

***A JOURNEY OF HEALING: TWO-SPIRIT PEOPLES
JOINING THE CIRCLE***

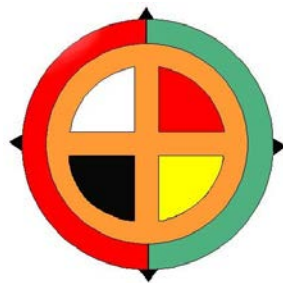
***HOLISTIC WELLNESS AND
RESOURCE MANUAL***

MARCH 2009

ALL NATIONS HOPE AIDS NETWORK (ANHAN)

A Journey of Healing: Two-Spirit Peoples Joining the Circle

***HOLISTIC WELLNESS AND RESOURCE MANUAL FOR
TWO-SPIRIT INDIVIDUALS AND SERVICE PROVIDERS***



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The views expressed herein are those of the authors and not necessarily
those of the funding agencies or the All Nations Hope AIDS Network.

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DISCLAIMER

Many teachings introduced in the Two-Spirit Project manual were not defined by which First Nation group gave the specific teaching. Each teaching is only a *reference* and each individual is invited to find his/her own identity within his/her own First Nation group. The teachings vary from nation to nation although there are similarities. These teachings were introduced to show the significance of the teachings and how they may apply today.

It is very important for the individual to find his/her own First Nation's teachings because it is in the relevance of the teachings that connections are made with our ancestral memory. It is with this connection that the healing journey begins for many Aboriginal people.

This manual also relies heavily on external sources and materials. Every effort has been made to accurately identify and credit the primary sources of this information. Wherever possible, full credit has been given throughout this publication for all outside resources and references and/or permission has been received for the inclusion and use of external resources.

LANGUAGE CAUTION

Some sections of this manual contain explicit language that may be offensive to some readers. Every attempt has been made to present the material in a respectful way; however the presentation of certain information does require clear and unambiguous detail. Apologies are extended to anyone who may be offended by the use of explicit language in our document.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	6
Wes' Story	7
Why This Manual Was Created	9
The All Nations Hope AIDS Network (ANHAN) Two-Spirit Project	9
<u>Section 1:</u> The Two-Spirited Peoples	11
The Two-Spirited Peoples	12
Trans-Peoples' Bill of Rights: Access to Services	14
Rights of Aboriginal People Living With HIV/AIDS	15
Two-Spirits: A Brief Look at Our History on Turtle Island	16
<u>Section 2:</u> Trends and Challenges Within the Two-Spirit Community	23
Aboriginal Peoples and Sexually Transmitted Diseases: A Snapshot	24
The Role of Injection Drug Use	25
Aboriginal Men Who Have Sex With Men	25
Aboriginal Women	26
Discrimination and Homophobia	26
Legacy of the Residential School System	27
Human Rights Violations	27
Lack of Statistical Data for LGBTTT	28
<u>Section 3:</u> Strategies to Improve Health and Wellbeing for Two-Spirit People	29
Reduce Ongoing Risk Behaviours	30
Strengthen Prevention	30
Culturally-Appropriate Services for Two-Spirited People	31
<u>Section 4:</u> Two-Spirit Wellness: Reclaiming Traditional Teachings and Creating Circles of Support	32
The Medicine Wheel as a Life Force	34
A Holistic Model	37
Approaching a Traditional Healer, Elder or Medicine Person	38
Feasts and Giveaways	41
Fasting	44
Moontime	46
Clans	49
Traditional Healing	51

Sweat Lodge	55
The Four Sacred Medicines	58
Sacred Items and Bundles	60
The Drum and The Drum Teachings	63
Smudging	64
 <u>Section 5: Support, Advocacy and Information -- What Every Two-Spirit Person Must Know!</u>	 65
Preventing Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (LGBT) Youth Suicide	66
Out and Proud Youth (OPY)	70
Homophobia	72
Heterosexism or "Invisible" Homophobia	74
Words and Labels	75
Barebacking – Know Your Risks. Choose Your Risks.	77
HIV & STI Field Guide for Men Who Have Sex With Men	79
 <u>Section 6: Supplementary Information and Resources</u>	 85
All Nations Hope AIDS Network (ANHAN) Resources	86
Community Resources and Contacts	87
List of Commonly Used HIV/AIDS Acronyms and Terms	88
Resource List	97
Websites and Links	98
Sources/Bibliography	100

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Wes' Story

My journey continues to be one of wonderment. There are still things out there that frighten me. Things that I still have to learn, things that the Creator will allow me to see, allow me to experience. It is only through my growth and the awareness of who I really am that I will then be able to understand. Life is full of awe and we, as human beings, have to take hold. Never let it out of sight, out of reach, it is there for all to attain.

Tansi -- hello! My name is Wesley Graham Keewatin and I'm a Cree Two-Spirit First Nation human being. I was born in the Regina General Hospital, Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada February 21st, 1960. I am originally from the Peepeekisis First Nation but have never lived on 'my' reserve during my entire life. I come from a family that consisted of 5 brothers and 3 sisters with me being the youngest 'male', but not the youngest in the family. As in every 'ordinary' family, it had its memorable moments.

Growing up I knew that I was different, I'd prefer the company of girls to boys, and it didn't bother me in the least. I remember when I was young my older sisters and cousins used to make me go outside with them and dance. And I really did dance, today that is what I like doing, I love to go out and dance. I remember when my parents used to have people over and they would play music, my parents and their guests would ask me to dance, I guess they found me so cute, that a little boy could dance like that!

As I started to grow older, I realized that I was attracted to men and at a very early age too! But back then, I never realized or it was never explained to me that there were labels and names put to faces. And I was labeled a 'fag'. I soon came to realize that this was not good; it brought shame and hurt to my family. But I prevailed and here I am today.

Being gay has had its hurts and blessings. But it is not the hurts that this is about; it's about acceptance and in what I found that moves me through my time. I was never ever ashamed of who I was, and it's like that to this day. Growing up in the city and going to school made life a little more difficult than what most would go through, but I hung on. I guess people, who tried to downcast me, tease me, tried to make me feel "less than" – it was because they did not understand me. But I made it through. In fact it made me stronger for the person that I was to become.

In my schooling I spent the first ten years of it in boarding school or Residential School if you like. I was sent there in 1967 and released in 1977. It was all good and no one can take that away from me. Yes, I was abused there but I forgave and moved on. When things (the sexual abuse) happened to me in there, I thought that it was normal, or I thought that everyone went through that stage. Boy did I ever have a completely different conception of what normal was! But then again, I pulled through.

Let me move ahead and let me tell you of my positive experiences of being gay. I was introduced to the concept of being a Two-Spirit person. I began attending Two-Spirit Gatherings. The term 'Two-Spirit' was coined when Canada had the honor of hosting the third annual *International Two-Spirit Gathering* in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Two-Spirit Gatherings bring together Aboriginal gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersexed individuals who are seeking solace. The Gatherings provide teachings on the Two-Spirits role in the Great Circle of Life; the Gatherings are a place where one can truly be who they were meant to be. No one judges you, you seek what you are looking for, you seek to find the real you at these Gatherings. Elders are on hand to guide you, to give you peace of mind, to lend that helping hand if you're lost along the way in life.

I was once there – lost – it seemed like no one understood me, I had nowhere to turn. This is about the same time that I heard of Two-Spirit Gatherings. The Gatherings are a true comfort in disguise. There are workshops on everything from nutrition to safe sex practices to healthy living. They give you a glimpse into our history and our place in life, our role in the traditional societies from which we, as Two-Spirit people, originated. They also include ceremonies that honor our past and represent our future. We participate in Sunrise ceremonies, Sweat Lodge ceremonies, Medicine Picking, Talking Circles, Storytelling, and traditional arts, music and crafts. We also have Giveaways along with a Pow-Wow. The Giveaways honor the guests that travel far and wide to attend these Gatherings. It is an all-round celebration – a genuine tribute to life and of who we are.

If you know of any 'gay' Aboriginal persons who are trying to find themselves, then point them in the direction of the Two-Spirit Gatherings. I'm sure they will not be misled or disappointed.

The Creator makes everyone for a reason; we are not mistakes, as some see us to be. We will not be shunned anymore; we are here to take our rightful place in this Great Circle of Life!



Why This Manual Was Created

This manual was created in the hopes that it could reach those Two-Spirits that are struggling on their journey -- their journey of hope. We also wanted to give those health providers, volunteers and other organizations a foothold on the Two-Spirits' journey of hope -- what it is like to be two-spirited in today's world, a world that sometimes does not understand certain ways of special people. The manual also provides insight and guidance into various traditional Aboriginal teachings from local and surrounding areas.

It is with hope that this manual creates recognition and well being for the Two-Spirits that are struggling in our society. The Two-Spirit Project recognizes the need to disseminate positive, healthy and truthful information for two-spirit individuals to access and in order for the community at large to become better informed. This manual is intended to be a healing guide and resource to assist Two-Spirits who may feel misguided and who choose unhealthy choices in their journey, a journey of acceptance in who they are.

The traditional values, beliefs, ceremonies and practices of our First Nations and Métis communities across Turtle Island will help us all, as human beings of Mother Earth, achieve healing and complete our circles of health and wellness.

The All Nations Hope AIDS Network (ANHAN) Two-Spirit Project

The idea for this manual came through and is under the umbrella of All Nations Hope AIDS Network (ANHAN). ANHAN is a Regina-based network of Aboriginal people, organizations and agencies who respectfully strive to provide support and services to Aboriginal families and communities who are experiencing HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis C.

ANHAN is led by an Aboriginal board of directors that includes an Aboriginal person living with HIV/AIDS and traditional Aboriginal Elders. The primary goals of ANHAN are to strengthen the network through a strong knowledge base pertaining to HIV/AIDS, development of training resources, development of a solid membership and volunteer base, and the facilitation of campaigns devoted to education, awareness and prevention.

ANHAN also supports peer driven projects for Aboriginal people struggling with addictions, assists in focus groups through both the network and through other partnerships and is involved in research to enhance the need to address the epidemic at a more community-based level (ANHAN Gathering 2002 Final Report).

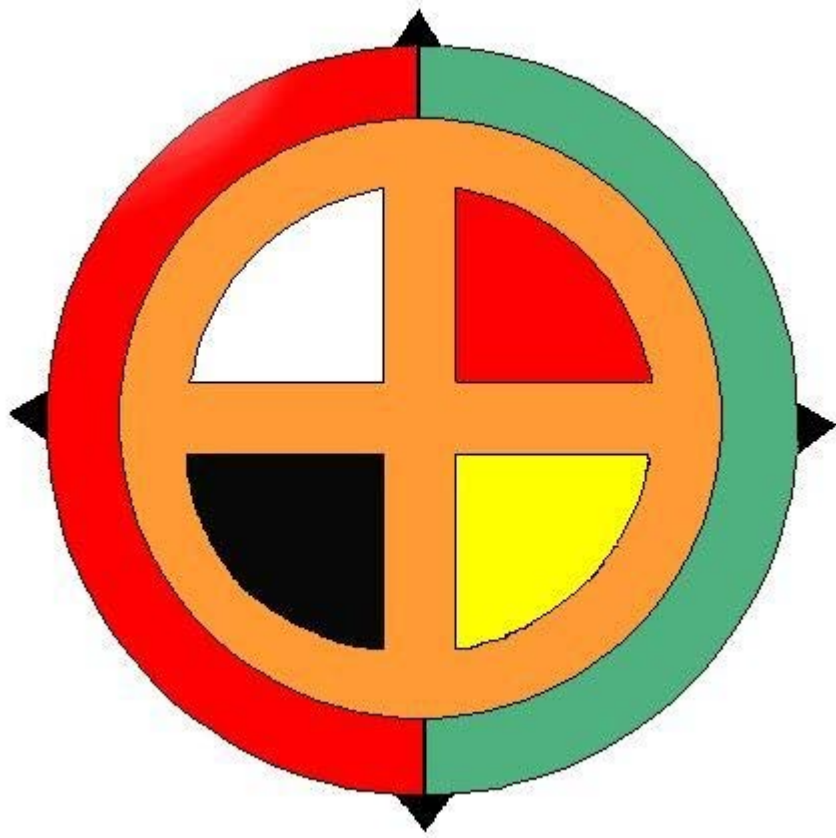
ANHAN has been the only network in Saskatchewan for the past ten years that has been actively providing HIV/AIDS education, prevention and support services to Aboriginal people infected or affected. ANHAN is well connected regionally, provincially and nationally. ANHAN provides representation and a voice to the many committees, gatherings, boards and task forces concerning the multitude of health and social issues affecting Saskatchewan's Aboriginal communities (ACAP Final Report 2002).

ANHAN's primary goals are:

- that the approach to dealing with IDU in prevention of HIV/AIDS among Aboriginal communities emphasizes harm reduction, be non-judgmental and respect prevention and intervention options;
- that IDU peer outreach programs be created or strengthened to reach Aboriginal persons who inject drugs; and
- that culturally specific services are made available to Aboriginal IDUs and their partners who may disclose their status.

Early in 2007, ANHAN identified a need to begin to gather information regarding statistics, gaps and prevention strategies for Two-Spirited (gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered and others) Aboriginal people specifically related to addressing HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis C and other STIs within this population. Following the first phase of this information gathering process, ANHAN developed a needs assessment and an environmental scan to further the research into the target population. In 2008, the Two-Spirit Project was initiated and received funding from the First Nations and Inuit Health Branch of Health Canada. The development and publication of this manual is one outcome of ANHAN's Two-Spirit Project.

SECTION ONE:
THE TWO-SPIRITED PEOPLES



The Two-Spirited Peoples

Who comprises the Two-Spirit community within Canada's Aboriginal communities?

The term "Two-Spirit" is a sacred term meaning an Aboriginal person who identifies as having been blessed at birth with both masculine and feminine spirits, a modern definition that is in keeping with the historical traditions of many First Nations. The following is a brief history of Two-Spirited peoples within Aboriginal society:

"In our culture, before the Europeans came to North America, "2-Spirit" referred to an ancient teaching. Our Elders tell us of people who were gifted among all beings because they carried two spirits: that of male and female. It is told that women engaged in tribal warfare and married other women as there were men who married other men. These individuals were looked upon as a third gender in many cases and in almost all cases they were honoured and revered.

Since European colonization, the existence of the Two Spirit community has been systematically denied and culturally alienated from the Aboriginal identity. 2-Spirit members bear witness to this activity in the form of racism, sexism and homophobia in the courts, the streets, the education system, the media and in other lesbian and gay organizations within the dominant Canadian society."¹

The consequences of colonization, the impact of Christianization and, especially, the residential school legacy resulted in intergenerational impacts for all of Canada's Aboriginal peoples.² These lingering effects are particularly felt within the Two-Spirited population:

"Today, Two-Spirited People are Native people who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, other gendered, third/fourth gendered individuals that walk carefully between the worlds and between the genders. Unfortunately, due to many of the colonizing forces and experiences that Native People have gone through, the roles of Two-Spirit people have been lost in our consciousness and many Native People have adopted the homophobic attitudes that are present in today's society. With the coming of the Seventh Generation, Two-Spirits are slowing relearning their traditional roles in Native communities."³

In 1990, at Canada's inaugural gathering of Aboriginal Two-Spirited people, the concept of Two-Spiritedness was introduced as a way for the Aboriginal LGBTTT community to promote and support itself and become accepted once again as part of a mainstream

¹ 2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations. Information Guide <http://www.2spirits.com>

² Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network. Residential Schools and HIV/AIDS: Direct and Intergenerational Impacts http://www.caan.ca/pdf/FS_Schools.pdf

³ Ibid.

Aboriginal society.⁴ This movement towards reclaiming the Two-Spirit voice across Canada was also accompanied by a variety of research and study throughout the 1990's that examined and promoted strategies specifically for this segment of the Aboriginal population. This research revealed a diverse array of supports and culturally-appropriate approaches:

- Effective education and prevention programs seem to focus on the oral traditions of Aboriginal culture (Lennie and Daniels, 1996). The use of storytelling, visual aids (McLeod, 1996, Hill and Gillies, 1996), gatherings (Vanderhoef, 1998) and strategies based on the Medicine Wheel (Weiser & Badger, 1996) seem to be effective in education and promotion.
- "Drop in programs and outreach can successfully target high risk groups and provide comprehensive care if they are culturally sensitive and include a harm reduction and strong advocacy approach" (Littlejohn et al., 1998).
- Birkel & Golaszewski (1993) used Indigenous outreach workers as change agents for IDU's. The Outreach Worker profile was a recovering IDU, active in 12 Step programs, who had lived and used drugs in the area most susceptible to transmission, and possessed a desire to give back to the community and was a natural leader.
- La Fortune (1993) suggests empowering gay and lesbian and bisexual Native people through historically and adapted social roles, self worth, and self preservation. Creating one's own personal historical document.
- The MAATF (1999) uses a Four Doorways Project to develop a model for peer education training, outreach and community development through partnerships, research and culture based services.⁵

As well, a variety of community-based organizations and agencies emerged during the 1990's to begin providing much-needed support services to the Aboriginal population infected and affected by STIs, including the Two-Spirited community across Canada:

- 2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations (*Toronto, Ontario*)
- All Nations Hope AIDS Network (*Regina, Saskatchewan*)
- Two Spirit Circle of Edmonton (*Edmonton, Alberta*)
- Red Road HIV/AIDS Network (*Vancouver, B.C.*)
- Nine Circles Community Health Centre (*Winnipeg, Manitoba*)
- Atlantic First Nations AIDS Network (*Dartmouth, Nova Scotia*)
- Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network (*Ottawa*)

With the emergence of Two-Spirit advocacy groups and community-supported initiatives, the time was right for the Two-Spirit community to begin to articulate their expectations for equal opportunity and access to service, support and, most importantly, respect:

⁴ University of Guelph. Voices of Two-Spirited Men http://www.uoguelph.ca/~asa/data/Voices_of_Two-Spirited_Men-Part_One.doc

⁵ Ibid.

Trans-People's Bill of Rights: Access to Services

Trans People have the right to . . .

- ⊕ not to be condemned or judged for whom they are
- ⊕ expect service providers to be sensitive and knowledgeable about Trans-People and act in the best interest of the Trans-person's needs
- ⊕ be informed of the laws, rules and policies affecting the operation of the service provider and to be informed in writing of the procedures for initiating complaints about the service provider
- ⊕ use legal avenues to protect against discrimination
- ⊕ be dealt with by the service provider in a courteous and respectful manner and to be free from mental, physical, and financial abuse by the service provider
 - ⊕ have his or her records kept confidential in accordance with the law
- ⊕ be dealt with by the service provider in a manner that recognizes the Trans-person's dignity and privacy and that promotes the Trans-person's autonomy
- ⊕ be given quality health care as guaranteed in the treaties of Canada and those given to citizens of Canada
 - ⊕ give or refuse consent to the provision of any community service
- ⊕ live a free and dignified life, including having the right to meet basic human needs such as decent housing and income security
 - ⊕ freely choose where to live and reside
- ⊕ information about the community services provided to Trans-people and to be told who will be providing the community services
- ⊕ access to Spiritual teachers and participate in ceremonies as children of the Creator⁶

Rights of Aboriginal People Living with HIV/AIDS

⁶ 2-Spirit People of the 1st Nations. "Our Relatives Said: A Wise Practices Guide" (Toronto: 2008) p. 4.

