Content Warning: Some of the following resources contain discussions of racism, colonialism, boarding schools, intergenerational trauma, hate crimes, alcoholism and drug use, homelessness

What Is Two-Spirit?

Two-Spirit is an identity created by indigenous people for indigenous people as a way to challenge colonial ways of understanding native gender and sexual expression. It should not be used as an identity by non-indigenous people. Two-Spirit is an identity label that describes gender identity and/or sexual orientation. Other terms might be used within different tribal communities, so always respect a person’s self-identification. Overall, the term two-spirit is generally preferred to “berdache,” which is a word that European settlers used to describe a third gender person (woman-living-man) who is Native American (Poynter, 2016).

It is cultural appropriation for someone who is non-indigenous to identify as Two-Spirit. Appropriate alternatives for a non-indigenous person who identifies as multiple genders are bigender, pangender, and polygender.

Looking for more information about Native American and Two-Spirit?

Articles

“Supporting LGBTQ Native American Students” – GLSEN

“Supporting LGBTQ/Native American LGBT People” – Center for American Progress

“Tribal Equity Toolkit 2.0: Tribal Resolutions and Codes to Support Two Spirit and LGBT Justice in Indian County”

“8 Things You Should Know About Two Spirit People” – Tony Enos

“5 Things Queer and Questioning Indigenous Folks Should Consider About Claiming Two Spirit Identity” – Mehealani Joy

“Two-Spirit Pride” – Rachel Browne

Videos

“What Is Two Spirit?” – sexplanations

“Our Families: LGBT/ Two Spirit Native American Stories” – BasicRights

“Two Spirits, One Dance for Native American Artist” – AJ+
Books


Films

*Two Spirits: Sexuality, Gender, and the Murder of Fred Martinez* (2009, documentary)

“TWO SPIRITS interweaves the tragic story of a mother’s loss of her son with a revealing look at the largely unknown history of a time when the world wasn’t simply divided into male and female and many Native American cultures held places of honor for people of integrated genders.”

CW: graphic discussion/depiction of racist and homophobic hate crime

Organizations

On-Campus

**UA Queer and Trans People of Color & Two-Spirit Discussion Group**

Contact the LGBTQ+ Resource Center for this semester’s meeting schedule

**LGBTQA+ Support Group**

- When: Tuesdays from 4-5:30 pm
- Where: SUMC 412
- Free and confidential
- For more information, contact Martie van der Voort at mvanderv@email.arizona.edu or 621-3334.

**Gender Spectrum Support Group**

- When: Mondays from 3-4:00 pm
- Where: Administrative Conference Room C312, Third Floor Campus Health
- Cost: $5 each week (can be billed to Bursar’s.) Please check in at CAPS.

Tucson/Phoenix

**Thornhill Lopez Center on Fourth**

[https://www.lgbtcenters.org/LGBTCenters/Center/6882/Thornhill-Lopez-Center-on-4th](https://www.lgbtcenters.org/LGBTCenters/Center/6882/Thornhill-Lopez-Center-on-4th)

**Tucson Two Spirit Group**

Second Tuesday of each month

160 N. Stone Ave.

Call to confirm meeting dates/times:

Marlene F. Jose (520) 884-7131, ext 234.

**Native PFLAG Phoenix Chapter**

[https://www.nativepflag.org](https://www.nativepflag.org)