

DECHINTA CENTRE FOR RESEARCH AND LEARNING

GENDER AND QUEER TERMINOLOGY TOOLKIT

**AN OVERVIEW OF KEY CONCEPTS AND
RESOURCES FOR DECHINTA STUDENTS**

Special thanks to Sydney Krill for writing and compiling this toolkit.

Creative Commons License Agreement: This report is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 2.5 Canada License.



ILLUSTRATION CREDIT

Please do not copy, share, or distribute the artwork in this toolkit without permission of the individual artists. If you have any questions about use, please contact admin@dechinta.ca or the artists directly.

All of the art used in this toolkit was created by BIPOC artists who identify as queer, two-spirit, and/or LGBTQ+. You can follow them on instagram here:

[@moe.butterfly.art](#)

[@brohammed](#)

[@jukipa_k](#)

[@lex.app](#)

[@coffinbirth](#)

[@broobs](#)

[@shaneebenjamin](#)

[@gggrimes](#)

[@themistakebead](#)

[@hurianakt.a](#)

[@ashluka](#)



DECHINTA
Centre for Research and Learning

WWW.DECHINTA.CA
INSTAGRAM: [@DECHINTACENTRE](#)
TWITTER: [@DECHINTA_](#)
FACEBOOK: [@DECHINTACENTRE](#)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

Part One: Introducing the Basics of Sex and Gender

- Sex and Gender
- Gender Assignment, Roles, and Attribution
- Gender Identity, Gender Expression, Sexual Orientation
- Gender and Sexuality as ‘a spectrum’
- The gender binary and science

Part Two: Sexual Orientations and Gender Identities

- Queer/Queering
- The LGBTQ+ Acronym
- Common Sexual Orientations
- Common Gender Identities
- Two-Spirit
- Questioning

Part Three: Colonial Disruptions of Gender and Queerness

- Pre-Colonial Gender Identity in Indigenous communities
- The Introduction of the Colonial Gender Binary
- Systems of Control over Gender and Sexual Freedom
- Moving Forward

Part Four: Queering as Practice —Creating Worlds Outside of the Colonial Binary

- The Importance of Language and Pronouns
- Coming Out (or Coming In)
- Dismantling the Colonial Gender Binary on the Land
- Being an Ally

References

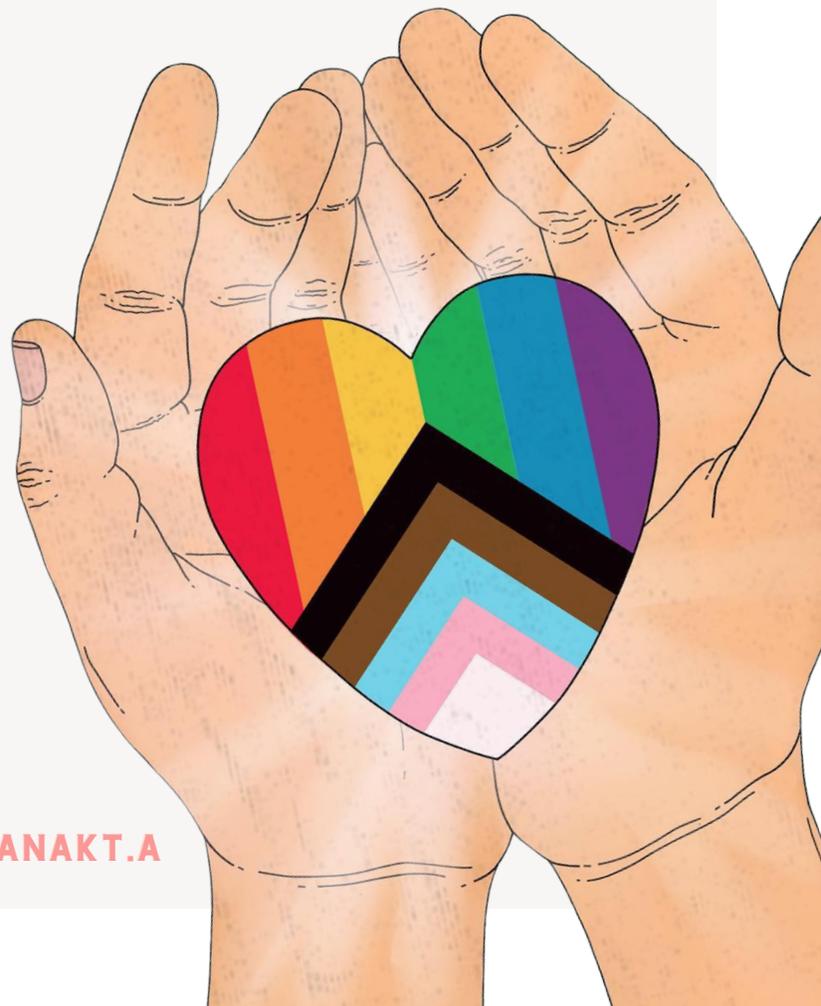


INTRODUCTION



This is your gender and queer terminology toolkit for your upcoming gender justice course! At Dechinta, we work to create an inclusive Indigenous learning environment that accepts and encourages all forms of gender and sexual diversity. It is very important to us that we centre Indigenous queer, two-spirit, and LGBTQ+ individuals, and their theory/practices, in the academic and land based work that we do. Further, Indigenous land based education is inherently queer – it challenges prevailing colonial and Eurocentric worldviews and demands the radical reclamation/reassertion of Indigenous knowledge systems. Knowledge systems which often had a non-binary understanding of the human and more-than-human world, which embraced and celebrated a variety of Indigenous gender continuums and sexual diversity, and which reject the colonial heteronormative approach to viewing ourselves, each other, and the land.