1. Be dealt with by the service provider in a courteous and respectful manner and to be free from mental, physical and financial abuse by the service provider.
2. Be dealt with by the service provider in a manner that respects the person's dignity and privacy and that promotes the person's autonomy.
3. Be dealt with by the service provider in a manner that recognizes the person's individuality and that is sensitive to and responds to the person's preferences, including preferences based on ethnic, spiritual, linguistic, familial and cultural factors.
4. Information about the community services provided to him or her and to be told who will be providing the community service.
5. Participate in the service provider's assessment of his or her requirements and a person who is determined under this act to be eligible for a community service has the right to participate in the service provider's plan of service, the service provider's review of the person's requirements as well as the evaluation and review of the person's plan of service.
6. Give or refuse consent to the provision of any community service.
7. Raise concerns or recommend changes in connection with the community service provided to him or her in connection with policies and decisions that affect his or her interests, to the service provider, government officials or any other person, without fear of interference, coercion, discrimination or reprisal.
8. Be informed of the laws, rules and policies affecting the operation of the service provider and to be informed in the writing of the procedures for initiating complaints about the service provider.
9. Have his or her records kept confidential in accordance with the law.
10. Live a free and dignified life, including having the right to be given quality health care as guaranteed in the treaties of Canada and those given to citizens of Canada.
11. Access to Spiritual teachers and participate in ceremonies as children of the Creator.
12. Not to be condemned, judged or forgiven as to how we acquired this disease.
13. Expect our service providers to be sensitive and knowledgeable about HIV/AIDS and act in the best interest of all living with or affected by HIV/AIDS.
14. Engage in and continue intimate and sexual relationships ensuring risks will be addressed through safer-sex awareness and practices, and respect.
15. LIVE!⁷

⁷ 2-Spirit People of the 1st Nations. "Speakers Manual – Speaking From the Heart" (Toronto: 2007) p. 113.

Two-Spirits: A Brief Look at Our History on Turtle Island

The material in this sub-section was obtained from the following online source:
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Two-Spirit>

It was a clear day and Elk meat was boiling on the fire outside the tipi. I sat inside a tipi somewhere in Saskatchewan, asking a Medawin (an Anishinabe medicine person) elder what she thought of Two-Spirit people. She believed that when we died we really didn't die. We traveled toward the stars to be with our people. Yet some needed to return to Earth to learn more. As life was getting ready to be formed during conception and the spiritual entity entered into the child, usually it was a female spirit that entered a female child, and a male spirit that entered a male child. Some of us were so excited to get back to our people that we didn't look at which body we entered into and didn't realize until later.

(As told by Raven E. Heavy Runner)

Did You Know?

- Two-Spirited Aboriginal people were traditionally looked at as valued and respected teachers, healers, care givers, educators and, if need be, warriors.
- Two-Spirited men were considered the Centre of Life between men and women.
- Two-Spirited women were skilled hunters.
- Two-Spirited men were great weavers and artisans.
- The people lived in peace and harmony without judging each other and in the spirit of NON-INTERFERENCE.



(Detail of *Dance to the Berdache*, painted by [George Catlin](#))

Definition and Historic Societal Role

Two-spirit individuals are often viewed as having “two spirits” occupying one body. Their dress is usually a mixture of traditionally male and traditionally female articles. They have distinct gender and social roles in their tribes.

Two-spirit individuals traditionally performed specific social functions in their communities. In some tribes, male-bodied two-spirits held active roles such as:

- healers or medicine persons
- gravediggers, undertakers, handling and burying of the deceased
- conducted mourning and sexual rites
- conveyers of oral traditions and songs
- nurses during war expeditions
- foretold the future
- conferred lucky names on children or adults
- wove, made pottery, made beadwork and quillwork
- arranged marriages
- made feather regalia for dances
- special skills in games of chance
- led scalp-dances
- fulfilled special functions in connection with the setting up of the central post for the [Sun Dance](#)

In some tribes female-bodied two-spirits typically took on roles such as:

- chief, council
- trader
- hunter, trapper, fisher
- warrior, raider
- guides
- mediators and peacekeepers
- vision quests, prophets
- medicine persons

Contact with the colonizers (European explorers, missionaries, conquistadors and settlers) introduced new and different values and beliefs into Aboriginal communities. In many cases, this resulted in the severe oppression of two-spirited people within both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities.

Some examples of two-spirited people in history include the accounts by Spanish [conquistadors](#) who spotted a two-spirited individual(s) in almost every village they entered in Central America. There are descriptions of two-spirited individuals having strong mystical powers. In one account, raiding soldiers of a rival tribe began to attack a group of foraging women. When they perceived that one of the women, the one that did not run away, was a two-spirit, they halted their attack and retreated after the two-spirit countered them with a stick, determining that the two-spirit would have great power which they would not be able to overcome.

Aboriginal people have often been perceived as "warriors," and with the acknowledgment of two-spirit people, that romanticized identity became broken. In order to justify this new "Indian" identity many explained it away as a "form of social failure, women-men are seen as individuals who are not in a position to adapt themselves to the masculine role prescribed by their culture" (Lang, 28). Lang goes on to suggest that two-spirit people lost masculine power socially, so they took on female social roles to climb back up the social ladder within the tribe.

Cross-dressing of two-spirit people was not always an indicator of cross-acting (taking on other gender roles and social status within the tribe). Lang explains "the mere fact that a male wears women's clothing does not say something about his role behavior, his gender status, or even his choice of partner..." (62). Often within tribes, a child's gender was decided dependent upon either their inclination toward masculine or feminine activities, or their [intersex](#) status. Puberty was about the time by which clothing choices were made to physically display their gender choice.

Two-spirit people, specifically male-bodied (biologically male, gender female), could go to war and have access to male activities such as sweat lodges.^[7] However, they also took on female roles such as cooking and other domestic responsibilities. Today's societal standards look down upon feminine males, and this perception of that identity has trickled into Aboriginal society. The acculturation of these attitudes has created a sense of shame and fear towards two-spirit males who live or dress as females and there is no longer a wish to understand the dual lifestyle they possess.

Two-spirits might have relationships with people of either sex.^[8] Female-bodied two-spirits usually had sexual relations or marriages with only females.^[9] In the [Lakota](#) tribe, two-spirits commonly married widowers; a male-bodied two-spirit could perform the function of parenting the children of her husband's late wife without any risk of bearing new children to whom she might give priority.^[10] Partners of two-spirits did not take on any special recognition, although some believed that after having sexual relations with a two-spirit they would obtain magical abilities, given obscene nicknames by the two-spirited person which they believed held "good luck," or in the case of male partners, boosted their masculinity. Relationships between two two-spirited individuals is absent in the literature with one tribe as an exception, the [Tewa](#).^[11] Male-bodied two-spirits regarded each other as "sisters," it is speculated that it may have been seen as [incestuous](#) to have a relationship with another two-spirit.^[12] It is known that in certain tribes a relationship between a two-spirit and non-two-spirit was seen, for the most part, as neither [heterosexual](#) nor [homosexual](#) (in modern day terms) but more "hetero-gender," Europeans however saw them as being homosexual. Partners of two-spirits did not experience themselves as "homosexual," and moreover drew a sharp conceptual line between themselves and two-spirits.^[13]

Although two-spirits were both respected and feared in many tribes, the two-spirit was not beyond reproach or even being killed for bad deeds. In the [Mohave](#) tribe for instance, they frequently became medicine persons and were likely to be suspected of witchcraft in cases of failed harvest or of death. They were, like any other medicine person, frequently killed over these suspicions (such as the female-bodied two-spirit named Sahaykwisa).^[14] Another instance in the late 1840s was of a [Crow](#) male-bodied two-spirit who was caught, possibly raiding horses, by the [Lakota](#) and was killed.^[15]

According to certain reports there had never been an alternative gender among the [Comanche](#).^[16] This is true of some [Apache](#) bands as well, except for the [Lipan](#), [Chiricahua](#), [Mescalero](#), and southern [Dilzhe'e](#).^{[17][18]} One tribe in particular, the [Eyak](#), has a single report from 1938 that they did not have an alternative gender and they held such individuals in low esteem, although whether this sentiment is the result of acculturation or not is unknown.^{[19][20]} It has been claimed that the [Iroquois](#) did not either,^[16] although there is a single report from [Bacqueville de La Potherie](#) in his book published in 1722, *Histoire de l'Amérique septentrionale*, that indicates that an alternative gender existed among them (vol. 3, pg. 41).^[21] Although all tribes were influenced by European [homophobia/transphobia](#),^{[22][23][24][25][26][27]} certain tribes were particularly so, such as the [Acoma](#), [Atsugewi](#), Dilzhe'e (Tonto) Apache, [Cocopa](#), [Costanoan](#), [Klamath](#), [Maidu](#), [Mohave](#), [Nomlaki](#), [Omaha](#), [Oto](#), [Pima](#), Wind River [Shoshone](#), [Tolowa](#), and [Winnebago](#).^[28]

It has been claimed that the [Aztecs](#) and [Incas](#) had laws against such individuals,^{[29][30][31]} though there are some authors who feel that this was exaggerated or the result of

acculturation as all of the documents indicating this are post-conquest and any that existed before had been destroyed by the [Spanish](#).^{[26][32]} The belief that these laws existed, at least for the Aztecs, comes from the [Florentine Codex](#). According to Dr. Nancy Fitch Professor of History at [California State University](#),



. . . then came the Disruption of our Peace. . .

There have been long-lasting and damaging effects of colonization for most Aboriginal peoples, but particularly so for Two-Spirited individuals.

Non-Aboriginal values were thought of as superior to Aboriginal values. For example, Two-Spirited youth were routinely beaten for any expression of intimacy or for any attempt to act other than what was prescribed as a male or female gender role.

Two-Spirited youth and other children were also routinely abused sexually, physically, emotionally and mentally. The pain they endured still resonates today. While traditionally Two-Spirited people were respected and valued, their views have often been replaced by homophobia and internalized racism as a result of church doctrines and assimilation techniques.

Disruption of our Peace has resulted in a painful legacy. . .

- ✚ lower educational attainment, compared to other Canadians
- ✚ unemployment rates that mirror third world countries
- ✚ living conditions are below acceptable standards including the lack of safe drinking water, appropriate sewage disposal and inadequate sources of heat
- ✚ poor nutrition
- ✚ excessively high rates of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) and Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)
- ✚ high rates of suicide, substance use, homelessness and mental illness
- ✚ high rates of disease including, but not limited to diabetes, TB, and HIV/AIDS (one Aboriginal person per day is infected with HIV)
- ✚ while Aboriginal people make up 2.8% of the Canadian population they represent 18% of the federally incarcerated population

- ✚ Aboriginal people make up a large percentage of street workers and those involved in the sex trade
- ✚ Aboriginal women and children suffer from emotional, sexual, and physical abuse at alarming rates
- ✚ the life expectancy of Aboriginal people is less than the Canadian public.

So What of the 2-Spirited People?

In the past, Two-Spirited people were held in the highest of esteem among their peers and within their traditional communities. They were visionaries, healers, medicine people, historians, and keepers of their nations; cultural traditions. Two-spirited individuals were given leading roles in religious and social ceremonies.

With the arrival of the Europeans and Christianity, Two-Spirit people were oppressed; their family and community members were taught to think of them as less than human according to the beliefs and values of the colonizers. They were marginalized, shunned and outcast by their communities.

Today, Canadian society is more enlightened of homosexuality and the gay lifestyle. After passing Human Rights Legislation, there has slowly become more acceptance of gay rights including those of Two-Spirit people. Two-Spirit people are organizing themselves to support each other and to educate and advocate within their communities.

Two-Spirited people, including gay, lesbian, transgender, transsexual, and intersexed are once again reclaiming their place as respected members of the Aboriginal community and rejoining their family and community circles:

- ⊕ We are healers, teachers, trainers, caregivers, activists and artists!
- ⊕ We are loving partners!
- ⊕ We are loving and nurturing parents!
- ⊕ We are families!
- ⊕ We are proud activists!
- ⊕ We are valued!
- ⊕ We are a vital part of a community!

SECTION TWO:
TRENDS AND CHALLENGES WITHIN
THE TWO-SPIRIT COMMUNITY



Trends and Challenges Within the Two-Spirit Community

SOURCE: ANHAN, *Addressing HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis C and Other Sexually Transmitted Infections Within the Two-Spirited Population: A Literature Review of Some Trends and Challenges and Best Practices*
March 2007

Aboriginal Peoples and Sexually Transmitted Diseases: A Snapshot

With the exception of data on HIV/AIDS, very little discrete data exists nationally regarding the prevalence of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including Hepatitis C, within the country's Aboriginal community. However, according to the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC), this much is known generally about STI:

"In Canada, there are three nationally reportable STIs: chlamydia, gonorrhoea and infectious syphilis. Since 1997, there has been a steady increase in the rates of all three infections. This phenomenon is not unique to Canada; other countries, including the U.S. and the U.K. have reported similar trends.^{3,4} Targeted enhanced surveillance and research are required to determine the factors that may be playing a role in these trends."⁸

More specifically, the growing prevalence of HIV/AIDS within the country's Aboriginal community is of increasing concern. According to the PHAC, Aboriginal peoples are overrepresented in the HIV epidemic and make up a growing percentage of positive HIV reports and reported AIDS cases.⁹ Of particular note is the increase of injection drug use as a key mode of HIV transmission in the Aboriginal community: "Of the 860 reports on Aboriginal peoples with known HIV exposure category, 517 were among injecting drug users (IDU) (60.1%). This was the most common way in which HIV was transmitted among Aboriginal peoples between 1998 and December 31, 2003". In AIDS cases, this number is slightly lower where, before 1993, 10.9% of reported AIDS cases among Aboriginal peoples were attributed to IDU. By 2003, this figure had increased to 58.3%.¹⁰

Given this growing evidence, it is obvious that Aboriginal people are an increasingly vulnerable group in the fight against the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Canada:

"The HIV epidemic among Aboriginal peoples shows no signs of slowing down. Evidence suggests that injecting drug use is the most common mode of HIV transmission among Aboriginal peoples, Aboriginal women make up a large part of the HIV epidemic in their communities, and Aboriginal peoples are

⁸ Public Health Agency of Canada. Canadian Guidelines on Sexually Transmitted Infections: 2006 Edition http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/std-mts/sti_2006/pdf/sti2006_e.pdf

⁹ Public Health Agency of Canada. Understanding the HIV/AIDS Epidemic among Aboriginal Peoples in Canada: The Community at a Glance <http://www.phac-aspc.ca/publicat/epiu-aepi/epi-note/index.html> 2004 (page 1).

¹⁰ Ibid. (pg 2-3)

infected at a younger age than non-Aboriginal persons. This indicates the different characteristics of the HIV epidemic among Aboriginal peoples and emphasizes the complexity of Canada's HIV epidemic. More complete information on the pattern of HIV/AIDS in Canada and HIV testing among Aboriginal peoples are needed to guide prevention and control strategies. In addition, it is vital to conduct further research to increase our understanding of the specific impact of HIV on Aboriginal peoples".¹¹

The Role of Injection Drug Use

Sharing needles continues to be the main risk factor for injection drug users because of several factors that increase the risks for HIV, Hepatitis C and other blood-borne diseases. These factors become more pronounced when HIV and other similar infections reach a benchmark among the IDU population.

The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) indicates that: "At the end of 2005, an estimated 58,000 people were living with HIV/AIDS: 17% were attributed to IDU;"¹² and has found that injection drug use is even more prevalent within the Aboriginal IDU population: "An estimated 53% of all new HIV infections among Aboriginal people in 2005 were attributed to injecting drug use".¹³

Aboriginal Men Who Have Sex With Men

Within the general Canadian population, men who have sex with men (MSM) accounted for 45% of all new HIV infections in Canada in 2005. As well, the estimated number of new infections among MSM in 2005 had not decreased and may have increased slightly compared to 2002.¹⁴ However, these statistics are not borne out within the Aboriginal population of MSM.

According to the PHAC: ". . . there are notable differences between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal reported AIDS cases and positive HIV test reports with respect to exposure category. Although the proportion attributed to heterosexual exposure is similar, Aboriginal peoples have a higher proportion of reports attributed to IDU and a smaller proportion to MSM".¹⁵

This observation would imply that injection drug use among Aboriginal MSM rather than direct sexual contact is perhaps a larger contributing factor to the number of HIV infections in this group.

¹¹ Ibid (pg 5)

¹² PHAC Populations at Risk http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/aids-sida/populations_e.html

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ PHAC. HIV Infections Among MSM in Canada (Epi Update) <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca>

¹⁵ Ibid.

Aboriginal Women

According to the PHAC, Aboriginal women are also overrepresented and comprise a comparatively large part of the Aboriginal HIV epidemic:

- Before 1993, females represented 11.9% of reported AIDS cases among Aboriginal peoples; in the year 2003, this percentage increased to 44.0%.
- During 1998-2003, females represented 44.6% of positive HIV test reports among Aboriginal peoples.¹⁶

Discrimination and Homophobia

Along with the increasing rates of Aboriginal MSM and women becoming infected with HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis C and other sexually transmitted diseases, there continues to be high levels of discrimination and homophobia directed towards these individuals from within non-Aboriginal society:

“The degree of tolerance towards Two Spirited or Bi-sexual Aboriginal persons varies within communities, but has a decided impact in many places on how those who test positive are treated and accepted by both community members/family and medical staff. As well, the hostility that exists towards Two Spirited people in some communities means the Elders and other leaders are reluctant to speak about the issue (Monette and Albert 2001;19) A number of Two Spirited people in urban centers report that they were forced to leave their home communities because of homophobia (Monette and Albert 2001;27)

A study of Two Spirit men in Toronto concluded that the core issue of homophobia must be addressed in order to reduce risk taking behavior among this group. More than any other factor, it was the sense of alienation that contributed to engaging in high risk activities which makes the Two Spirit men vulnerable to HIV/AIDS (CAAN 2002j). It also made them less willing to access intervention services that generally did not convey respect, support and some sense of community for Two Spirited men (Monette and Albert 2001).”¹⁷

Open displays of discrimination and homophobia are also occurring within Aboriginal communities with devastating effects:

“Homophobia is a relatively new phenomenon in Native communities, one that stems from the lack of understanding and acceptance that colonizing Europeans had towards Native culture. The openly practicing homosexuals that they encountered in Native communities reinforced colonizers’ beliefs that they had a divine right to destroy

Native people and their culture.¹ Homosexuality, to the Europeans,

¹⁶ PHAC. Understanding the HIV/AIDS Epidemic Among Aboriginal Peoples in Canada: The Community at a Glance (December: 2004)

¹⁷ Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network. Canadian Aboriginal People Living with HIV/AIDS: Care, Treatment and Support Issues http://www.caan.ca/pdf/CAAN_CTS_e_final.pdf

was forbidden, a taboo, a blasphemy to their God, and yet another reason that Native Americans needed to be converted to Christianity. Sadly, many Native communities now perpetuate this same homophobia, resulting in Native lesbians being forced off their reservations to urban areas where they hope to find acceptance. This exile deprives them of their family and community support network, and also robs the community of their traditional contributions".¹⁸

Legacy of the Residential School System

Wounded children grow up to be wounded adults. This is the legacy for thousands of Aboriginal people who survived their (and their family members') participation in the residential school system in Canada. Some studies have linked the residential school system to the current situation facing Aboriginal people, and especially the Two-Spirit population, today:

"The legacy of Indian Residential Schools lives on today. Many First Nations people have become anti-social and choose drugs, alcohol and/or violence as a way of coping with life. . . . Another devastating result of the residential school experience was the denigration of women and Two-spirit people in Aboriginal communities. The dominant religion did not make room for women to have equal roles as men, or for there to be alternate genders or sexual preferences than that of heterosexuals. As a direct result of the residential school experience, homophobia is now rampant in most Aboriginal communities, even more so than in mainstream society. The religious dogma of the Residential Schools have erased a proud and rich history of Two-spirit people in most Aboriginal communities."¹⁹

As a result of this legacy, healing is required on an extremely wide scale.

