



## Understanding and Celebrating Two Spirit People (Grades 9-12)



### Activity Materials

- WiFi access (recommended)
- pen & paper (or another way of taking notes)
- Indian Country Today article "[8 Things You Should Know About Two Spirit People](#)"
- [BESE Explains: Two Spirit](#) You Tube video
- Smithsonian Magazine article "[Pride Month 2020: Perspectives on LGBTQ Native Americans in Traditional Culture](#)"
- NIEA FAQ sheet "[The National Indian Education Association recognizes & supports LGBTQ2S Native community members](#)"

### Activity Guide

Each June, the nation recognizes LGBTQ Pride Month in various ways across the country. For many Native Americans/Alaska Natives, the acronym is expanded to 2SLGBTQ, recognizing two-spirit Native people. Two Spirit is a recently coined term that recognizes and reclaims an ancient and pre-colonial esteem of tribal members who possessed a male and female spirit. This name applies to Native Americans and should not be used to describe someone who is non-Native. This activity is inquiry-based in which you explore several resources to answer several questions. **Questions:**

1. What does the term two-spirit mean?
2. How were two-spirit members valued by their tribes in the past? Has that value remained the same in today's society?
3. What impact did colonialism have on two-spirit Native people?

#### Resources:

1. Watch the brief video [BESE Explains: Two Spirit](#).
  - a. According to this video, how is a two spirit identity more than a gender identity?
  - b. What roles did two spirit people play in tribes?
2. Next, read the article "[8 Things You Should Know About Two Spirit People.](#)"
  - a. Based on this article, how is a two spirit person different from the westernized labels L-G-B-T and Q?
3. Finally, read the article "[Pride Month 2020: Perspectives on LGBTQ Native Americans in Traditional Culture.](#)"
  - a. What impact did European colonialism have on different tribes' traditional values of a two spirit identity?

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## Understanding and Celebrating Two Spirit People (page 2)

### Helpful Learning Tips



Learning about two spirit people may present a range of feelings from pride and empowerment to uncertainty or hurt for youth and their families. It is important to be sensitive to the needs or responses of young people while addressing this and other topics related to the 2SLGBTQ community. For some families, it may be difficult to create a safe space for their youth to discuss two spirit or other topics. For help with how to approach these discussions or provide support for youth in the community, access the resources below:

- NIEA, in response to the passing of the resolution [2019-E01: In Support of Native Students, Educators, and Community Members who Identify as LGBTQ2S](#), published [an FAQ sheet](#) which provides 2SLGBTQ definitions, resources, and information for youth advocacy
- GLSEN (Gay, Lesbian, & Straight Education Network) <https://www.glsen.org/>
- PFLAG (Parents & Friends of Lesbians and Gays) <https://pflag.org/>
- The Trevor Project (Support for suicidal LGBTQ youth) <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/>

### Classroom Connections



As mentioned in the Helpful Learning Tips section above, topics related to 2SLGBTQ must be approached with sensitivity and respect in the classroom. However, as an advocate of students, teachers should also ensure that their classroom is inclusive as well as a safe space for 2SLGBTQ students. This can be challenging and requires the support of administrators, colleagues, parents, and the community. For additional classroom texts on a range of social justice issues (2SLGBTQ, racism, prejudice, classicism, etc.), register for a free account at [LearningforJustice.org](#) and access [their database of classroom texts and resources](#).

For more information and support on creating a safe environment in schools, visit the Safe Schools Coalition <http://safeschoolscoalition.org/>

For classroom resources and LGBTQ youth advocacy through education, visit GLSEN (Gay, Lesbian, & Straight Education Network) <https://www.glsen.org/>

#### Main Resource Links:

- "BESE Explains: Two Spirit" YouTube Video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XBH6wVOjolg>

- "8 Things You Should Know about Two Spirit People" by Tony Enos at *Indian Country Today* <https://indiancountrytoday.com/archive/8-things-you-should-know-about-two-spirit-people-294cNoJj-EGwJFOWEnbbZw>

- "Pride Month 2020: Perspectives on LGBTQ Native Americans in Traditional Culture" <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/blogs/national-museum-american-indian/2020/06/17/pride-2020/?fclid=IwAR0ULzCmdsEPVTNETIsIZLkU8q-6o1dHuyXm6TASrzdP6Gh4YgFl8kVEw8U>