

Opening Two-Spirit Spaces

Report Back on CBRC Two-Spirit Gathering



Our first Two-Spirit virtual gathering, hosted by CBRC and 2SiMs, was an inspiring and uplifting event. It was a time for us to connect and share our knowledge, experience, and strengths with one another, and create a collective vision and voice. Our community has spoken, and we have identified the need for more Two-Spirit, Indigequeer, trans and gender diverse spaces to reaffirm our identities, connect with each other and nurture our community and its members.

DETAILS:

The Two-Spirit Gathering took place on October 27, 2021, 13:00-16:30 PST

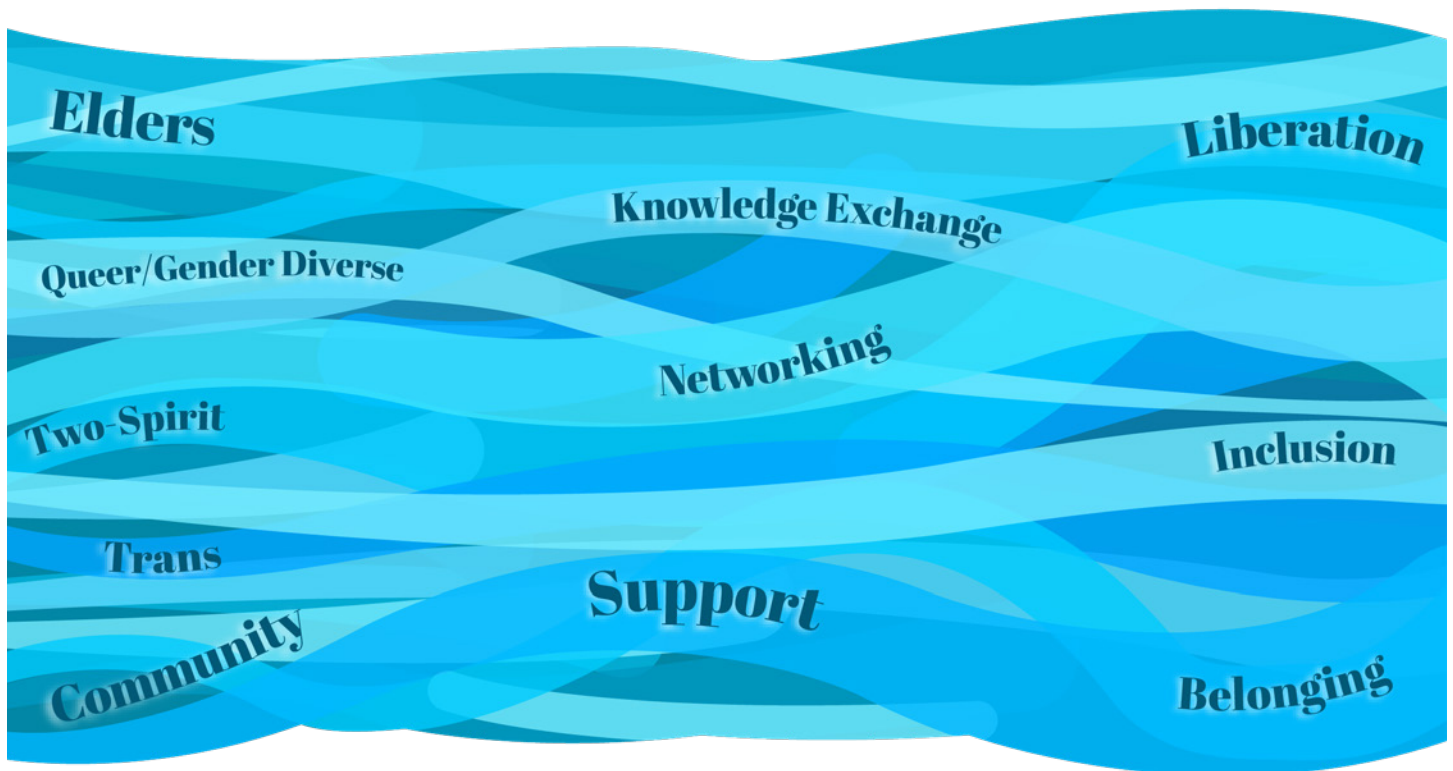
Attended by 70 participants from across Turtle Island (Canada and USA)

Hosted by CBRC and 2SiMs

Honorary opening by Elder Albert McLeod (Nisichawayasihk Cree/Métis)

MAJOR NEEDS IDENTIFIED:

- Networking opportunities
- Two-Spirit mental health supports
- Two-Spirit directory of organizations and community for collaboration, networking, and community building
- Increase number of Two-Spirit gatherings and spaces



“Being Two-Spirit is about personal progress and understanding. Many of us are learning about ourselves as we reclaim and accept this understanding of who we are. Community support and affirmation is powerful.”