Human Rights Violations

The just and equal application of human rights laws demands that all individuals be treated fairly, with dignity and respect, regardless of sexual orientation. Internationally, the United Nations through its Human Rights Council, continues to urge its member States to address human rights inequities and violations against those marginalized by their gender identity and/or sexual orientation:

"Regrettably, the voices of lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgender people have often been silenced or marginalized within the international system. As recently as last month, the ECOSOC NGO Committee rejected every application for consultative status by NGOs representing lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgender people, thus denying these groups the ability to even speak with their own voice before this inaugural meeting of the Council".²⁰

¹⁸ Mending the Sacred Hoop Technical Assistance Project. Introductory Manual 2003: Embracing Our Two Spirited Relatives <http://www.msh-ta.org/Resources>

¹⁹ Urban Native Youth Association. Two-Spirit Youth Speak Out <http://www.unya.bc.ca>

²⁰ Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network. Statement to the Human Rights Council re: Marginalized Groups.

Fortunately, Canada has been more progressive than most when it comes to addressing the human rights needs of the LGBTTT populations, as noted during its high level statement to last year's Commission: "What do we expect from a multilateral system for promotion and protection of human rights? ... This system should be flexible, so that we can make progress in new areas, such as fighting discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity".²¹

However, in spite of the Canadian government's desire to fight discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, most within these communities would concur there is a considerable distance to travel on the road to equality and fair treatment for them in this country.

Lack of Statistical Data for LGBTTT

With the exception of the above trends gathered and supported by the federal government, there is an overall lack of statistical data specifically for the Aboriginal lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and two-spirit population. This gap in data needs to be addressed in order to begin developing a clear picture of the impact of Hepatitis C, HIV/AIDS and other STIs on this segment of the Aboriginal population. However, PHAC tells us that this much is currently known generally about the rates of STIs among women who have sex with women (WSW) generally:

"There are very few data on rates of STIs among WSW, although studies have consistently found higher rates of STIs – specifically human papillomavirus (HPV), genital warts, HIV, syphilis and genital ulcer disease – among heterosexual and bisexual women than among women who have sex with women exclusively.⁵³⁻⁵⁵ Although STI transmission among WSW is strongly correlated with sexual contact with male partners, sexual transmission of HIV, syphilis, HPV, herpes simplex virus types 1 and 2 (HSV-1 and -2), *Trichomonas vaginalis*, *Chlamydia trachomatis* and HAV have been reported in WSW with no history of a male partner.⁵⁶⁻⁶¹ Higher rates of bacterial vaginosis and hepatitis C virus (HCV) have been reported for WSW than for women with male sex partners only.^{55,62,63} The few studies exploring STI risk behaviours among WSW have demonstrated higher rates of sexual contact with homosexual/bisexual men;^{55,64,66} sex with HIV-infected partners;⁶⁴ injection drug use;^{54,55,64,66} sex for money or drugs;^{54,64,66} and a greater number of recent partners⁶⁴ among WSW compared to exclusively heterosexual women".²²

SECTION THREE:

Sexual Orientation and Gender Equity <http://www.aidslaw.ca>

²¹ Ibid.

²² Public Health Agency of Canada. Canadian Guidelines on Sexually Transmitted Infections 2006 Edition http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/std-mts/sti_2006/pdf/sti2006_e.pdf

*STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE HEALTH
AND WELLBEING FOR TWO-SPIRIT PEOPLE*



Some Strategies to Improve Health and Wellbeing for Two-Spirit People

SOURCE: ANHAN, *Addressing HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis C and Other Sexually Transmitted Infections Within the Two-Spirited Population: A Literature Review of Some Trends and Challenges and Best Practices*
March 2007

Reduce Ongoing Risk Behaviours

All evidence indicates that IDU within the Aboriginal community continues to be the most common method in which STIs are transmitted as well as an ongoing risk factor within the population. Reducing risk behaviours such as IDU will continue to be a ongoing challenge.

As PHAC indicates: "Injecting drug users (IDU) continue to be an important risk group in the Canadian HIV epidemic. Recent evidence supports the trends seen in surveillance data suggesting that injecting drug use is a particularly important risk factor for HIV and AIDS among Aboriginal peoples. ... Aboriginal people are over-represented in the IDU population and are at even higher risk than other members of this high-risk population".²³

And even more challenging for ANHAN is that, according to PHAC, Regina's IDU population continues to be comprised primarily of Aboriginal individuals: "A 2000 study of IDU in Regina indicated that of the 255 participants, 90% identified themselves as an Aboriginal person".²⁴

Strengthen Prevention

Many stigmas and fears exist that impede prevention messages. Even when someone is HIV positive, these negative attitudes can affect how they access proper medical attention, care and support. Therefore, one can see how difficult it may be to gain a more accurate assessment of how prevalent Hepatitis C, HIV/AIDS and STIs are among the Aboriginal Two-Spirit population. Strengthening holistic prevention and risk reduction strategies may provide invaluable data on the incidence of STIs within Regina's Aboriginal Two-Spirit community. PHAC's new guidelines on sexually transmitted infections supports this approach:

"The prevention and control of STIs cannot be approached with a narrow focus. . . Both primary and secondary prevention activities are paramount to reducing the incidence (newly acquired infections) and prevalence (number of cases) of STIs. Primary prevention aims to prevent exposure by identifying at-

²³ Public Health Agency of Canada. *HIV/AIDS Among Aboriginal Peoples in Canada: A Continuing Concern*
http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/publicat/epiu-aepi/epi-06/pdf/epi06_e.pdf

²⁴ Ibid.

risk individuals and performing thorough assessments, patient-centred counselling and education.⁷ Secondary prevention involves reducing the prevalence of STIs through the detection of infections in at-risk populations, counselling, conducting partner notification and treating infected individuals and contacts in a timely manner, thus preventing and/or limiting further spread.⁷²⁵

Culturally-Appropriate Services for Two-Spirited People

As ANHAN has already demonstrated through their ten years of operation, the Aboriginal IDU population needs and requires traditional, culturally-appropriate Aboriginal health and wellness services. The Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network (CAAN) also supports the need for culturally-appropriate strategies:

“60.5% of the APHA study group use or need traditional Aboriginal health and wellness services such as Elder counsel, ceremonies, medicines, and sharing/healing circles. This reflects the extent to which cultural values, belief and practices shape individual responses to HIV illness. APHAs offered numerous unsolicited positive comments about their experiences using traditional health and wellness services. For example, APHAs benefited from advice by Elders, and received social support by participating in sharing and healing circles. Other researchers have also concluded that when Aboriginal people are afforded opportunities to learn and re-connect with their culture, they generally build stronger coping mechanisms for negative life experiences associated with the disease”.²⁶

The same most likely holds true for the Two-Spirited population. However, there are additional factors unique to this population that will need to be considered when designing programs and services:

“While respect and esteem for two-spirits is a traditional part of Native society, many two-spirited people have lost the status they once held in their community. While some may have their two-spiritedness downplayed by others who say, “that is just Sue, our mother, our cousin, our sister, our friend”, other two-spirits have been ostracized or banished from their communities and their contributions to their societies denied”.²⁷

²⁵ Public Health Agency of Canada. Canadian Guidelines on Sexually Transmitted Infections 2006 Edition http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/std-mts/sti_2006/pdf/sti2006_e.pdf

²⁶ Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network. Canadian Aboriginal People Living with HIV/AIDS: Care, Treatment and Support Issues http://www.caan.ca/pdf/CAAN_CTS_e_final.pdf

²⁷ Mending the Sacred Hoop Technical Assistance Project. Introductory Manual 2003: Embracing Our Two Spirited Relatives <http://www.msh-ta.org/Resources>

SECTION FOUR:
***TWO-SPIRIT WELLNESS:
RECLAIMING TRADITIONAL TEACHINGS
AND CREATING CIRCLES OF SUPPORT***



Two-Spirit Wellness: Reclaiming Traditional Teachings and Creating Circles of Support

*The information here is only a small portion of the many vast and extensive Aboriginal Teachings that exist. Teachings vary from First Nation to First Nation and even from one geographical region to another. Every attempt has been made to present this information in a way that honours and respects traditional teachings and protocols. **Always consult with a Traditional Elder, Healer or Medicine Person to seek clarification and to identify the practices and ceremonies that might work best for you.***

Healing is a personal journey. Only you can decide when you are ready to begin your personal healing journey. Once you begin, the journey will be lifelong. As with all journeys in life, the road to healing will have forks and turns, potholes and mountains to climb. But most importantly, a healing journey will provide insight and teachings that will help to guide you through every minute of every day.

The healing models and tools included here are provided for guidance and reference. The traditional knowledge-keepers are our Elders and these are the “specialists” we seek out within our Aboriginal community when we require advice, help, and support.

The power of Aboriginal tradition and ceremony is in the ability to bring peace, harmony and balance into our lives – with the goal of creating a healthy and holistic life.

Traditional Aboriginal Teachings



Circle of Life

The Medicine Wheel As a Life Force

The following information is contained within the document:
Taking Care of Business – A Peer Training & Research Manual for HIV + Injection Drug Users
Addictions Foundation of Manitoba

The Medicine Wheel has been called many things and is described in many ways by people today. It is alluded to in phrases like “the Sacred Hoop”, “the Traditional Circle”, “the Web” or in a ceremony, and each is used to pay respect to the various vantage points from which Aboriginal people may see this sacred symbol.

Diversity among traditional Aboriginal people has always been perceived as a sign of sacredness. One’s uniqueness and differences are viewed as a valued contribution to the whole. There are sacred numbers that help typify a wheel of medicine when it is related to a living sign of creation. Each wheel will be seen differently depending on the location, tribe or family one comes from.

There are some fundamental things that remain the same wherever one travels. Most often a medicine wheel will have included four main parts of the circle. This is reflective of the understanding that it requires more than one thing to create life and when the four parts are functioning well together there is harmony and wellness.

What remains the same are seven aspects of each direction that offer many layered teachings and viewpoints.

These may be symbolized differently by teaching, clan, family, gender, nation, ceremony or geography. Within each of the four aspects of the circle an unfolding of the layers of each will reveal seven layers. Each of the four components will host these seven layers.

No one nation, community, society or individual will have the same symbolism as their relatives. There will be similarities and these will be emphasized when looking for relationship. In essence, it is the celebration of differences through the sharing of similarities.

The core or centre is where the SELF will find its balance.

The Four Directions

East

The first part of the Medicine Wheel is the East. It represents the Infant or child stage of life. This does not mean that all children are in the East and only the East. One child may have had to grow up fast, raise siblings or look after themselves. Another example may be someone looking at an abusive past and just beginning to heal – they would be considered in the “child stage” of healing for that particular issue. It is about beginnings, starting journeys, realizing something for the first time. It also represents the physical part of a person. The first thing a child does when they are growing is touch and feel things. They put them in their mouths: they explore. These things can all be represented as the “rising sun”. The medicine in the East is sage. Sage represents kindness and gentleness. The gifts the sage smudge brings are renewal and openness. There are Elders who practice the belief that women on their period or “moon time” (because the cycle of the moon is similar to a woman’s menstrual cycle) can smudge using a certain kind of sage. The season represented by the East is spring, the color is yellow and the animal that watches over the direction is the Eagle because it is the only life form that can travel from humans to the Creator and back again.

South

The second part of the Medicine Wheel is the South. It is the Youth stage of life and is responsible for the emotional part of the person. Youth stages of life, learning and healing are usually filled with emotion and a search for identity, meaning or acceptance. Youth is represented by the season of summer, and the medicine for the South is sweetgrass. Sweetgrass, to Aboriginal people is very sacred. Some people have said that sweetgrass is so sacred, it’s the one grass that certain animals won’t graze on, or eat. Sweetgrass is used to invite in goodness, good energy or good spirits. It cleans the energy path so that the good things can flow in easier. Sweetgrass is picked and braided before it dries. The color representing the South is Red, for the earth and the animal watching over the Southern direction is the mouse. The mouse is the keeper of innocence and prosperity.

West

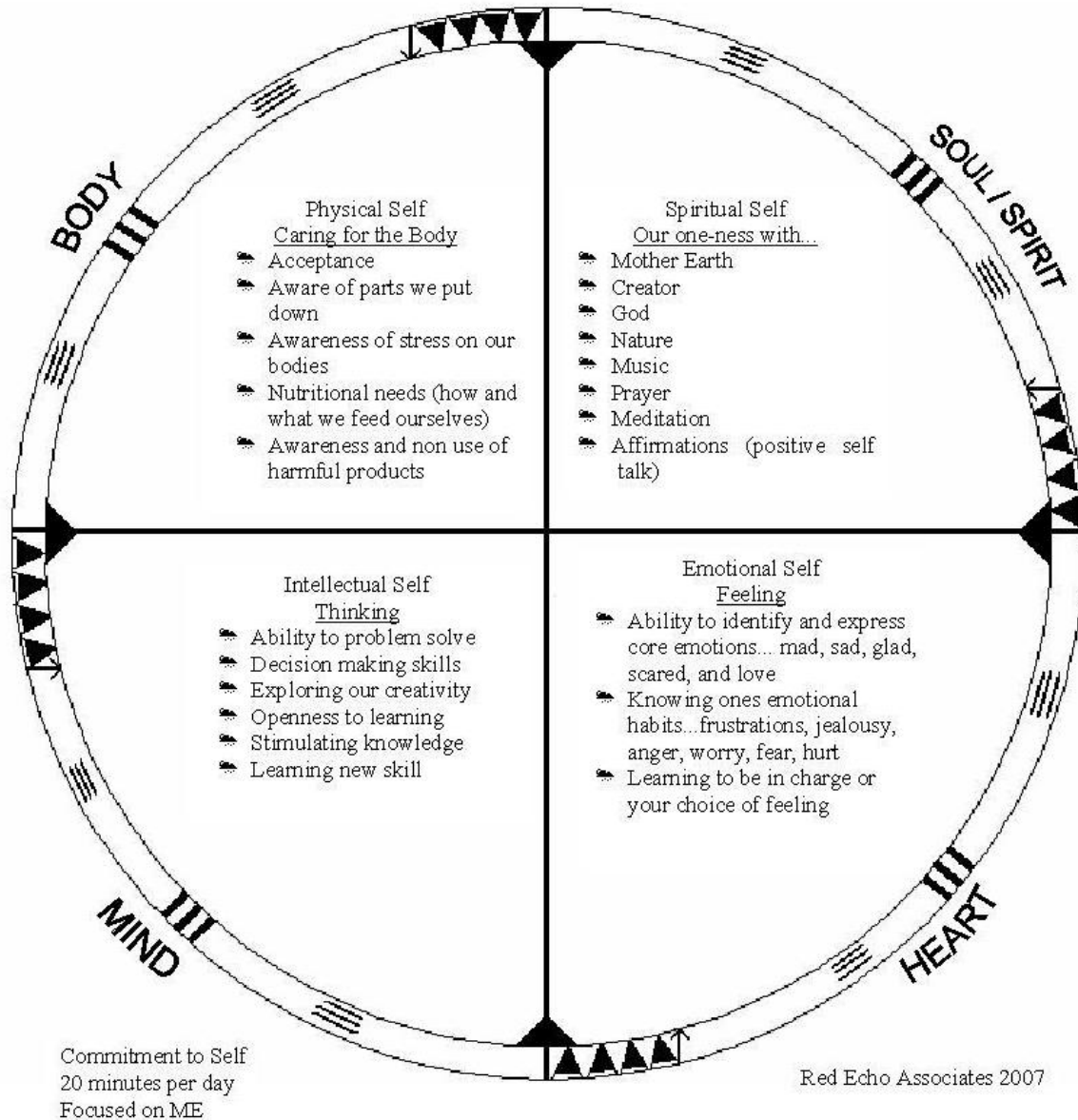
The third part of the Medicine Wheel is represented by the Western Direction. It is the adult stage of life or learning. The West is responsible for the mental or thinking aspect of a person's being. The gift it brings to the mental aspect of a person is introspection or "looking inside of yourself." The West can teach us to look inside of ourselves and see who we really are or what we would like to become. This involves acceptance and growth. The animal watching over the West is the grizzly bear. The grizzly fasts during the winter (meaning they do not eat or drink) in order to be able to look within themselves and from there to help people. The bear is seen as being a brother and protector to humankind. Whatever a bear eats can be eaten by humans and the Elders say that bears only eat medicine. Whatever a bear eats has medicinal qualities which is why they fast, so that they can learn more about the medicines and in turn teach people about them. The color of the West is black, to symbolize depth and looking within. The smudge medicine related to the West is Cedar. Cedar is used a lot in sweatlodge ceremonies because it helps the "looking within" process. Cedar provides clarity and helps keep out negative energies. The season represented by the West is autumn.

North

The fourth part of the Medicine Wheel is represented by the Northern direction and is the elder stage of life or learning. This means that the person has come to a point where they can begin passing on knowledge or experiences to others. If you have been healing from abuse, can sit and tell your story, listen to others and see where they are in their own personal healing you have reached an elder point in your own life in a that specific area. People reach the elder stage when they have gathered much life experience and can be open enough to share it and allow others to learn from it, without pushing or pressuring anyone into learning or changing. The North represents wisdom and faith. To reach this point in any life cycle requires both of these. The season it represents is Winter and the animal watching over it is the sacred white buffalo. The white buffalo carries a tremendous amount of wisdom, healing and teachings. The color symbolizing the North is white, for purity and constancy. The medicine for the North is tobacco. Tobacco is the first medicine that was given to the people of the plains. It was given for pipe ceremonies, and those nations given the gift of the pipe were given tobacco along side of it. Tobacco is used to send up prayers for growth and healing. It is offered for thankfulness and gratitude when healing has been performed.

The following depiction of Medicine Wheel Teachings is used with permission from Red Echo Associates, Inc.

A HOLISTIC MODEL



The following information was obtained online at
<http://www.aht.ca>
 SOURCE: Anishnawbe Health, Toronto, Ontario

Approaching a Traditional Healer, Elder or Medicine Person

When you are on a Healing Journey, it is a natural step for you to seek help and guidance from a Traditional Healer, an Elder or a Medicine Person.

Healers

When Healers talk about healing, they say that the Creator and the spirits work through them to help the people. If they are asked in what way they are different, they say that the gifts they have and that they are allowed to use is what makes them different. They always express their deep gratitude for the healing powers of everything that the Creator has put here and for the spirits that do the healing.

