, and culturally relevant to 2SLGBTQQIA+ folks. All-gender washrooms and pride flags at building entryways are a start!

Strengthen Indigenous Partnerships



- **Community Collaboration:** Work with local Two-Spirit leaders, Indigenous Elders, and Indigenous organizations to co-develop programming and policy.
- **Employment & Leadership:** Increase Indigenous and Two-Spirit representation in staff, leadership, and advisory roles within the sector.
- **Grant & Funding Support:** Allocate funds for Indigenous-led recreation, cultural events, and safety initiatives that are inclusive and safe for 2SLGBTQIA+ folks.

Advocate for Systemic Change



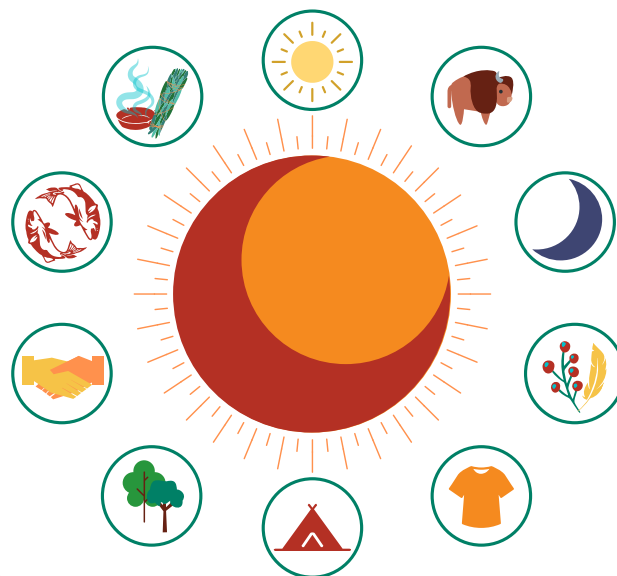
- **Advocate to government:** Strong support for policies that support gender inclusivity in recreation and sport, and protect people's access to all forms of gender-affirming care.
- **Youth & Leadership Development:** Support Indigenous and Two-Spirit youth through mentorship programs and employment in recreation and parks.

Alignment with the Walking With Indigenous Communities: ARPA's Action Map

The Alberta Recreation & Parks Association (ARPA) created the ***Walking With Indigenous Communities: ARPA's Action Map*** to support reconciliation and build strong relationships with Indigenous peoples and communities.

This action map identifies 10 key actions that will guide our reconciliation work.

By taking steps like those mentioned above, the recreation and parks sector can help to meaningfully include Two-Spirited folks while aligning with ARPA's commitment to meaningful action and healing.



Visit: [Walking With Indigenous Communities](#)

