



## School Mental Health Program

# LGBTQ+/ Two Spirit Native Youth Bullying

This flyer provides an introduction to Native LGBTQ+/Two Spirit youth bullying and resources to help create more inclusive schools.

### Two Spirit

The term Two Spirit was first coined in 1991 during the annual general meeting for Gays and Lesbians of the First Nations in Winnipeg, Manitoba. It originates from the Ojibwe words “niizh manitoag” (two spirits).<sup>1</sup> Those at the meeting decided to replace a derogatory term created by colonizers with the term Two Spirit to distance themselves from non-Natives.<sup>1</sup> There are more than 100 different Indigenous words that refer to Two Spirit people but not every tribe uses the term, so the general reference is Native LGBTQ+/Two Spirit.

Traditionally, Two Spirit refers to someone who is Native and who expresses their gender or spiritual identity in Indigenous, non-Western ways.<sup>2</sup> Native LGBTQ+/Two Spirit people existed pre-colonization and are people who are male, female, and sometimes intersexed.<sup>2</sup> In many tribes, they are considered neither man nor woman but a separate gender altogether. Prior to colonization, Native LGBTQ+/Two Spirit people often had specialized work roles, distinguished temperament, dress, lifestyle, and social roles, and were regarded as sacred.<sup>2</sup> More than 150 tribes have acknowledged Two Spirit in their communities.<sup>3</sup>

### Native LGBTQ+/Two Spirit Youth Bullying

Native youth experience racism, homophobia, and transphobia in school. Here are some statistics on Native LGBTQ+/Two Spirit bullying:

- 2 in 5 Native LGBTQ+/Two Spirit students experience **both** homophobic and racist harassment in school.<sup>4</sup>
- Nearly two-thirds of Native LGBTQ+/Two Spirit students (65.0%) felt unsafe at school because of their sexual orientation, 51.0% because of their gender expression, and 19.7% because of their race or ethnicity.<sup>5</sup>
- 96.3% of Native LGBTQ+/Two Spirit students heard homophobic remarks; more than two-thirds (67.5%) heard this type of language often or frequently.<sup>5</sup>
- 89.5% of Native LGBTQ+/Two Spirit students heard negative remarks about transgender people; more than half (51.7%) heard them often or frequently.<sup>5</sup>
- Many Native LGBTQ+/Two Spirit students experienced harassment or assault at school based on personal characteristics, including sexual orientation (78.4%), gender expression (70.4%), and race/ ethnicity (46.1%).<sup>5</sup>



## Recommendations and Resources

Many factors help provide safe learning environments for Native LGBTQ+/Two Spirit students. These can include:

- cultural and ethnic clubs
- professional development for school staff that address the intersections of identities for Native LGBTQ+/Two Spirit students
- increased curricular resources that include diverse and positive representations of for Native LGBTQ+/Two Spirit people history and events
- school policies and guidelines for how staff should respond to racism, homophobia, and transphobia, and
- working to address inequities in ways that support learning institutions and education.<sup>5-6</sup>

Furthermore, current programs and practices can be made more affirming and include more members from families and communities to strengthen suicide prevention initiatives.<sup>7</sup> When schools are LGBTQ+-affirming, they are associated with significantly lower odds of a suicide attempt within the past year.<sup>6</sup>

## Resources: Information On Bullying & Native Youth And How To Help

• [Center of Excellence on Racial and Ethnic Minority Young Men Who Have Sex with Men and Other Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Populations](#)

- <https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/ttac-bullying-factsheet-2.pdf>
- <https://www.ihs.gov/newsroom/announcements/2010announcements/stopbullyinginyourschoolsandcommunities/>
- <http://soaringeagles.americanindiansource.com/sentinel/bully.html>
- <https://www.parentcenterhub.org/resources-bullying-cyberbullying-native-youth/>
- <https://www.wernative.org>
  - <https://unityinc.org/native-youth/anti-bullying-resources-for-native-youth/>
  - <https://uwm.edu/lgbtrc/wp-content/uploads/sites/162/2014/09/two-spirit-resource-directory-jan-2013.pdf>
  - <https://www.glsen.org/research/native-and-indigenous-lgbtq-students>
    - <https://www.cnay.org/>

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