Each Healer has a purpose and that purpose is to help the people. They tend not to call themselves Healers but might refer to themselves as helpers in Traditional Healing or helpers to the spirits.

The help that they give is credited to the spirit that they have, the Creator, and the spirit helpers who come in many forms to assist them. Helpers can manifest in any form. They can be animals, trees, sticks, rocks, fire, water, plants and earth.

The abilities of some Healers are said to be their birth right and generally these individuals start training and working at an early age. The ability of others may be revealed later in life as a result of a severe illness or a near-death experience. Some may on fasts or on a vision quest where their gifts and their responsibilities are revealed and explained to them by the spirits.

A Healer can be given his or her direction of how to take care of the people through dreams or visions.

There are similarities to all healing practices but each Healer has their own way and medicines that they work with. Each Healer is an individual and they live their lives according to the teachings they have received. Some may work with plants, some may counsel, some may use other forms of doctoring and some may heal with their hands. They may work through ceremonies such as the sweat lodge or the shaking tent. There may be one or many forms of healing that they have received training in.

Depending on the form that their healing work takes, Healers may use drums and shakers as they sing and pray. They will use one or more of the four sacred medicines for smudging.

Medicine People

Some Healers are called Medicine People because they work with the plant medicines. They know about the plants and prepare medicines.

There are special procedures for everything. If a Healer needs powerful medicine for someone, the Healer has to find out how to get it, how to keep and store it, and how it should be used and given. One plant may have five or six different uses. The Healer may need to fast in order to learn about a particular medicine. Healers say that they are continually learning.

“Doctoring”

“Doctoring” takes many forms. The use of the medicines is one of them. Removing sickness by extraction is another.

Some Healers are specialists in treating certain illnesses. For example, a Healer may have special abilities to help with heart disease or with diabetes.

A Traditional Healing is holistic, if a person seeks help for an ulcer, it is not only the ulcer that is treated. The root cause of the condition is addressed.

“Spiritual Healing”

All Healers look at all aspects of the individual – the spiritual, emotional, mental and physical – as they are interrelated. There are some who describe the work they do in terms of working with energy, the mind and the spirit. They might work with eagle feathers to get to the core of the problem.

‘Counseling’

Counseling is an intrinsic part of all Healing, but there are Healers whose particular gift is to use words to heal. Some communities have seers who it is said can see backwards and forwards.

‘Ceremonies’

Healers may perform doctoring during a sweat lodge ceremony or they may take care of you when you go on your fast for healing. They may work through the shaking tent to advise and prescribe and they may support you when you participate in the sun dance.

Elders

A Traditional Elder is someone who follows the teachings of our ancestors. It is said Traditional Elders walk and talk the good way of life.

Traditional Elders teach and share the wisdom they have gained of the culture, history and the language. The sharing of their wisdom is healing.

An Elder does not have to be a senior but could be someone younger who has many teachings and who has earned the respect of their community by contributing to its spiritual development.

Visits with Healers, Elders and Medicine People

When you go to a Healer, Elder or Medicine Person, be yourself, be respectful to them and to yourself.

Take tobacco to give, as an offering. Tobacco is meant for that communication between you, the Healer and the Creator. The tobacco can be in any form. For example, it can be one cigarette from a pack, it can be a pack of cigarettes, it can be a pouch of tobacco or it can be loose tobacco wrapped in a small square of cloth (called a tobacco tie).

Talk to the Healer or Elder explaining why you have come to them.

Refrain from taking alcohol or drugs for four days before going to a Healer.

Women schedule their appointments with Healers for times when they are not on their moontime.

Other gifts can be given to express your gratitude for the help you have received. This may be in the form of an item such as a basket or blanket or it could be money.

There are certain protocols specific to each Healer, Elder or Medicine Person. Many Healers will have helpers who will convey these protocols to you. For example, they will let you know whether you may receive treatment after having chemotherapy.

As our awareness and knowledge of our traditions and cultures increases, so does our honor and respect for these ways. This has not always been the case in our communities. There are always those who present themselves as Healers, Elders or Medicine People who have not earned that title and may use the teachings and medicines in the wrong way. It is important for everyone, especially young people, to be aware of this and to exercise caution when they seek healing, teachings or advice. It is advisable to consult with people whom you trust to get referrals to respected and recognized Traditional Elders, Healers or Medicine People.

Feasts and Giveaways

Feasts and Giveaways are an important part of Native life. They are held throughout the year to acknowledge the help received from the spirit world, our relatives and ancestors, and other members of the community. Feasting gives us the opportunity to honor all those who have helped us, to feed them and express our respect for what they have done for us.

Feasting is also spoken of as the way we strengthen the life and spirit of our bodies.

Types of Feasts

Feasting may be an individual or group event. At larger gatherings, drumming, singing and Traditional dancing may be a part of the ceremony and feast. Tobacco is always offered and the foods served vary according to the customs of the community or territory and the reason for the feast.

Feasting is done for many reasons. Some of these are given here:

‘Seasons’

There are spirit feasts with the four seasons, the spring, summer, fall, and winter. The feast for honoring and feeding the dead is held in the fall and, in some communities, also in the winter.

Some people hold a feast before the seeds are put in the ground and again after harvest time. Feasting the harvest may consist of taking a plate of food back to the garden and leaving it there as a way of giving back to the earth.

‘Names and Clans’

Feasts are held at naming ceremonies. When clans gather they will feast their clan, usually every spring and fall.

‘Fasts and Sweats’

Fasters are given a drink of water and berries after their fast and the sacrifice they have made for everyone is honored at a feast. Feasts are often held after the sweat lodge ceremony as well.

‘Sacred Items’

We feast the gifts that we carry. We acknowledge the spirit of our pipes and feathers for their power to help us. We have drum feasts for the drums we carry. We feast all the items that we took with us on our fasts, such as our colors, feathers and shakers.

‘Berry Ceremony’

A berry ceremony is held to thank Mother Earth who has given birth to the berries.

‘Moontime Ceremony’

There is a feast for a girl who has just begun her moontime.

‘Helpers’

We feast the helpers that are given to us and all the others who so eagerly give us help when we ask for it. People will feast the eagle, the bear, the wolf, the mountain, the fire, the plant medicines, and all the other spirit helpers who come to them.

‘Many Other Feasts’

There are feasts for the salmon and deer because they have come back.

There is a feast of wild meat before the girls go out to dig for bitter root and carrots.

‘Feast for the Dead’

A feast is also a way to maintain a relationship with our families or loved ones who have gone to the spirit world. At a Feast for the Dead, the teachings say that we can call the spirits back. This is also the time when we can ask them for help in addition to showing our gratitude to them for the help that they have given us. In some communities this ceremony is held in the fall between the time that the leaves fall off the trees and the first snowfall.

The feast begins with prayers and an offering of tobacco. The people and the directions are acknowledged and the spirits are told what is being done. The food is set out on the table.

The foods prepared include those that the relatives and ancestors liked when they lived here. This might be wild meat, corn, squash, and berries. Other foods and teas, such as cedar tea, raspberry tea, and red willow tea, are added to those four basic foods. Salmon, bannock and wild rice are other foods included in feasts. The smudge bowl is taken around the food and people are smudged.

Gifts of cloth and leather are also given with the food and tobacco offering for the spirits.

Out of respect, the younger ones make up a plate of food for the Elders. By doing this, the younger ones learn about taking care of another human being. The Elders are the first to be served and then the other participants follow in a specified order. As the feasters make up their plate of food from the dishes laid out on the table, they put a spoonful of food for their relatives and ancestors into a pot set out for this purpose. At the end of the feast this pot of food is taken outside and the food is set on the ground for the spirits. Any food remaining on the table at the end of the feast is taken out and put on the ground or burned when the sun comes up in the morning. It is said that during the night, many spirits come from every direction to share in the feast. The spirits of the relatives and ancestors bring other spirits who haven't been remembered and they share the food with them.

A feast will be given when a family member has died. A sacred fire burns for four days and a food offering is made for the person each day before sundown. A ceremony is held before the feast where it is said you eat with your relative for the last time.

Giveaways

Very often a feast is followed with a giveaway. We have given tobacco and food to the spirits to express our gratitude for what we have received, such as a return to good health. With the giveaway we thank the people who have come to be our supporters. Some people say that the things that we give away are things that we are giving to the other side, the spirits, even though a person here is receiving the gift.

The person who is holding the feast and giveaway may make ribbon shirts, moccasins, dresses and small tobacco pouches for the people, or they may give blankets and other useful items for the home. They feel good after giving away the gifts that have been made and that they value.

At a traditional wedding, for example, the couple gives all kinds of gifts to those who attend. By doing so, they lay the foundation of sharing for their future together.

A good example of feasts and giveaways is when a young warrior has his first kill. The new hunter holds a feast and gives all of the animals' meat to the community in respect for becoming a hunter. This is the rite of passage of a boy to a hunter.

Fasting

Fasting is one of the many ceremonies that has been practiced in First Nations communities for thousands of years. In the past, the Elders of a community would take the young people out to fast in order to help them find their direction in life. Today, as our cultural traditions and ways of healing are being revived in our communities, more Native people are seeking answers through the ceremony of fasting.

Reasons for Going on a Fast

When you choose to go on a fast, it is with a purpose in mind. You may go out to seek direction in your life or you may go out to learn more about our ways and about Creation. You may fast for your spirit name and colors. Healers may fast in order to find and gain permission to use a certain plant medicine. You may fast for many other reasons. Whatever the reason for your fast, you prepare yourself beforehand through prayer and tobacco.

It is said that when you fast you are sacrificing yourself for all, for your family and for your community, by denying yourself the basic comforts of shelter, water nourishment and companionship.

Different Places and Ways Fasts are Conducted

Fasts are conducted in many different ways and in many different places. You may be put out to fast deep in the woods, in a field, on an island or a mountain.

Fasters may stay in a fasting lodge that they themselves have constructed of saplings and tarps, they may sit on a platform in a tree with a tarpaulin to keep them dry if it rains, or they may stay in a fasting hut. Wherever they spend their one, two, three or more days of fasting, they will bring with them the medicines – tobacco, cedar, sage, sweetgrass or other plant medicines that they may be used in their region and their sacred items such as a drum, pipe, smudge bowl, feathers and ribbons of their colors.

Spring and fall are generally the time for fasting. Some teachings say that you fast in the fall to take away negative energy and you fast in the spring to replenish yourself with new energy. Healers and Elders say that fasting has a cleansing and healing effect. Fasting has also been described as a healing way where the first person we face when we fast is ourselves. People may fast either in the spring or fall each year.

Offerings are made before the fast. This may be food offerings as well as tobacco. Very often, fasters will go into the sweat lodge before they are taken out to their fasting spot and later, when they are brought in from their fast. The fasting conductor lets the fasters know the connection he or she has with the spirit world.

Firekeepers tend the sacred fire at the base camp for the duration of your fast. The person who has put you out on your fast looks after you while you are out.

Your fasting site might be encircled with cedar and tobacco ties. You might build a sacred fire at your site where you offer your tobacco. However your fasting site is set up, you are in the care of Mother Earth and our First Family.

Fasting Experiences

Everything you see on a fast is important, even the little bugs around your fasting area. You may yourself feeling closer to the sky world than you have ever felt before when the sacred light from the moon and stars brightens the night sky. You may gain an increased awareness of the beauty of the natural world, our first Family.

Your dreams and visions are all part of the journey. It is said that fasting brings you closer to the spirit world and that your spirit wakes up when you are on a fast. You may feel that the questions you were asking have been answered.

When you are on a fast, you may have your sacred items with you – your drum so that you can sing the traditional songs you have learned and the sacred medicines to help you in your prayers. It is said that when you call on the spirits with a song, they will hear it and come to help you.

Ending A Fast

At the end of a fast, when the person who has taken you out to fast comes to get you, you may be taken into a sweat lodge where you have the opportunity to talk about your fasting experience. Your fast may be ended by drinking spring water or cedar water and berries. A Traditional Feast is prepared for the fasters in celebration of the spiritual journey the fasters have experienced.

Fasting Conductors

The conductor of fasts has been trained and has earned the right to take people out on a fast. The conductor does this in a certain way, in the way that he or she has been taught. The conductor of a fast is able to tell you the Traditional teachings of the fast they are taking people out on.

The fasting conductor should be informed of any health condition you have before you go out on a fast.

The conductor of a fast watches over the physical and spiritual well-being of the fasters whom he or she takes out to fast.

The conductor of a fast should be able to interpret the dreams, visions and gifts that have come to you and to offer guidance about your fasting experience.

Moontime

Moontime and Grandmother Moon

Native people know that everything in Creation has spirit. The plants, the trees, the water, the wind, the rocks and the mountains have spirit. The sky worlds, including the moon and the other planets, have spirit. All these are part of our First Family, the natural world.

The Moon is called Grandmother Moon and great respect is paid to her.

Recognition of the Moon in the Calendar

The cycles of the moon determine our yearly calendar. The changes that come with each passing moon indicate the times for planting, harvesting, hunting and gathering. In the Anishnawbe calendar the names of each month include the word 'moon' and reflect the close connection between the cycles of the moon and the plant and animal life on Turtle Island.

Spirit Moon
Mnidoo-Giizis (January)
Bear Moon
Mkwa-Giizis (February)
Sugar Moon
Ziisbaakdoke-Giizis (March)
Sucker Moon
Namebine-Giizis (April)
Flower Moon
Waawaaskone-Giizis (May)
Strawberry Moon
Ode'mini'-Giizis (June)
Raspberry Moon
Mskomini-Giizis (July)
Thimbleberry Moon
Datkaagmini-Giizis (August)
Corn Moon
Mdaanini-Giizis (September)
Falling Leaves Moon
Binaakwe-Giizis (October)
Freezing Moon
Bashkakodini-Giizis (November)
Little Spirit Moon
Mnidoo-Giisoons (December)

Grandmother Moon: The Female Energy

It is said that Grandmother Moon watches over the waters of the Earth. We see this in her regulating of the tides.

Grandmother Moon controls all female life. Much of the water life spawn according to the cycles of the moon.

It is said that Grandmother Moon is especially close to women because she governs the women's cleansing cycle, the natural cycle of menstruation known as the moon time.

Just as Grandmother Moon watches over the waters of the Earth, it is said that women watch over the waters of the people. Water always come before new life.

Moontime

It is said that the moon cycle is a gift to women. It is a time to cleanse herself mentally, physically, emotionally and spiritually.

The moon time is considered a time of power, second only to the ability of the Great Spirit to give life. That is how strong that power is.

Women can ask Grandmother Moon for direction in life, for wisdom, and for help for her children and others. Grandmother Moon can give her healing and balancing energy to women.

Some teachings say that when women are on their moon time, the Creator comes closer to them.

When women are on their moon time, their power is at its strongest and this is acknowledged in that they do not prepare foods or medicines, take part in ceremonies or use the pipes and other sacred items. The moon time is a ceremony of life for women and a time for renewal. The moon time is the time for women to relax and take it easy. All the chores are done by other family members. It is a time for women to think about themselves, their families, their relatives or anyone they think needs help. It is a time of reflection.

Teachings on the Moontime

In the past, when a young woman had her first moon time her aunts or grandmothers would take her to a small lodge where she would be close to the natural world. The young woman is sacred at that time. She is now able to give life. She would be given the teachings about her new life from her mother, grandmothers or aunts. She would be taught about her role as a woman in the community.

Honoring Grandmother Moon

Some teachings say that when the moon is full, women can ask Grandmother Moon to give them new energy.

Around the full moon, women on their moon time become very intuitive. It is an opportunity for women to take time for themselves to help foster their intuition and to have strong dreams.

When the moon is full, a woman can do a ceremony to honor and seek guidance from Grandmother Moon. The ceremony can be simple. A woman can sit on the ground and ask Grandmother Moon to replenish her body with new energy. She takes water with her which she asks the Moon to bless. That water then becomes her medicine.

Full moon ceremonies are held in many communities. The ceremony may differ from place to place. It is held either on the Full Moon or two days before or after the Full Moon, depending on the teachings given to the women in a particular community. Women gather in a circle, from the youngest to the oldest, representing the life journey from infancy to old age. They drum and sing. Tobacco is placed in the fire and the women ask for the cleansing of the earth, as the water, the lakes, rivers and oceans constitute women's responsibility.

In some communities, at the Full Moon ceremony, each woman brings a container of water. They pour this water into one bowl and this water is offered to the Grandmother Moon and to the Earth. At the end of the ceremony, the water, now called moon water, can be used as a medicine during the month.

Sacred Animal Teachings



Clans

In Aboriginal culture the oral tradition is important. We learn and are taught through stories. An Anishnawbe teaching on the clan system is an example of this...

A long time ago, before humans inhabited this world, it is said that the clans were already here. Before the humans arrived, the animals, fish and birds were told by the Creator that humans were coming and that these humans wouldn't have anything and would be pitiful. So each of the animals, fish and birds said, "We will take care of them and show them how to live in harmony with all of Creation. We will sacrifice ourselves as food so they won't starve and we will supply them with our skins so they will be warm. We will teach what medicines and ceremonies to use to heal themselves."

Your clan is with you the day you are born and are still with Aboriginal people today. It is said that your clan walks with you and looks after you. Your clan takes care of you so that you don't have to go through life without help and protection. The spirit of your clan is for you to use because you are a member of that clan; you always offer tobacco when you ask your clan for help.

The Mohawks' family-oriented culture is based on the clan structure. Within the clan structure of the Sioux Nations, the clan is passed down through the women. Among the Anishnawbe, the children of the family are of their father's clan.

The clans of a Nation are often the animals and other creatures that inhabit the region. In the Great Lakes area the wolf, bear, turtle and deer are common clans. The Anishnawbe say that their clans may be almost any animal, fish or bird. Some of the clans of the Six Nations are the Turtle, Bear, Wolf, Rock, Snipe, Pipe of Peace and the Heron.

Within the clan there may be many different types of an animal, bird or fish. For example, the turtle clan includes different types of turtles, such as snapping turtles and painted turtles. Each clan has its own duties and responsibilities. You can consult the elder clan members for the teachings of your clans.

Among the Anishnawbe, the Crane clan, for example, is involved in leadership and the sharing of knowledge, particularly the teachings. Their role is one of leadership because the cranes were instrumental in establishing the clan system for the Anishnawbe. It is said that the Cranes have a loud voice that can be heard for miles. When the crane gives a teaching, it can be heard far away in other parts of the world; people listen and learn when a crane teaches.

The Eagle clan represents the family unit; both parents protect and bring food to the eaglets. The eagle also teaches about respect, hunting, being a warrior and being in balance with the environment.

The Bear clan are like the guardians of the communities. They are also the protectors and carriers of the medicines.

Learning Your Clan

If knowledge of your clan is lost to your family and if your search through family, church, treaty, band or school records does not reveal this information, you can offer tobacco and make the request to know what your clan is to a spiritual person who has the ability to find out what clan is watching over you.

Honoring Your Clan

To honor your clan is to be a brother, uncle, sister or aunt to all the people who are of your clan. When you meet someone of your clan who is younger than you, they are considered to be your nephew or niece. When you meet someone of the same age, they are considered to be your brother or sister. It is your responsibility to take care of the relatives of your clan. When a clan member visits your community, you ensure that this person is taken care of. When you do this you bring honor to the clan and yourself. Depending on what clan you belong to, you may feast your clan monthly; once or twice a year; or four times a year at the change of the seasons. Many people will make their food and tobacco offering to their clan by leaving the offering outside on the ground or in the water. For example, a member of the Bullhead Fish clan puts their offering of tobacco and food on a raft which is sent onto the lake. In some communities all the members of a clan may gather to feast their clan and to hold clan ceremonies.