TWO-SPIRIT COMMUNITY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Create Spaces and Circles of Connection

- Create inclusive safe spaces to amplify our voices, take action, and claim our space at the table
- Host regular gatherings to offer knowledge, belonging, community, liberation, and support (virtual, in-person, workshops, ceremony)
- Brainstorm and create a Two-Spirit strategic health plan to make sexual health resources more accessible and applicable to our needs a Two-Spirit strategic health plan that has access to sexual health resources
- Establish a Two-Spirit directory to create an accessible network resource of Elders, businesses, organizations, and contacts, for support and knowledge exchange
- Create a “Community Voice” composed of Elders, Knowledge Keepers, leaders, grassroots community members, activists, and Two-Spirit, Indigenous queer/trans and gender diverse folks

2. Embolden Culture, Ceremony, Identity and Spiritual Nourishment

- Remember that gender-based violence, homophobia, transphobia are colonial constructs and not Indigenous to our identities
- Honor our past and future by bridging generational knowledge and strengths between Elders/Knowledge Keepers and our young people
- Share the history/origin of Two-Spirit culture with our youth, so they will better understand where our liberation originates from and the rich history will strengthen their identities
- Invite Elders to share knowledge and reaffirm identity, which will help young questioning Indigenous folks find their own identities (an empowering action that enriches the lives of young people, gives a stronger sense of belonging, is motivating and can be shared with home communities)
- Acknowledge, support and nurture the intersecting identities of Two-Spirit people
- Understand that incorporating ceremony is an essential part of future Two-Spirit gatherings (to begin with a clear mind at the start of the day, and be able to take the time to resolve, let go, and renew at the end of the day)

“Our physical bodies should not bound us from expressing our spirit and soul authentically within sacred and community spaces.”

3. Address Tokenization

- Acknowledge the pressure and labour placed on Indigenous people working in colonial spaces to be the sole voice and expert on the needs of Indigenous people
- Establish culturally affirming approaches (transactional/extractive vs. cultural protocol/reciprocity/knowledge exchange)
- Educate non-Indigenous folks who are not aware of protocol
- Decolonizing the extractive process, building relations first
- Create a Two-Spirit network to support each other in our work

4. Take Back the Space

- Understand that it is difficult to navigate colonial spaces in institutions, that challenging ignorance can be harmful, and that there is a need for more Two-Spirit education within these systems
- Constantly challenge use of language, stereotypes, and exclusionary policies within non-Indigenous institutions
- Express the need for safe language when dealing with cultural/sexual/gender diverse issues
- Increase the visibility of Two-Spirit culture and Indigeneity within non-Indigenous institutions
- Occupy space and support one another within non-Indigenous institutions, as these institutions continue to employ non-Indigenous people and imposters in Indigenous roles
- Adapt process of funding to decrease competition within the Two-Spirit community due to lack of funds typically available (timeline consideration should also be a conversation within the community, rather than the institution)
- Actively decolonize the ways in which ongoing harm happens to us, our relatives, our communities, and our knowledge

5. Eliminate Hierarchies

- Acknowledge the power and wisdom that comes with lived experiences, as our lived experience is as valuable in serving our community as any professional accreditation
- Make sure we are not excluding our own community through our work, as resources can still be stigmatizing for Two-Spirit people based on gender, sexual orientation, or sexual practices
- Continue to destigmatize our language and conversations around sex and sexuality

“We need to ensure that grassroots voices, and all of our Two-Spirit community members, are weaved into the centre of the academic community. If we’re about relationships and relationality, we have to be invested in our concept to actualize consensus-based decision making. We have to be centered in community.”

In response to the Two-Spirit Gathering recommendations, we are creating a monthly virtual space for our Two-Spirit community members to join us for cultural teachings, networking, socializing, connecting, and supporting one another.

Stay tuned for more information in the coming days.

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www.cbrc.net/2Spirit-Program


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