Many people put out a food offering for their clan in the fall, to give their clan strength and energy to survive the winter and in the spring to revitalize their clan's spirit after a hard winter.

Some Bear Clan people feed their clan when the bear is going into hibernation and again in the spring when the cubs are born. They might leave food offerings of strawberries, raspberries, salmon and other types of meats and berries a bear would like. Generally, a food offering will consist of any food your clan would eat.

Members of the Bullhead Fish clan, the boss of all fish clans, feed the clan when the ice comes in and goes out.

In the past, clans were painted on warrior shields encircled with medicine bundles. Today clan markers, items which represent your clan such as antlers, skins, skulls, a painting or carving of the clan, may be hung in a respectful manner.



Traditional Healing

Background

For centuries, Aboriginal people in Canada lived according to their own laws, following their own traditions with their own social structure. The Creator and the land provided all that was needed: food, water, medicines, shelter, and clothing. Aboriginal people maintained a close connection with the Creator. From this close connection, they have a solid understanding that everything is connected and that all of creation is in a constant state of change. People are interconnected with their environment, for how they live affects the environment. They are interconnected with each other, as one's actions can have positive or negative impacts on others and the community. They understand that to live 'a good life' is to honor the Creator by living in balance, caring for the physical body, the spirit, emotions, and mental processes within themselves, and caring for all things to which they are connected, i.e., each other and their environment. *[Report: Communities Coming Together]*

Health is integrated and holistic; people are made up of spirits, mind, emotions and a physical body, and these four elements interact to form a person. The emphasis is on prevention of disease, and that health and sickness are understood by the laws of nature. When spirit, mind, emotions and the body are in balance, the person is in a state of well being. When illness presents itself, it is necessary to address the physical, mental, spiritual and emotional side of the person in order to restore balance and health. Sickness is seen as beginning in the spirit, then it affects the mind, emotions and finally manifests in the body.

The healers in the aboriginal community were/are Medicine Men and Medicine Women. Medicine People were often identified when they were children, while others have their abilities revealed to them at other points in their lives. Medicine People continue their work throughout their lives. They were accountable to the Creator, to the people, and to Elders of their medicine society. They held firm the tenet that medicine is not for sale, and it is not for profit, but rather it is a gift that is to be shared.

Each Medicine Person had (and has today) different gifts, and offered specializing healing based on those gifts. Each medicine person employed his or her methods using ceremony and mental thought blocks of the person seeking healing. These methods were, and still are very effective, and hold great value and meaning for Aboriginal People.

Traditional Knowledge

Traditional Healers and Elders say that the Great Spirit works through everyone, so that everyone has the ability to heal, whether it's the mother who tends to the scrapes of her child, a friend who eases your pain by kind words or the Healer who heals your sickness. Everything that was put here is healing – the trees, the earth, the animals and the water.

In the past, knowledge of the medicines was a natural part of everyone's learning. We knew what plant medicines were for and how to prepare offerings for them. When we needed special help beyond what was common knowledge, we looked to our Medicine People and Healers. This familiarity with the healing properties of the plants that grew around us was empowering. It was something that belonged to the community.

This knowledge is no longer widespread and many of the illnesses that our communities are faced with today were not seen in the past. Many Native people are seeking emotional, mental and spiritual healing for past abuses and traumas, for the pain that they are carrying as a result of what generations of their families went through and for a loss of identity due to separation from family and culture. Others are seeking help for physical illnesses such as diabetes and arthritis that affect native people in disproportionately large numbers.

Native people know that everything in Creation – the plants, trees, the water, wind, rocks and the mountains – have spirit. As part of Creation, we also are sacred and have spirit. Healing is understood in terms of the spiritual basis of everything.

Our approach to healing is through ceremony. When we put our tobacco down as an offering to these things we call Creation, our spirit is making that connection so that we will be able to get that life source from them.

Our healing ways are referred to as Traditional Healing, This way of healing is holistic, based on an understanding of the interconnectedness of all life and the importance of balance and harmony in Creation.

The Number Four in Creation

In all of Creation, there are four parts to everything that is natural. There are four parts to the morning, four parts to the afternoon, four parts to the evening and four parts to the night. The human body has four parts: the arms, legs, trunk and head. A tree has four parts, the roots, branches, trunk and leaves. They are connected but have different functions.

Just as in Creation all things are connected but have different functions, so our mind, body, spirit and emotions are part of the sacred circle of life and are interconnected. When one of them is out of balance, it affects the others. If you have a physical problem, it is connected to your spirit. If your mental state is out of balance, it will cause emotional turmoil.

Traditional Healing is the restoring of balance to the mind, body, spirit and emotions. There needs to be harmony and balance in us just as there is in all of Creation. When that harmony and balance is lacking, sickness ensues. It is said that a great deal of healing comes from ourselves because we want to be healed. In taking responsibility for our own healing, we may participate in ceremonies. This can include our daily ceremony of offering tobacco. It can also include other healing ceremonies that we participate in under the guidance of Healers and conductors, such as the sweat lodge, the shaking tent, the sun dance, the fast and the vision quest. When you start on a healing journey, you are making a commitment to help yourself, your family and your community.

Although ceremonies differ from First Nation to First Nation, basic beliefs are similar. We all have come to take care of the spirit. Use of sacred items such as the pipe, the drum and the eagle feather can help us make the connection with Creation. It is said that all of Creation can give us teachings, that our way is a loving way that teaches us about kindness, caring, sharing, honesty and respect.

Prayers and Offerings

When we pray, the spirits that travel with us hear our prayers. They recognize us clearly when we let them know our spirit name. In this way our spirit name is said to be fifty percent of our healing and balance and also because, with it, we know who we are, we know where we belong, we know where we are going and we know where we came from.

We can approach a Traditional Healer or a Medicine Person for healing. We can also approach our Elders who heal through the sharing of their wisdom and the teachings.

When we go to a Healer or Elder, they ask the Creator for help on our behalf. They have a gift to heal through spiritual powers which come from the Creator and their spirit helpers and from within themselves.

Healers and Medicine People work in a variety of ways. Each Healer has their own way and special gift. Healing involves ceremony. When a person comes for doctoring, that is a certain kind of ceremony. When Medicine People call in the spirit of the medicines to help, that is also a kind of ceremony.

Some Healers know and work with the plants through their connection with the spirits of those plants. Healers and Medicine People prescribe medicines specifically for an individual. The way in which the medicine works is not exactly known and is sometimes referred to as 'The Great Mystery.'

Great respect is shown for the plants that are used in healing. Healers say that the spirit force of a plant directs them to the plant to use for an individual. Before the plant is picked, the Healer puts down a tobacco offering to acknowledge the spirit of the plant. The plant is addressed by its Native name as, it is said, at least half of the healing is done by the spirit of the plant.

Some Healers do doctoring which may involve the extraction of illness. Some Healers describe their way of working as working with energy, the mind and the spirit. Some are seers some are counselors, and some heal with their hands.

All Traditional healing is holistic. If a person seeks help for an ulcer, it is not only the ulcer that is treated. The root cause of the condition is addressed. The whole person is worked on. Maybe the whole family will be involved in the healing process. Or maybe the person will need to do something for the community.



Sweat Lodge

If you are on a healing journey the Sweat Lodge is a good place to begin because when you are sitting in a sweat lodge, you are at the center of the Four Directions.

The sweat lodge ceremony forms part of the ceremonial life of many First Nations. Even within one territory, there may be differences in the way the ceremony is conducted.

Some Types of Sweats

The Sweat Lodge has been called 'the most powerful structure in the world.' It is a place specially constructed to conduct ceremony. Sweats vary from purification and cleansing to healing sweats. It is said that the Sweat Lodge during ceremony 'responds' to what the participants need.

Other types of sweats include clan sweats, such as Bear clan sweats, sweats for fasters both before and after they fast, sweats for sundancers and sweats when you seek your spirit name.

In some traditions, the women sweat together at one time and the men sweat at another. Specific sweats may be held for children or for warriors.

Fire and Altar

As you approach the sweat lodge you come first to the altar and the sacred fire where the rocks, called Grandmothers and Grandfathers, are heated for the sweat. One of the teachings of the fire is that when we leave this earth, we have to go through fire to get to the spirit world. It takes only a second and all the impurities that we have gathered while on this earth are removed.

Both the fire and the altar are in line with the door of the lodge.

Before you enter the lodge, offerings are made at the altar or the sacred fire. Tobacco is always one of the offerings.

The Structure of the Lodge

A sweat lodge is a dome-shaped structure. When people talk about the lodge they talk about entering the womb of Mother Earth. It is a sacred place.

Doorway

The direction of the doorway that the people enter differs according to the teachings of the conductor. On conductor's teachings may specify that the doorway face east. Another conductor's teachings will require that the doorway face south because his or her medicine and what they learned came from the south. The teachings of another lodge specify that the direction of the doorway change throughout the year. This four direction lodge would face each direction for three months of the year.

Frame

The frame of the sweat lodge or sweat house is made of a specific number of red willow, ash, birch, maple or jack pine saplings. Some teachings refer to the frame as the ribs of Mother Earth. Tobacco is placed at the base of the hole that each pole is set into.

In the past, the frame would be covered with buffalo or deer hides. Today, canvas tarps and blankets are used. The coverings keep the light out and the heat in.

Once the lodge is constructed, a ceremony is held before the first sweat takes place.

Inside the Lodge

Inside the sweat lodge, the participants sit in a circle around the central fire pit. The sweat lodge conductor usually sits at one side of the door and may have other participants sit in the four directions of the lodge. The number of people attending the ceremony varies depending on the reason for the sweat.

Grandmothers and Grandfathers

A firekeeper tends the sacred fire outside the lodge. At the request of the conductor, the firekeeper brings the Grandmothers and Grandfathers to the lodge door. They are then placed in the pit at the centre of the lodge by the conductor's helper. Even though the firekeeper is not inside the sweat lodge, he is very much a part of this ceremony and may receive teachings, cleansing and healing.

In some teachings, the rocks are known as the bones of Mother Earth. Women call the rocks Grandmothers and men call them Grandfathers.

In one tradition, teachings describe four lodges-in-one where the number of rocks is specified for each type of sweat. Seven rocks are used in the cleansing sweat, fourteen rocks are used in the healing sweat, twenty-one rocks are used in the hunting sweat and twenty-eight rocks are used in the truth sweat.

Drum

When you enter a sweat lodge you are seeking the help of the Creator and the spirits. The helping spirits are called into the sweat lodge by means of the prayers, songs, drums or shakers. A drum, either a little hand drum or the water drum, is an important item in the ceremony because the drum is made from all of Creation. The sound of the drum is like the heartbeat of Mother Earth. ***[See additional drum protocols in section “The Drum and The Drum Teachings”]***

Songs and prayers are offered during the ceremony. Sometimes a pipe is used. Each person has a chance to speak or pray within the lodge. Cedar water is poured on the Grandmothers and Grandfathers, creating a cleansing steam in the lodge.

At the end of the ceremony, the spirits are thanked and sent home.

When you come out of the sweat lodge your spirit feels new and alive. You can feel the healing energies and you are more aware of all Creation and the beauty that is there.

Sweat Lodge Conductors

Sweat lodge conductors are men or women who have trained for many years to earn the right to conduct sweats. They have received the teachings and have gone through ceremonies to develop the gift that is given to them.

The sweat lodge conductor knows the protocol and history of his or her lodge. They are able to explain it clearly and concisely when asked.

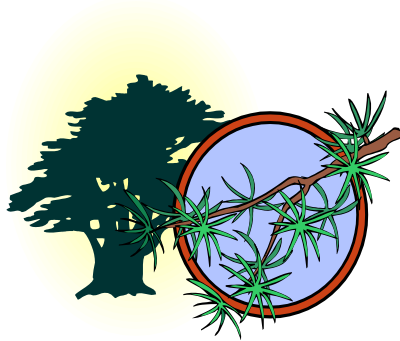
It is important that the sweat lodge conductor is aware of health issues you may have before you enter the sweat lodge.

He or she is also able to assist you with your experiences in the sweat lodge.

Preparations for a Sweat

When you request a sweat, an offering of tobacco is made to the sweat conductor.

Some sweat lodge conductors say you should refrain from alcohol or drugs for at least four days, others say seven days.



The Four Sacred Medicines

Tobacco is the first plant that the Creator gave to the Native people. It is the main activator of all the plant spirits. Three other plants, sage, cedar and sweetgrass, follow tobacco, and together they are referred to as the four sacred medicines.

The four sacred medicines are used in everyday life and in ceremonies. All of them can be used to smudge with, though sage, cedar and sweetgrass also have many other uses.

It is said that tobacco sits in the eastern door, sweetgrass in the southern door, sage in the west and cedar in the north.

Elders say that the spirits like the aroma produced when we burn tobacco and the other sacred medicines.

Tobacco

Traditional people say that tobacco is always first. It is used as an offering for everything and in every ceremony. "Always through tobacco," the saying goes.

Traditional tobacco was given to us so that we can communicate with the spirit world. It opens up the door to allow that communication to take place. When we make an offering of tobacco, we communicate our thoughts and feelings through the tobacco as we pray for ourselves, our family, relatives and others.

Tobacco has a special relationship to other plants: it is said to be the main activator of all the plant spirits. It is like the key to the ignition of a car. When you use it, all things begin to happen. Tobacco is always offered before picking medicines. When you offer tobacco to a plant and explain why you are there, that plant will let all the plants in the area know why you are coming to pick them.

When you seek the help and advice of an Elder, Healer or Medicine Person, and give your offering of tobacco, they know that a request may be made as tobacco is so sacred.

We express our gratitude for the help the spirits give us through our offering of tobacco. It is put down as an offering or thanks to the First Family, the natural world, after a fast. Traditional people make an offering of tobacco each day when the sun comes up.

Traditional tobacco is still grown in some communities. For example, the Mohawk people use a traditional tobacco that they grow themselves and that is very sacred to them.

Sage

Sage is used to prepare people for ceremonies and teachings. Because it is more medical and stronger than sweetgrass, it tends to be used more often in ceremonies.

Sage is used for releasing what is troubling the mind and for removing negative energy.

It is also used for cleansing homes and sacred items. It also has other medicinal uses.

There is male sage and female sage. The female is used by women.

Cedar

Like sage and sweetgrass, cedar is used to purify the home.

It also has many restorative medicinal uses. Cedar baths are healing. When cedar is put in the fire with tobacco, it crackles. When it does this, it is calling the attention of the spirits to the offering that is being made.

Cedar is used in fasting and sweat lodge ceremonies as a form of protection: cedar branches cover the floor of the sweat lodge and a circle of cedar surrounds the faster's lodge.

Sweetgrass

Sweetgrass is the sacred hair of Mother Earth. Its sweet aroma reminds people of the gentleness, love and kindness she has for the people.

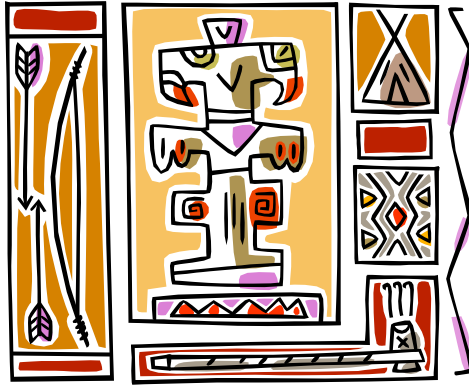
When sweetgrass is used in a healing circle it has a calming effect.

Like sage and cedar, sweetgrass is used for smudging and purification.

Taking Care of the Medicines

You take care of these sacred medicines by keeping them in a dry place. They can be stored in paper bags or wooden boxes.

If you have been using alcohol or drugs, Healers say you should wait four to seven days before touching the medicines.



Sacred Items and Bundles

When we carry sacred items, we carry them with the recognition that everything in Creation has spirit, including the animals and plants, the rocks, the water, the moon and the stars. Even one feather of a bird has spirit. When we carry a feather in our bundle and use it for our personal prayers and in ceremony, we are calling on the spirit of that bird for help and guidance.

Pipe

A pipe can be a Grandmother or a Grandfather. Usually when women carry it, it is referred to as a Grandmother; when men carry it, it is called a Grandfather. The pipe itself represents a woman and a man, the bowl representing the woman, the stem, the man. The pipe was given to Native people as a way of communicating with the Creator; a direct link is formed. When the pipe is smoked or touched, people are putting their thoughts and prayers in it.

Drum

The drum is the heartbeat of our people; it's the heartbeat of life. We live the first nine months of our lives within our mothers and we listen to the heartbeat; it sets the pattern of existence.

Drumstick

There are various types of drumsticks. Some people refer to the drumstick as being part of the Thunderbirds. Other teachings say the drumstick is the arm of the Great Spirit who gives us a heart beat.

Rattle

It is said that before the Creator made everyone, the universe was in darkness and the only sound was the sound that a shaker makes, the shaking of seeds in a gourd.

The spirits are drawn in when many people use their shakers as they sing a song.

Eagle Feather

The eagle is one of the ones closest to the Creator because he can fly so high and he spoke for the people. In the old ways, if you did something remarkable for your people you had the right to an eagle feather. If a warrior proved himself in battle, facing an enemy, he received a feather.

Today, the greatest enemy Native people face is alcohol and drugs. If you are in battle with one of these, you are in a battle for your life. When you overcome alcohol or drugs, you have won that battle and you become a warrior. You earn an eagle feather and you have to live by it. It is a high honour to receive an eagle feather.

Sacred Bundles

Many First Nations people who follow their Traditional Teachings will have sacred items to help and guide them.

A sacred bundle can consist of one or many sacred items. It can be the little tobacco pouch that someone wears around their neck or it can be the items that the spirits have given to a person to carry for the people.

Personal Bundles

You may have a personal bundle that you have built with items you have gathered and that you take care of. This bundle is sacred to you. It contains items that help you in your personal development; it contains items that have given you a teaching and that you use in ceremonies. Maybe your parents or your grandparents or an Elder gave you something to help you on your path. All the contents of your bundle relate to you.

Your personal bundle may include medicines, your drum, a bowl, a rock, your colors, a feather, a staff, a rattle and your pipe. You may also carry a clan marker, something that represents your clan, such as a bear claw if you are of the Bear Clan. Tobacco is always first in your bundle. These items remind us of the beauty of Creation.

Bundles for the People

The bundles for the people are used for healing and ceremonies. It is said that these bundles contain things that the Nations need to survive. The Healers who carry the medicine bundles say they do not own these bundles. They say that our people's understanding is that we do not own anything, not even our physical body which is given back to the earth when we die. They carry these items as gifts for the people. The Healers who take care of these bundles have been chosen by the spirits to carry on the teachings, the work and the responsibilities that come with these bundles.

Respecting and Honouring Sacred Items and Bundles

Some people display their sacred items in a special room on an altar. Others keep them in the bundle until they are ready to use in a ceremony. Some leave their feathers out as these may have been given to them to create calmness in the home.

People feast their sacred items four times a year with the seasons or twice a year in the spring and fall. Some people feast them every time they do a ceremony.



The Drum and The Drum Teachings

SOURCE: Nine Circles Community Health Centre
705 Broadway, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3G 0X2

The Drum teachings have been taught by the Elders for many years. It represents the Circle of Life. It is the heartbeat of our Mother, the Earth. It is a Living Being with the Energy of the Tree and the Animal that gave it life.

Creating and taking care of a Drum is a big responsibility. It is like taking care of a baby. The Drum needs nurturing. We nurture the Drum by putting it in a bag or wrapping it in a cloth. Smudge the Drum before each use. Sometimes it needs water or warmth. Keep it warm by rubbing your hand on the Drum or if you are out in the country at a Ceremony, gently warm it over a fire.

- ⊕ *Always, keep your Drum in a clean dry place, away from common living areas.*
- ⊕ *Respect your Drum. The Drum is not for show.*
- ⊕ *The Drum is Sacred.*
- ⊕ *Only bring out your Drum for singing and drumming or going to a Ceremony.*

No two Drums are the same; each has its own distinctive structure, spirit, and life. The hands and the thoughts of the one who makes the Drum are a part of its uniqueness. The Drum is not just a music maker, but a voice for the soul within the sound.

If you are drinking alcohol or taking drugs (narcotics) please don't bring out your Drum. Elders teach us negative energy can go into the Drum. Elders suggest abstaining from using especially from the Drum and Sacred Medicines. It is like taking care of a baby; you do not want to endanger the child by neglect or abuse.

For women on their Moontime (menstrual cycle), Elders teach us to put the Drum away to honor this Sacred Cleansing. This is not a punishment, but a sign of respect that honors your Woman Self.

Remember, taking care of a Drum is a big responsibility. Knowing and respecting these Drum teachings will help you take care of your Drum.

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Smudging

SOURCE: Nine Circles Community Health Centre
705 Broadway, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3G 0X2

Things you want to know about traditional Aboriginal smudging:

- ⊕ For thousands of years some Aboriginal people, in particular First Nations and Metis, have smudged with Aboriginal Traditional medicines.
- ⊕ A smudge is smoke used for ritual cleaning. Smudging is a ceremony traditionally practiced by some Aboriginal cultures to physically or spiritually purify or cleanse negative energy, feelings or thoughts from a place or a person. Also, if an individual is scared or anxious, the smudge helps them to be calm. Some non-Aboriginal people also smudge.
- ⊕ Sacred medicines such as Cedar, Sage, Sweetgrass or Tobacco are burned in an abalone shell or clay bowl. The person puts their hands in the smoke and carries it to their body, especially to areas that need spiritual healing (mind, heart, body). The smell of the burning medicines stimulate the brain to produce a calming, soothing effect and to promote the healing processes.

Useful Information for Landlords

- ⊕ The smudge is similar to other spiritual practices such as the burning of incense in homes and churches.
- ⊕ Sage and Sweetgrass do not stain walls because they are natural with no harsh chemicals.
- ⊕ Aboriginal medicines are not narcotics (drugs).

Smudging At Home

- ⊕ Individuals are encouraged to use only small amounts (a nickel size or a loonie size) of medicine when smudging.
- ⊕ Also, it is suggested to use Sage or Sweetgrass only as it is very effective.
- ⊕ People are encouraged to open windows after smudging.

SECTION FIVE:
SUPPORT, ADVOCACY AND INFORMATION -
WHAT EVERY TWO-SPIRIT PERSON MUST KNOW!



Support, Advocacy and Information - What Every Two-Spirit Person Must Know!

SOURCE: The Avenue Community Centre for Gender and Sexual Diversity
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan
<http://www.avenuecommunitycentre.ca>

Preventing Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (LGBT) Youth Suicide

Suicide among gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer and questioning teenagers has always been a large issue within the community. With so much pressure to fit in and be a certain way, being a teenager is tough enough without knowing that you are different. There is alternatives to suicide, this is a preventable situation, and there is much that can be done to stop suicide from occurring within the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) youth community.

Risks Factors of LGBT Teens

- ❖ It has been only in the last decade that there has been recognition that gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender youth (generally defined as ages 15-24) are at an increased risk of suicide compared to other youth.
- ❖ Some studies indicate that the rate of attempted suicide for transgender youth is higher than 50%. It is also estimated that gay, lesbian and bisexual youth comprise 30% of completed suicides, with transgender youth also having a high incidence of completed suicides.
- ❖ Gay youth are 2 to 3 times more likely to attempt suicide than other young people.

These statistics show that LGBT youth tend to be at a much higher risk of suicide than other youth. Lack of understanding, tolerance, acceptance and inclusivity can create issues of depression, anxiety and self-loathing. LGBT teens have a higher tendency towards issues of depression as well, which directly contributes to the risk factors of suicide.



Suicide Myths and Facts

There are also many myths about suicide out there which are incorrect. It is important to recognize the difference between Myth and Fact. Here are some Myths and Facts about suicide:

Myth: People who talk about killing themselves rarely commit suicide.

Fact: Most people who commit suicide have given some verbal clues or warning of their intentions.

Myth: The tendency toward suicide is inherited and passed from generation to generation.

Fact: Although suicidal behavior does tend to run in families, it does not appear to be transmitted genetically.

Myth: The suicidal person wants to die and feels that there is no turning back.

Fact: **Suicidal people are usually ambivalent about dying** and frequently will seek help immediately after attempting to harm themselves.

Myth: All suicidal people are deeply depressed.

Fact: Although depression is often closely associated with suicidal feelings, not all people kill themselves are obviously depressed. In fact some suicidal people appear to be happier than they've been in years because they have decided to 'resolve' all of their problems by killing themselves. Also, people who are extremely depressed usually do not have the energy to kill themselves.

Myth: There is no correlation between alcoholism and suicide.

Fact: Alcoholism and suicide often go hand in hand. Alcoholics are prodded to suicidal behavior and even people who don't normally drink will often ingest alcohol shortly before killing themselves.

Myth: Suicidal people are mentally ill.

Fact: Although many suicidal people are depressed and distraught, most could not be diagnosed as mentally ill.

Myth: Once someone attempts suicide, that person will always entertain thoughts of suicide.

Fact: Most people who are suicidal are so for only a very brief period once in their lives. If the person receives the proper support and assistance, he/she will probably never be suicidal again. Only about 10 percent of the people who attempt suicide, later will kill themselves.

Myth: If you ask someone about their suicidal intentions, you will only encourage them to kill themselves.

Fact: Actually the opposite is true. Asking someone directly about their suicidal intentions will often lower their anxiety level and act as a deterrent to suicidal behavior by encouraging the expression of pent-up emotions through a frank discussion of their problems.

Myth: Suicide is quite common among lower class.

Fact: Suicide crosses all socioeconomic distinctions and no one class is more prone to it than another.

Myth: Suicidal people rarely seek medical attention.

Fact: Research has consistently shown that about 75 percent of suicidal people will visit a physician within the month before they kill themselves.

Once you can separate Fact from Myth, you can take a closer look at what it means to be suicidal and who is at risk.



Danger Signs of Suicide

- ❖ previous suicide attempts
- ❖ the verbalizing of suicide threats
- ❖ the giving away of prized personalized possessions
- ❖ the collection and discussion of information on suicide methods
- ❖ the expression of hopelessness, helplessness, and anger at oneself or the world
- ❖ themes of death or depression evident in conversation, written expressions, reading selections, or artwork
- ❖ statements or suggestions that the speaker would not be missed if he or she were gone
- ❖ the scratching or marking of the body, or other self-destructive acts
- ❖ recent loss of a friend or a family member (or even a pet) through death or suicide; or other losses (for example, loss of a parent resulting from divorce)
- ❖ acute personality changes, unusual withdrawal, aggressiveness, or moodiness, or new involvement in high-risk activities
- ❖ sudden dramatic decline or improvement in academic performance, chronic truancy or tardiness or running away
- ❖ physical symptoms such as eating disturbances, sleeplessness or excessive sleeping, chronic headaches or stomachaches, menstrual irregularities, apathetic appearance
- ❖ use or increased use of abusive/harmful substances

Watching for danger signs can save a life!

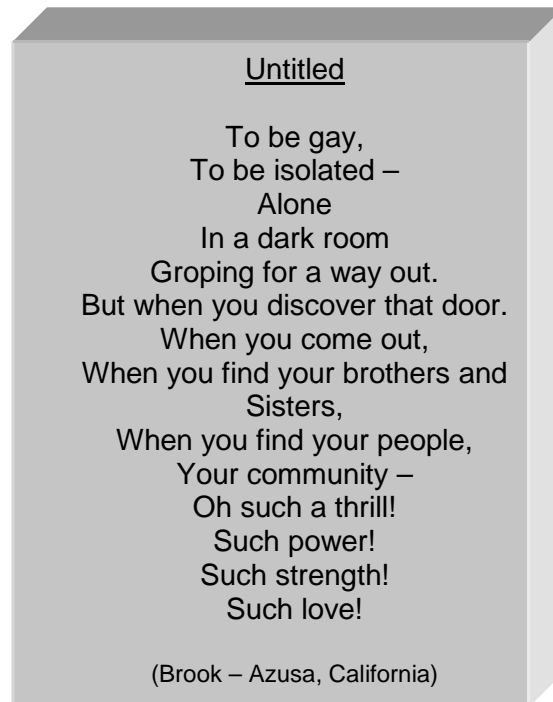
Never forget to TALK about suicide!

***Remember, talking does not encourage –
talking brings thoughts out into the open!***

SOURCE: The Avenue Community Centre for Gender and Sexual Diversity
 Saskatoon, Saskatchewan
<http://www.avenuecommunitycentre.ca>

Out & Proud Youth (OPY)

Am I the only person who thinks they're gay, lesbian or bisexual?!



Being a teenager or young adult and questioning your sexual orientation can be and often is a lonely and scary experience. Fear, anger, sadness, loneliness and depression are all common feelings. Often you don't know where to go to talk that's safe.

Luckily there's a place you can go...

What is OPY?

OPY = Out and Proud Youth is a group that offers support and friendship for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender youth in a safe environment. OPY is operated through *The Avenue Community Centre for Gender and Sexual Diversity* in Saskatoon.

The group goal is to meet the needs of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender youth. OPY is often the first direct connection for youth to the gay & lesbian community. All OPY members take part in choosing group activities, outings, events, learning sessions, etc. with the assistance of the OPY facilitator/ resource person. OPY offers a safe place to discuss feelings, meet other youth, make friends and have fun!

Who is an OPY Member?

OPY provides a social and support network for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or Two-Spirit youth or youth who are questioning their sexuality. OPY accepts members up to the age of 22. OPY also welcomes the straight friends of gay youth. OPY emphasizes empathy, compassion, confidentiality and trust of all its members. Everything discussed at OPY meetings; ideas, stories, personal information, etc. stays in OPY meetings and is NOT shared outside OPY.

What happens at OPY meetings?

OPY starts at 7:30 p.m. on Friday evenings. What happens at OPY is decided by OPY's members: pot-lucks, movie nights, games, scavenger hunts, coffee nights, or anything they can come up with. Often OPY just hangs out and talks about what's happening in the lives of its members.

OPY is also very active in the gay community not only in Saskatoon but provincially too. OPY members have helped out at dances, Pride Week Events, walked in the Provincial Gay Pride March and taken part in political activism. A few have even taken part in raising awareness of LGBT issues in conventions and professional workshops. Members are always encouraged to take part in as many activities they feel safe taking part in or feel a strong connection to.

OPY provides:

- ✓ A safe place to be and talk about your feelings or concerns.
- ✓ A place to meet other gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, two spirit and questioning youth like you.
- ✓ A place to make friends.
- ✓ A place to get the information you want and need.

Homophobia

Homophobia -- what is it?

Homophobia is an irrational fear, and is directed towards gay men and lesbians and those who are perceived as being gay. Homophobia has also come to include a collection of beliefs that being gay is unnatural and abnormal and that this justifies discrimination and/or acts of hate and violence towards gay men, lesbians and those perceived to be gay.

Homophobia can be divided into four distinct forms...

Personal or Internalized Homophobia – this is a form of homophobia that is often found in gay people, bisexual people or people who are questioning their sexual orientation. It prevents the person experiencing it from fully developing their full potential and can lead to various forms of mental and physical illness, substance abuse and even suicide.

It is not uncommon for a person suffering from internalized homophobia to turn that feeling outward. They believe that by attacking gay men, lesbians or those perceived to be gay they can prove they are 'not gay'.

Interpersonal Homophobia – this is when a person acts on his/her homophobic beliefs with verbal and/or physical abuse, intimidation, or by discriminating against a gay person(s) or someone they believe to be gay.

Institutional Homophobia – this is when groups, organizations, businesses and government agencies have active policies or laws that exclude or limit the rights or access of gay men and lesbians. Often these policies are unwritten and are based on the attitudes and actions towards gay people by senior staff and/or management.

Cultural Homophobia – this is when social standards and customs that perpetuate or give preferred treatment to heterosexuals. An example is marriage. It also supports the belief that heterosexuals are morally superior to gay people.

How Does Homophobia Affect Me?

Homophobia has the following affects:

- It prevents people from taking active part in the lives of their gay family members or friends.
- It can make you change your behavior so that you are not perceived as being gay by others.
- It can isolate you from openly gay family members or friends so that you won't be labeled as being gay.
- It prevents you from having full well-rounded, and deep friendships with members of the same sex.
- It assigns set roles for each gender, preventing you from exploring careers or hobbies that interest you but are associated with the opposite sex.
- It can make you feel like a coward when others say or do hateful things to or about gay people and you do nothing or say nothing out of fear.
- It can make a gay person get married and have children in order to hide their orientation.
- It can adversely affect your home life when a family member, who is gay or perceived to be gay, is physically attacked, emotionally abused or driven out of the home by another family member.



Photo courtesy of Microsoft Office Clip Art
(file #j0401368)

Heterosexism or “Invisible” Homophobia

Heterosexism

Heterosexism is the assumption that everyone you know or hang-out with is straight. It is very common and is more often than not completely unintentional. When you ask if a man has a girlfriend or wife; or when you ask a woman what her husband does for a living; you are making an assumption about their sexual orientation.

Believing that there is no one in your circle of family, friends, co-workers, or community who is gay is heterosexist. The average person has about 125 -175 people in their lives with whom they interact with on a regular basis and another 75-100 more who they see irregularly. By most studies as few as 6 and as many as 40 of these people are gay.

Even though you are not homophobic you might be heterosexist. Do not panic. Be aware. It is easy to make assumptions about orientation. Heterosexuality is the most common sexual orientation, just not a universal one. The key is not to assume that everyone around you is straight. Make a real effort, it will be appreciated.

What can be done?

Homophobia is like most forms of prejudice, based on false stereotypes and misinformation. Stereotypes spread by homophobia make it difficult to develop relationships with or, fact-based opinions and attitudes about gay people.

Luckily, like any kind of prejudice, education and real information that is widely shared can and is effective in fighting homophobia. Learn as much as you can. Ask questions of your family members or friends who are openly gay. Contact gay-lines, gay community agencies or search on the internet for gay positives sites. They can all help you understand more and better.

Discriminating against one group makes it easier to discriminate against another. Where does it stop? Canada has learned that discrimination against: women, non-english speaking minorities, the young, the old and different races, religions or nationalities is wrong and socially irresponsible. And being gay is no different than any of these.

Eliminate one group and the whole is weakened.

By working against all forms of prejudice including homophobia a more just and free society is created. In a free and tolerant society everyone benefits.

Words and Labels

As children we very quickly learn the power of words. They can make us feel afraid, happy, hurt or loved. Even as adults we understand this. Yet, words by themselves do not have power, we give them power. Any word that can be used to hurt or insult can just as easily show love and respect. It is how we say the word and how we take it that gives it power.

Sexual Orientation: is the drive to establish intimate emotional and sexual relationships with other people. It has three forms: Heterosexual-attracted to opposite sex; Homosexual-attracted to same sex; and Bisexual-attracted to both sexes.

Sexual Preference: is often used as a substitute term for sexual orientation. Sexual Preference really only applies to some bisexuals who prefer one sex to the other but still have relations with both genders.

Gay/Lesbian/Queer: gay and queer are both generic terms used for homosexual men and women. Gay is more often associated with men than women. The term gay man/men is very common, gay people is also quite common, but the term gay woman/women is rare. Lesbian is a term exclusive to gay women. Queer is becoming popular in referring to both gay men and lesbians and it also includes bisexuals and transgendered people. Gay Community are used to describe all sexual minorities. And, since we live in the time of abbreviations, LGB or LGBT, are also seen.

Transgender/Transexual, Cross-Dressers, Intersex & Drag Queens/Kings: Are often thought to be the same but are different. Transgender/Transexuals are people who are mentally and emotionally one gender while their body is the other. Cross-Dressers are people who enjoy wearing clothes associated with the other sex; they may be straight, gay or bi. Intersex are people who have the sex organs of both genders. Drag Queens are gay men who dress as women; Drag Kings are lesbians who dress as men; both do it to entertain and for fun.

Straight/ Straight Not Narrow: Straight is a term used to refer to heterosexual people. Straight Not Narrow, are straight people who actively support the gay community.

The Closet: Being in the closet is when a person hides their true sexual orientation. It can be because of denial, fear, or a desire to 'protect' family and friends.

Out: People at some point chose to leave the closet to be 'out of the closet'. They accept and embrace their sexual orientation. There are three levels: personal-out to yourself, private-out to family and friends, and public-out to work and the world at large. Some people are 'outed', forced out of the closet by someone or some event. To be outed can be very upsetting.

Homophobia/Homohobe: the word homophobia used to mean a fear of homosexuals. Today is also refers to hate, discrimination and intolerance towards the gay community. A homophobic is a person who hates, fears, discriminates against and attacks gay men, lesbians, bisexuals, and those seen as gay.

Heterosexism: Is the belief that being straight is to be better and morally superior to gay people. It also means the assumption that everyone is straight and to treat them as straight.

Fag, Queer, Dyke, Lesbo, Gay and Homo: are all terms that were/are used to attack gay men, lesbians, bisexuals and those who appear gay. When used as insults and slurs they are hateful. Yet, many in the gay community have reclaimed these same words using them as terms of affection and pride.

This is not a new idea. The African-Canadian community has done the same for racist comments. When the African-Canadians use these terms it is acceptable, when the white community uses them it's insulting.

Pride: Refers to the celebration of being queer. It also refers to festivals that occur in cities around the world during the summer months. Pride Day, Pride Week or Pride Mardi Gras all commemorate the Stonewall Riots which took place in June 1969 in New York City.

Barebacking -- Know Your Risks. Choose Your Risks.

Things You Should Know Before Choosing to Bareback

Every sexually active person needs to be aware that he is always at risk sometimes small, sometimes greater. That doesn't mean that you have to give up sex, just be in control. The following are some quick points to be aware of when you are getting ready to have hot sweaty passionate sex.

CONDOMS ARE NO GUARANTEE

- Condoms can break or come off.

BUT

- Also true, condoms significantly lower your risk of getting or passing HIV.

IF YOU DON'T HAVE HIV YOU CAN'T PASS IT ON

- For HIV to be passed during sex, one of you has to already have it.
- If neither of you have HIV you can't get it by fucking together, even without a condom.
- If you or your partner think you might have been exposed to HIV, for some reason, the only way to know is to test for HIV and to take more than just one test.

EVERY NEW PARTNER BRINGS A NEW RISK

- The more people you have anal sex with the greater your chances of getting HIV.

WHEN BAREBACKING IT IS SAFER TO GIVE THAN TO RECEIVE

- It is safer for the person with HIV to bottom than to top.
- HIV is harder to pass from bottom to top than it is from top to bottom.
- This no guarantee though, it can still happen.

A GENTLE WET SCREW vs. A HARD DRY SCREW

- Gentle anal sex with lots of lube reduces HIV infection if you have no condom.
- Rough anal sex with a condom reduces HIV infection.
- Using lots of lube and a condom reduces the risk of HIV infection no matter how gentle or rough anal sex is.

CUMMING OUTSIDE IS SAFER THAN INSIDE

- Cumming outside a person's ass or mouth will reduce risk of HIV infection.
- Pre-cum can still carry enough HIV to infect a person.

CLEAN EQUIPMENT LOWERS THE RISKS

- Keeping your dick, ass and sex toys clean will lower your risk.
- Washing up before and after will help lower your risk.
- Use care when using enemas or male douches; you can also tear the anal lining making getting HIV easier.
- If you were the top taking a leak after sex can also lower your chance of getting some STI's.

SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS (STI'S) INCREASE YOUR HIV RISK

- If one of you has an STI and the other HIV the risk to both of you is quite high.
- Having an STI makes getting HIV easier.
- HIV can advance very quickly if one catches an STI.

HIV WITH A HIGH VIRAL LOAD EQUALS EASY TRANSMISSION

- True, a high viral load makes HIV easier to transmit.
- Also true, HIV can be transmitted at any viral load level.

Talk to the Guy

Your most effective tool in managing your risk is your voice. Talk to him. Even if it is a casual or one-time encounter you can still tell him your limits and ask his. If the one-night-stand grows into something more; a regular fuck-buddy, steady boyfriend or something else talking about your limits once makes it easier to do it again. You can explore new things or take another look at old things. There is no law saying that your limits can't change, even mid-screw.

Condoms: Using “The Ick” Factor”

You may have few worries about HIV or STI's, if you and your partner(s) test negative, but there is another reason to slip a condom on – “The Ick Factor”. Despite what you see in the pornos, anal sex is not neat or clean. Porn star bottoms douche heavily before an anal scene is filmed.

Using a condom makes cleaning up after sex much quicker. A condom will keep your dick fairly clean of shit. You will still need to wash up afterwards, but it will be much easier.

Be Up Front With Him

Adding a few extra inches or subtracting a few years or a dozen pounds on your chat room profile is one thing, not being honest about your HIV/STI status is another. It puts you at risk and them too. Controlling your risks means being ready to say what you need to say and ready to hear what they have to say.

Weigh All The Risks
Then Choose Which
Risks You Do & Don't
Want To Take



HIV & STI Field Guide for Men Who Have Sex with Men

Chlamydia (a.k.a. “the Clap”)

For some people the clap is a joke, “the kind of applause you never want to hear in the bedroom” and “it makes fire shoot out of y’er dick”. But, just ask someone who has had it and they may not think it’s so “ha, ha” funny.

The clap is a fairly common STI in the heterosexual community, but is becoming more common in gay men and men who have sex with men. The clap is passed on through anal sex, oral sex and vaginal sex. In men the symptoms include: a milky fluid leaks from your dick, your balls ache and are tender when you touch them, and pain when you pee. Men have described the symptoms like this: rancid puss dripping out of my dick, my nuts felt like someone kicked me in the crotch, and when I took a leak I nearly passed out from the pain, it was like I was pissing liquid fire.

The clap is very easy to avoid, wear a condom. If you get infected get to the doctor quick. He can clear things up with some pills.

One last thing: because Chlamydia shares many of the same symptoms as gonorrhea they have the same nickname “clap”.

Gonorrhea (a.k.a. “the Clap”)

Gonorrhea shares many of the same symptoms as Chlamydia and the same nickname “the clap”. The clap is often the brunt of jokes, probably because so many men can relate. Gonorrhea is a very common STI. There are large outbreaks nearly every year in different parts of the country.

Gonorrhea is a bacteria that thrives in warm moist places: inside your ass, mouth and down your urethra. Like Chlamydia you might see yellowish puss leaking out or your dick and you experience intense pain when urinating. One difference is that gonorrhea may block up your urethra so you may really want to go pee but you can’t or only a little

trickle of piss comes out. If you have it in your ass you will have pain when you take a dump. Or, if it's in your mouth you will have a sore throat.

Gonorrhea is passed on when you suck, fuck or rim someone who is infected. You can also get it if you touch the bacteria then spread it to other parts of your own body.

Again, use a condom and you lower the risk dramatically. If you are infected a simple prescription from the doctor will clear things right up. Leave it untreated and you may develop arthritis, heart infections or become sterile.

Syphilis

Syphilis is on the rise in Canada, the U.K., U.S., and around the world. Before HIV and AIDS syphilis was the STI that killed. Thanks to modern drugs syphilis is very easy to treat if you catch it early on.

It is quite easy to get syphilis. Unprotected oral, anal or vaginal sex are the main ways it gets passed on, you can also get it from finger-fucking, fisting and rimming. Using condoms and latex gloves will greatly reduce the risk of you catching it.

Syphilis has three stages each with its own symptoms:

Stage 1: a red sore appears on your mouth, dick or ass, it scabs over then disappears. There might also be some swelling in the neck or groin, which ever is closest to the sore.

Stage 2: a skin rash appears usually on your hands and feet. You may also have fever, headaches, hair loss, swollen glands, and nausea. Plus, you might also find wart like growths on or near your dick and ass and ulcers in your mouth.

Stage 3: dementia, heart and nervous systems begin to show signs not working properly.

Sometimes you might not experience any symptoms. The best way to check is to have a blood test, if you think you might have been exposed.

Crabs

These little beggars really get around! Crabs is probably the most common STI out there. Best of all though it is nothing more than aggravating and annoying, it is not life threatening in any way.

There are just two symptoms to look out for, itchy crotch, armpits, and face; and itty-bitty red crab like things in the itchy spots.

Spread by skin-to-skin contact with a person carrying crabs or sharing their bed, bath towels or clothes are all ways to get crabs. They will appear in the hair in your crotch, ass, armpits, and on your face.

Most people, who catch crabs, go to the drug store and not the clinic. There are several shampoos and creams that are sold across the counter to deal with crabs. Follow their

instructions. You may also want to completely shave the affected areas. You still need to use the creams or shampoos.

Take all your bedding, dirty clothes and bath towels and wash them in very hot water and dry in the dryer on high heat for at least 10-20 minutes. Take your pillows and seal them in plastic bags for 2 weeks crab eggs take 7-10 days to hatch. Vacuum and then wipe the mattress down with a bleach solution and let it dry completely.

You will also need to let anyone you've shared your bed, clothes, towels or yourself with in the week prior to the crabs showing up. They might have caught them too. Finally, you will need to give up sex until you've completely gotten rid of the little pests in usually about 2 weeks.

Herpes-2

Herpes is one of the most commonly found type of STI, nearly one in five Canadians have herpes. That's pretty good odds that you will hook up with someone who has herpes. There are two types of herpes, type 1 and type 2. Type 1 is the cold sore type that appears on the mouth or mouth area. Type 2 is the type that affects the privates. Type 2 or herpes-2, is spread through sexual contact. Anal, vaginal and oral sex can all expose you to herpes-2. Jerking a guy off who has herpes-2 on his dick or kissing him when he has herpes-2 on or inside his mouth, can also give you it.

It can appear on or near you dick, asshole, scrotum, thigh or mouth. It can also be inside your ass, piss slit and mouth. When you are infected there can be scabs, blisters, bumps and you may feel a burning sensation when you piss. Many people don't realize they have herpes-2. They might think they have jock itch, heat rash, or are reacting to laundry soap, and in some cases they may have no visible symptoms at all. Sometimes the scabs and bump may just be too small to see. Herpes has a cycle where it is active and inactive. When it flares up you have to be careful not to spread it and to make a trip to the drug store.

Herpes-2 was not a serious thing before the HIV & AIDS crisis. While there is no cure it is easily managed when it becomes active with medicines that you can get as a pill or a cream. Also, before AIDS it was not life threatening. That has changed. If you have herpes-2, active or inactive, the chance of you getting HIV is FIVE TIMES more likely.

Think of it this way, those close calls where you could have gotten infected but didn't, aren't likely to happen if you've got herpes-2. Plus, if you have HIV and you get infected with herpes-2, you will move from having just HIV to full-blown AIDS much faster and your ability to infect someone else increases THREE TIMES. So, herpes-2 is now a big deal.

Hepatitis

There are 3 types of Hepatitis: A, B and C. The first two aren't too bad; the last one can really mess you up with liver damage and a lifetime with no alcohol.

Hep A is spread through shit. Finger fucking, rimming, and handling shitty condoms or sex toys can all spread Hep A. Luckily Hep A can be dealt with if you get some medical attention. There is even a vaccine you can get to prevent you from getting it.

Hep B is spread through shit, spit, cum, pre-cum, blood and piss. So, finger fucking, rimming, handling shitty condoms or sex toys, deep kissing, and fucking can spread Hep B. There is also a slight chance of getting it through piss/water sports or by sharing a toothbrush or razor. Getting Hep B will lay you up for weeks, taking the meds, giving up liquor of every kind and if you are HIV+ too your life can be at serious risk. Wait too long to treat it and you can be that one in a hundred people that die from Hep B. There is also a vaccine for Hep B, which can greatly lower your risk of getting Hep B.

Hep C – this is the nasty one! Hep C infects people through blood. Rough ass-sex, fist fucking without a latex glove, sharing needles, a bloody toothbrush or razor can all involve blood which puts you at risk. Treatments last 6 months to 12 months using drugs that have serious side effects. If you don't get treatment, Hep C can kill you.

How would I know if I have contracted Hepatitis? Well here are the key symptoms: fever, headaches, major drop in your energy level, nausea from cigarette smoke and alcohol, loss of appetite, vomiting and stomach pain. If the Hepatitis is an advanced case you might also have these symptoms: your skin and the whites of your eyes turn yellow, your shit becomes very pale, and your piss is very dark. It can take 1 – 6 months before you show any signs. Getting tested is your best chance to survive a Hepatitis infection.

HIV

This is the big one. No other sexually transmitted infection has gotten more play than HIV in the last 20 odd years.

Surprisingly many people really don't know much about HIV that is actually true and not second-hand information. Here is a quick and accurate info on some common HIV questions.

How can I get it?

The most common way of getting HIV is having unprotected sex. It doesn't matter if you are screwing a man or a woman. We all know that sex is messy business. Body fluids like cum, pre-cum, vaginal fluids, and blood can all carry HIV and if any of them get left behind in your ass, inside your piss-slit or a woman's vagina you have a real risk of getting HIV. Sharing dirty needles, dirty sex toys, and re-using condoms also increase your risk.

I want to mess around with a guy, what is safe?

You can't get HIV from sucking face, swapping spit, dry humping or jerking someone off. As for sucking dick, the chances of getting HIV are really, really slim.

I forgot to bag it, what about the morning after pill for HIV?

There is a morning after pill for HIV just like there is one to stop a woman from getting pregnant. There is one big difference; you have to take the HIV morning after pill for at least 90 days, that's three loooong months. Plus, it might not even work!

How do I know if this guy is positive or not?

Ask him. There really isn't any other way. Don't believe him? Wrap it up! Or walk on by!

HIV is just like diabetes, easily managed right?

Uh, no. Sure there are drug cocktails and new blends coming out every week, but HIV and AIDS changes faster than that. And sure you can live a very long life, but you may never be able to sleep in again. Many cocktails are very strict about when you take them. If it says every 6 hours it really means EVERY 6 HOURS! Then there is all the side effects that you have to deal with: diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, low sex drive, loss of appetite, and severe headaches are just some of the possibilities. Diabetes is very different.

If I get HIV do I have to give up sex?

Thank-god no! You will have to be careful. Using condoms, practicing safer sex, and being honest and open with the people you fuck with will keep your sex life alive. To be honest, if you are HIV positive, they are as much a risk to you as you are to them. Getting a STI can be deadly to a person who is HIV+ even in a town or city you don't live in, and ask to be tested.

HIV/STI Testing

Your best defense against HIV, STI's and AIDS is knowing your status Positive or Negative. Having the test results will help you take better control of your life; keeping yourself HIV & STI negative or managing your HIV. In either case you will live longer and easier if you just know.

In Canada & Saskatchewan getting full combo of tests is easy, free and best of all reliable. There are sexual health clinics in Saskatoon, Regina and Prince Albert where you can just walk-in, when they're open, and get tested. Or, you can go to nearly any walk-in clinic in the province; even in a town or city you don't live in, and ask to be tested.

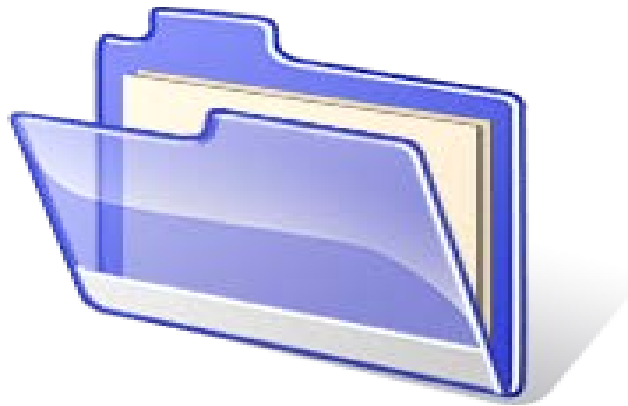
The test is very simple. A small amount of blood is taken, filling several test tubes, and sent to a lab in Regina. In about two-weeks test results are sent back in a sealed envelope.

All the tests are blind tests. There is only a number linking you, your blood and your test results. Now, while the nurse who takes your blood will know you are getting tested she or he is forbidden to let anyone know you've been tested. Only you and the doctor will know the test results and he can't tell anyone YOU don't want to know.

One way or the other you will know your status.



SECTION SIX:
SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION
AND RESOURCES



All Nations Hope AIDS Network (ANHAN) Resources



The following materials are produced and distributed by

All Nations Hope AIDS Network (ANHAN)

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Regina SK. S4T 0L2

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Toll Free number: 1-877-210-7622 (Canada Wide)

FAX (306)525-3698

Web site address www.allnationshope.ca

- Two Spirit People (pamphlet)
- Two Spirit Project (handout)
- Two Spirits Terms of Reference

For copies of the above documents contact:

Wesley Keewatin

Two-Spirit Project Coordinator

All Nations Hope AIDS Network

Email: twospirits@sasktel.net

Community Resources

NativeOUT NativeOUT is a grassroots Native American Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Two-Spirit (LGBTTS) group in Phoenix, Arizona. The website has events, resources, videos, and media productions.

<http://www.nativeout.com/>

Nine Circles Community Health Centre at 705 Broadway, Winnipeg, Manitoba is a community based, non-profit centre that specializes in HIV/STI prevention and care. Their Cultural Program offers services to all clients, that links them with resources internally and externally with Elder support, cultural ceremonies, and continued connection spiritually, mentally, emotionally and physically.

Call 1-204-940-6000 for additional information on these services or go to the website

<http://www.ninecircles.ca/>

North East Two-Spirit Society Website is devoted to providing information for Two-Spirit American Indians of New York City and the tri-state area (New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut.)

<http://www.ne2ss.org/>

Regina Two-Spirited Society Located at the All Nations Hope AIDS Network office.

Call Toll Free number: 1-877-210-7622 (Canada Wide) or check out the website

<http://www.allnationshope.ca/>

Saskatchewan Two-Spirit Society Based in Saskatoon

<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=21661965446&ref=ts>

The Avenue Community Centre for Gender and Sexual Diversity The Avenue Community Centre for Gender & Sexual Diversity was incorporated in 1991 as Gay & Lesbian Health Services, a non-profit agency in Saskatoon working to address health and social issues in the lesbian, gay, bisexual, two-spirit and transgender (LGBT) community.

Call Toll Free: 1.800.358.1833

Email: info@avenuecommunitycentre.ca

Website: <http://www.avenuecommunitycentre.ca/about/about.htm>

The North American Indian Two-Spirit Informational Pages on Youth Suicide

A compilation of studies regarding Two-Spirit youth suicide, summaries, and references.

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/~ptrembla/aboriginal/index.htm>

Two-Spirited People of the 1st Nations Toronto based agency with HIV/AIDS programs and Two-Spirit resources, information, educational tools.

<http://www.2spirits.com/>

Two-Spirits of the North Based in Prince Albert

<http://www.facebook.com/home.php?#/group.php?gid=21263330222&ref=ts>

List of Commonly Used HIV/AIDS Acronyms and Terms

This glossary has been developed to support the work of staff, board and members of All Nations Hope AIDS Network (ANHAN) and is not intended to be a comprehensive or definitive list of terms and acronyms, but a guide to assist in the work of the Network.



A

AAAD – Aboriginal HIV/AIDS Awareness Day – December 1st. The day set aside for public awareness and promotion of Aboriginal HIV/AIDS issues in Canada.

AASO – Aboriginal AIDS Service Organization

Aboriginal – an all-encompassing term that includes: First Nations, Status and Non-Status Indians, Inuit and Metis peoples

ACAP – AIDS community Action Program – A program created by Health Canada that provides funding to Community Based AIDS Organizations to set up projects to deal with HIV/AIDS in their communities.

ACBAO – Aboriginal Community-Based AIDS Organization

ACBO – Aboriginal Community-Based Organization

ACBR – Aboriginal Community-Based Research

AFN – Assembly of First Nations – National Political Organization representing First Nations.

Affected – To experience the consequences of HIV, either directly through friends or family, or indirectly, through economic, social, or political instability caused by the virus being present in your community.

AIDS – Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome – the syndrome caused by the HIV virus. Also known as late stage HIV disease.

AIDSPhobia – an irrational fear of AIDS, HIV, or those living with the disease.

AIWG – Aboriginal Interim Working Group – a working group struck at the First Aboriginal Summit on HIV/AIDS in Winnipeg, Manitoba to develop the framework for the National Aboriginal Council on HIV/AIDS.

APHA – Aboriginal Person Living With HIV/AIDS

APHI – Aboriginal Peoples Health Institute – A National Aboriginal Health Organization

ART – Anti-Retroviral Therapy – Western medicines(drugs) developed that affect and inhibit on a human cellular level the replication of HIV.

ASO – AIDS Service Organization – an organization providing AIDS services.

Asymptomatic – a person who has HIV but does not show any signs of AIDS.

B

BCR – Band Council Resolution

BD/SM – sexual behaviors, short for bondage and discipline/sadomasochism. Sexual pleasure through the use of power or submission and/or the infliction of or receiving of pain. Behavior is mutually pleasurable for both parties.

BHST – A Bureau of HIV/AIDS, STDs and TB – a department at Health Canada responsible for monitoring the spread, distribution and control of these particular diseases among the Canadian population.

Bill C-31 – amendment to the federal government's *Indian Act* affecting Indian status for women and children

Bisexual – a person attracted to members of the same and opposite sex.

C

CA – Contribution Agreement – A legal document that sets out the obligations of both parties around government funding.

CAAN – Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network – A national Aboriginal non-governmental HIV/AIDS organization.

Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network – A national non-governmental HIV/AIDS organization.

CAP – Congress of Aboriginal Peoples – A national Aboriginal political organization.

CAS – Canadian AIDS Society – A national non-governmental AIDS organization.

CATIE – Canadian AIDS Treatment Information Exchange – A national HIV/AIDS and Hep C information program.

CBR – Community Based Research – National research policy that promotes community involvement of the design, implementation and use of data from research initiatives.

CHN – Community Health Nurse

CHR – Community Health Representative

CHW – Community Health Worker

CIDPC – Centre For Infectious Disease Prevention and Control – A department at Health Canada

CIHR – Canadian Institute of Health Research

CIHAN – Canadian Inuit HIV/AIDS Network – A national Inuit HIV AIDS network.

Consensus – to agree collectively as a council on a decision

Contractor/Consultant – an individual hired to carry out a piece of work, but not as a full-fledged employee or the organization who hires them.

CPHA – Canadian Public Health Association – A non-governmental advocacy organization that monitors various health issues in Canada and provides independent health information to Canadians. Also home to the **HIV/AIDS Clearinghouse** – a national mega-project that maintains depository of information related to AIDS and HIV.

Crossdresser – an individual who dressed in the clothing of the other sex on occasion but do not desire to change their sex. They dress for personal reasons which can range from a need to express their feminine or masculine side, to in a way which provide erotic pleasure.

CSC – Corrections Services of Canada – a government department responsible for maintaining Canada's federal correctional system.

CSHA – Canadian Strategy on HIV/AIDS – The third Health Canada strategy to deal with HIV/AIDS in Canada.

CTAC – Canadian Treatment Action Council – a national non-governmental HIV/AIDS treatment advocacy organization.

CTN – Canadian HIV/AIDS Trials Network – a national non-governmental network that monitors and sets ethical standards for clinical trials of HIV/AIDS drugs in Canada.

D

DIAND – Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development

Direction-Setting – a meeting held by Health Canada to help determine the future directions of the Canadian Strategy on HIV/AIDS

DNA – Deoxyribonucleic Acid – the form in which genetic information is stored in the nucleus of cells

Drag – Drag Queen/Drag King – people who present larger than life images of the opposite sex (men as queens, women as kings) exaggerating sexual stereotypes for entertainment or self-gratification.

E

EPI – a short form meaning epidemiological or referring to epidemiological data – the collection and study of information about the prevalence and incidence of a disease

Elder – a person that carried Aboriginal heritage, cultures and traditions.

Email – an electronic way to transmit messages between individuals with computers

F

FI – Fusion Inhibitor – A type (class) of HIV drug. As of December 1, 2001, no Fusion Inhibitors have been approved for use in Canada.

First Nations – The Indian people of Canada both status and non-status.

FNIHB – First Nations and Inuit Health Branch

FTE – Full Time Equivalent - a position that works on an average of a full-time employee.

FTM – a person who changes their gender from female to male.

F/P/T/ AIDS – Federal/Provincial/Territorial Committee on HIV/AIDS

G

Gay – a person who is homosexual. More commonly used to describe homosexual men.

Gender – a classification for identifying as masculine or feminine

GLBTT – Gay/Lesbian/Bi-sexual/Transgendered/Two-spirit

GN – Government of Nunavut

GNWT – Government of the Northwest Territories

GNP – Global Network of People Living With HIV/AIDS – an international network of people living with HIV.

Gray Rocks – A national HIV/AIDS direction setting meeting for the Canadian Strategy on HIV/AIDS held in Grey Rocks, Quebec in 2000.

H

HAART – Highly Active Antiretroviral Therapy

Hamlet – an Inuit Community

Harm reduction – a National HIV/AIDS prevention strategy

HBV – Hepatitis B Virus – a virus that attacks the liver, related, though considered not as severe as Hepatitis C.

HC – Health Canada

HCV – Hepatitis C Virus – a virus that attacks the liver and for which there is no known cure. Prolonged and acute Hepatitis C infection can often result in liver disease and cirrhosis. The virus is passed on through blood to blood activities, such as sharing needles and unprotected sexual intercourse.

HIV – Human Immunodeficiency Virus – the virus that causes AIDS

Hep C – short for Hepatitis C

Hermaphrodite – a person born with genitals that show characteristics of both sexes

Het – short for heterosexual

Heterosexism – domination by heterosexuals that leads to the ignoring of homosexuality and the assumption that heterosexuals are superior

Heterosexual – a person attracted to members of the opposite sex

Homophobia – an irrational fear of homosexuals or homosexuality

HPB – Health Protection Branch – A department at Health Canada (obsolete)

HPPB – Health Promotion and Protection Branch – A department at Health Canada (obsolete, now known as Population and Public Health Branch)

I

ICAD – International Coalition on AIDS Development

ICASO – International Coalition of AIDS Service Organizations

IDU – Injection Drug User

IDUphobic – an irrational fear of people who use needles to inject illicit drugs

Indigenous – refers generally to the original peoples of any land, country or geographic area

Infected – refers to an individual living with the HIV disease

Innu – The Nescapi and Montagnais First Nations peoples who live in Quebec and Labrador

Internet – An international network of computers

Intersexed – another term for hermaphrodite, a person born with genitals which show characteristics of both sexes

Inuit – Canada's Aboriginal peoples of the Arctic

Inuk – singular form of Inuit, Use Inuk when speaking of one Inuit person

Inuktitut – language of the Inuit

ITC – Inuit Tapirisat of Canada (obsolete, now the Inuit Tapiriiksat Kanatami)

ITK – Inuit Tapiriiksat Kanatami – the national political organization for the Inuit in Canada

J

Journal Voucher – a government process to move money between Federal Departments

Jurisdiction – *lit.*, authority and control of a particular land base, service, municipality, territory, country or government. In the Aboriginal community jurisdiction may also refer to issues of Aboriginal identity, culture, language, treaty rights, land claims and/or self-determination.

K

KY – a brand name of a water-based lubricant often recommended for use with condoms during sex. Helps reduce tearing and breaking of condoms during sexual activity.

L

LCDC – Laboratory Centre for Disease Control – a department at Health Canada (obsolete, now known as CIDPC)

Legal Network – See **Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network**

Lesbian – a woman attracted sexually to other women

LGBTT – lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and two-spirit

LIHC – Labrador Inuit Health Commission

LMN – Labrador Métis Nation

M

MCHA – Ministerial Council on HIV/AIDS – Council that advises the Minister of Health on all issues related to HIV/AIDS

Medicine Wheel – First Nations spiritual symbol representing all of creation. In graphic representation, the medicine wheel is drawn in the shape of a wheel divided into four quadrants. These are meant to symbolize the four sacred directions, the four elements, the four grandfathers, the four winds and the four races of man.

Métis – Peoples of mixed First Nations and European ancestry

Michif – the language of the Métis

Microbicides – protective jellies or creams used in the vagina or rectum during sexual intercourse that reduce risk of HIV or other sexually transmitted infection. (STI's)

MNC – Métis Nation Council - a national Aboriginal political organization representing Métis in Canada

MNCW – Métis National Council of Women – a national Aboriginal political organization representing Métis women in Canada

MOH – Medical Officer of Health

MOU – Memorandum of Understanding

MSB – Medical Services Branch – (obsolete, now known as First Nations and Inuit Health Branch FNIHB)

MSM – Men who have Sex with Men – an epidemiological classification for HIV transmission and the literal translation of a gay Inuk.

MTF/M2F – a person who has surgically reassigned their gender from male to female

N

NAAS – National Aboriginal AIDS Strategy – (obsolete, now known as the Aboriginal Strategy on HIV/AIDS in Canada)

NACHA – National Aboriginal Council on HIV/AIDS

NAHO – National Aboriginal Health Organization

NAPHAN – National Aboriginal People Living with AIDS Network – a national organization formed in Winnipeg, Manitoba in the early nineties to advocate on behalf of Aboriginal people living with HIV/AIDS. NAPHAN became the Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network (CAAN) in 1997.

NARGHA – National Aboriginal Reference Group on HIV/AIDS established to provide advice to Health Canada on the development of administrative guidelines for the CSHA Aboriginal allocation of \$1.2 million in solicited funding

NAS I/II – National AIDS Strategy I and II – The first two Health Canada Strategies created to deal with HIV/AIDS in Canada. (Note: The third HIV/AIDS funding strategy created in 1998 is known as the Canadian Strategy on HIV/AIDS)

Native – an all-encompassing term that includes: First Nations, Status and Non-Status Indians, Inuit and Metis peoples

NEP – Needle Exchange Program

Net – short for Internet

NGO – Non-Governmental Organization – a community organization created to promote or advocate for specific issues that is independent from government organizations

NHRDP – National Health Research and Development Program – A Health Canada Research Department now operating through the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR)

NIICHRO – National Inuit and Indian Community Health Representatives

Organization – A national organization that represents community health representatives among Inuit and First Nations across Canada

NIHB – Non-Insured Health Benefits

NIYC – National Inuit Youth Council

NNRTI's – Non-Nucleoside Reverse Transcriptase Inhibitors – a type (class) of HIV drug

Non-nuke – see NNRTIs

NRTI's – Nucleoside Reverse Transcriptase Inhibitors - a type (class) of HIV drug

NS – Northern Secretariat

NWAC – Native Women's Association of Canada – a national Aboriginal political organization representing Aboriginal women in Canada

NWT – North West Territories

Nunavut – Inuit Region in the North

Nunavik – Inuit Region in Quebec

O

OCAP – Ownership Control Access Possession – a national policy governing the ownership and use of information produced on Aboriginal people to be owned, controlled, accessed and possessed by Aboriginal people

OI's – Opportunistic Infections – infections present in a person with HIV, usually die to the failure of the immune system to stave off infection and disease in the late stages of the illness (See HIV and AIDS in Understanding Epidemiology)

P

Pauktuutit Inuit Women's Association – a national Inuit women's health organization

PCAP – Prevention and Community Action Program – a national funding program at Health Canada, The 1.2 million dollars dedicated under the CSHA to urban and off-reserve Aboriginal HIV/AIDS issues is administered through this program.

PEP – Post Exposure Prophalixsis – preventative anti-retroviral treatment for HIV disease after potential exposure to HIV in an attempt to prevent sero-conversion

nPEP – Non-occupational Post Exposure Prophalixsis - preventative anti-retroviral treatment for HIV disease after potential exposure to HIV in an attempt to prevent sero-conversion, refers to those who are assumed exposed outside of a workplace environment

PH – Population Health – a department of Health Canada

PHA – Person Living with HIV/AIDS

PHAC – Public Health Agency of Canada

PI's – Protease Inhibitors – a type (class) of HIV drug

PLWA – Person Living with HIV/AIDS

Population-based/Population-specific – initiatives that address issues unique to a group of people

PPHB – Population and Public Health Branch

Pre-op – individuals who are changing their gender but haven't been physically altered by surgery to their genitals, pre-operative transsexuals may already have breast implants/reductions, be taking hormones or undergone electrolysis

Prophylaxis – any preventative measure, in HIV/AIDS, usually means preventative treatment for opportunistic infections in people who are HIV positive, such as medication given to positive patients to prevent pneumonia. Also, treatment given to those assumed exposed to HIV but before evidence of sero-conversion. (See PEP)

Q

Queer – a term used to capture gay, lesbian, bisexual, transsexual/trans-gendered and two-spirit

R

RCAP – Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples

Reserve – A First Nations Community

RFP – Request for Proposals

RHA – Regional Health Authority

RIA – Regional Inuit Association

RNA – Ribonucleic Acid -- the form in which HIV stores its genetic information

S

Sex – the two divisions of an organism distinguished as male or female

SIS – Safe Injection Site

S/M – SadoMasochism

STD – Sexually Transmitted Disease

STI – Sexually Transmitted Infection

Straight – slang meaning heterosexual

2-spirit – Individuals of Aboriginal descent who, either by behaviour, sexual preference, belief or practise, identify outside of the traditional characteristics of their sex

Symptomatic – a person who has HIV and shows signs of AIDS

SWGAI – Special Working Group on Aboriginal Issues, a sub-committee of the Ministerial Council on HIV/AIDS

T

TB – Tuberculosis – an infectious disease, caused by a bacteria that affects the human lungs and lower respiratory system

TB – Treasury Board of Canada – a government department that sets financial policy and standards for all government departments, responsible for establishing Treasury Board Guidelines

TPB – Therapeutics Products Branch – a department at Health Canada

Transsexual – a person who has changed their original sex through a medical operation to change their genitals and/or the use of hormones treatments, electrolysis, plastic surgery; transsexuals identify completely as members of their new gender

Transvestite – a person who dresses as the opposite sex for sexual gratification, transvestites do not desire to change their gender and are most often heterosexual men

Trans-gendered – live as members of the opposite sex but without the need or desire to change their bodies as shown by transsexuals, trans-gendered people may take hormones but do not have genital surgery

Transphobic – an irrational fear of transsexual/transgendered people

TS/TG – transsexual/transgendered

Two-Spirit/2-spirit - Individuals of Aboriginal descent who, either by behaviour, sexual preference, belief or practise, identify outside of the traditional characteristics of their sex

U

UN AIDS – A United Nations special department that monitors and attempts to deal with the HIV/AIDS pandemic across the planet

UNGASS – United Nations General Assembly Special Sessions on HIV/AIDS

Universal Precautions – standardized, routine precautions taken by health professionals to protect themselves against HIV

V

VD – Venereal Disease

W

WWW – World Wide Web – information resource accessed by the Internet

WSW – women who have sex with women

WSM – women who have sex with men

Y

YOA – Young Offenders Act

YOF – Young Offenders Facility

Youth – young people usually means under the age of 25

Resource List

Included here is a comprehensive list of books, videos/DVDs and other resources that are accessible and relevant for Two Spirit individuals



Becoming Two-Spirit: Gay Identity and Social Acceptance in Indian Country
Brian Joseph Gilley. (paperback)

Beneath the Naked Sun - Recordings of the contemporary life of two-spirit people
Connie Fife. (1998)

The Sacred Hoop: The recovering of the feminine in American Indian traditions
Paula Gunn-Allen. (Beacon Press)

The Zuni Man-Woman
Will Roscoe. (paperback)

Two Spirit People: American Indian Lesbian Women and Gay Men
Lester B. Brown, Ph.D., (editor). (1997: Harrington Park)

Two-Spirit People: Native American Gender Identity, Sexuality, and Spirituality
Sue Ellen Jacobs, Wesley Thomas, and Sabine Lang (editors). (1997) (paperback)

Websites and Links

Included here is a comprehensive list of additional relevant websites and links

A New Spirituality

http://tperkins.com/spiritual/two_spirit_people.html

Anishnawbe Health

<http://www.aht.ca>

Avenue Community Centre for Gender and Sexual Diversity

<http://www.avenuecommunitycentre.ca>

Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network

<http://caan.ca>

Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network

<http://www.aidslaw.ca>

Changing Ones (Will Roscoe's Home Page)

<http://www.geocities.com/westhollywood/stonewall/3044/index.html>

Fred Martinez Project

<http://www.twospirits.org/film.html>

Homeless LGBT Youth and LGBT Youth in Foster Care

<http://www.safeschoolscoalition.org/RG-homeless.html>

Mending the Sacred Hoop

<http://www.msh-ta.org/Resources>

Nine Circles Community Health Centre

<http://www.ninecircles.ca>

Public Health Agency of Canada

<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca>

Nowhere Near Enough

<http://www.turtleisland.org/healing/transgender.doc>

Two-Spirit Peoples

<http://www.peak.sfu.ca/the-peak/99-1/issue5/spirit.html>

Voices of Two-Spirited Men

http://www.uoguelph.ca/~asa/data/Voices_of_Two-Spirited_Men-Part_One.doc

Urban Two-Spirited Youth Must be Empowered

<http://www.ayn.ca/ViewNews.aspx?id=34>

Urban Native Youth Association

<http://www.unya.bc.ca>

2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations

<http://www.2spirits.com>

Sources

Addictions Foundation of Manitoba. Taking care of business: a peer training and resource manual for HIV and injection drug users

<http://www.afm.mb.ca/AFM%20Library/documents/Harmreduction-InjectiondruguseSeptember2007.pdf>

All Nations Hope AIDS Network (ANHAN). *Addressing HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis C and Other Sexually Transmitted Infections Within the Two-Spirited Population: A Literature Review of Some Trends and Challenges and Best Practices*. Regina: March 2007.

Anishnawbe Health Toronto. <http://www.aht.ca>

Avenue Community Centre for Gender and Sexual Diversity (Saskatoon, Saskatchewan) <http://www.avenuecommunitycentre.ca>

Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network. Canadian Aboriginal People Living with HIV/AIDS: Care, Treatment and Support Issues

http://www.caan.ca/pdf/CAAN_CTS_e_final.pdf

Foundations of a Good Practices Approach <http://www.caan.ca>

Residential Schools and HIV/AIDS: Direct and Intergenerational Impacts

http://www.caan.ca/pdf/FS_Schools.pdf

Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network. "Statement to the Human Rights Council re: Marginalized Groups, Sexual Orientation and Gender Equity"

<http://www.aidslaw.ca>

Mending the Sacred Hoop Technical Assistance Project. Introductory Manual 2003:

Embracing Our Two Spirited Relatives <http://www.msh-ta.org/Resources>

Nine Circles Community Health Centre (Winnipeg, Manitoba) <http://www.ninecircles.ca>

Public Health Agency of Canada. Canadian Guidelines on Sexually Transmitted Infections 2006 Edition

http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/std-mts/sti_2006/pdf/sti2006_e.pdf

HIV/AIDS Among Aboriginal Peoples in Canada: A Continuing Concern

http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/publicat/epiu-aepi/epi-06/pdf/epi06_e.pdf

HIV Infections Among MSM in Canada (Epi Update) <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca>

Populations at Risk http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/aids-sida/populations_e.html

Understanding the HIV/AIDS Epidemic among Aboriginal Peoples in Canada: The Community at a Glance

<http://www.phac-aspc.ca/publicat/epiu-aepi/epi-note/index.html> 2004

Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada. *Nowhere Near Enough: A Needs Assessment of Health and Safety Services for Transgender and Two Spirit People in Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario – Final Report*

<http://www.turtleisland.org/healing/transgender.doc>

Tootoosis, A. and K. Red Echo Associates. (Cut Knife, Saskatchewan).

University of Guelph. Voices of Two-Spirited Men

http://www.uoguelph.ca/~asa/data/Voices_of_Two-Spirited_Men-Part_One.doc

Urban Native Youth Association. Two-Spirit Youth Speak Out <http://www.unya.bc.ca>

Wikipedia <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Two-Spirit>

2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations. Information Guide <http://www.2spirits.com>

Leading an Extraordinary Life: Wise Practices for an HIV Prevention Campaign with Two-Spirit Men <http://www.2spirits.com>

Ode'ing Ji-Giizhwed 2-Spirits APHA Speakers Manual – Speaking from the Heart

(Toronto: 2007). <http://www.2spirits.com>

Our Relatives Said: A Wise Practice Guide (Toronto: 2008)

<http://www.2spirits.com>