We have created this glossary of key terms and resources around gender, sexuality and queerness to provide you with some history, terminology, and resources around the topic of gender justice broadly, and in relation to Indigenous people. We hope that this toolkit will provide you with a foundation of academic theory and best practices around the core topics of INLB 252/452 so that when we can go out on the land, we can put them into practice during our time together.



ART BY @HURIANA.KT.A

An abstract painting featuring vibrant, expressive brushstrokes in shades of blue, green, yellow, red, and pink. The colors radiate from a central point, creating a sense of movement and energy. The background is a light, neutral tone, which makes the colors stand out.

PART ONE: INTRODUCING THE BASICS OF SEX AND GENDER

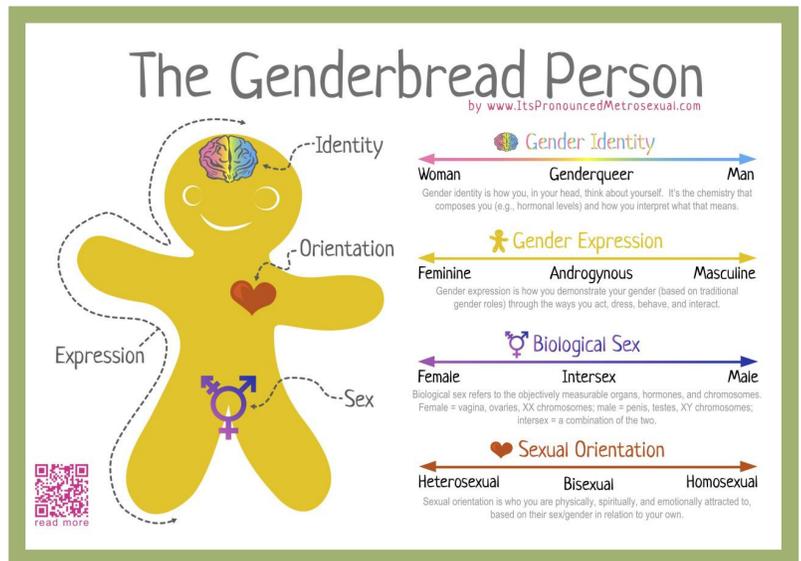
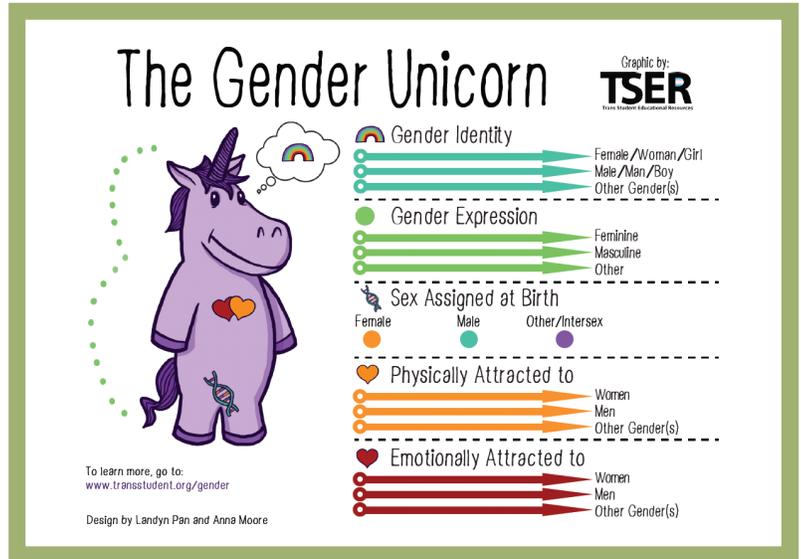
ART BY @JUKIPA_K



Growing up, it is likely that the majority of us were raised to believe that the only two biological sexes to exist were 'female' and 'male'. At birth we are assigned to one of these categories depending on what body parts we have. After birth and as we continue to grow up, it is assumed that our gender identities are either 'girl/woman' or 'boy/man' depending on the sex we are assigned at birth. Further, gender identities are associated with certain characteristics (i.e. women are emotional) that have created a system of social, political, and economic roles that tell us what 'men' and 'women' ought to be doing body parts we were born with (i.e. therefore they are not fit to be in leadership roles).

Sex: Sex refers to the physical and physiological characteristics chosen to assign humans as male or female at birth. It is determined by characteristics such as sexual and reproductive anatomy, chromosomes, and hormones.

Gender: Characteristics of women, men, girls, and boys that are socially constructed. This includes norms, behaviours, and roles associated with being a woman, man, girl or boy (gender has historically taken the form of a binary, with other sexes and gender identities being marginalized). Gender is a social construction (for example, girls are not born liking pink and boys are not born liking blue, this idea was created by society) and is fundamentally different from the sex one is assigned at birth. Gender has been used as an oppressive tool to designate fundamental characteristics to, and determine, the social/political/economic roles of those considered biologically male or female, such as the idea that women should stay at home and men should work. As a social construct, gender varies across societies and can change over time.



Five misconceptions about sex and gender [video], Teen Vogue:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2S0e-i117vY>



In recent years (and as many Indigenous people knew and practiced long before colonialism), we have come to understand that sex (female/male) and gender (woman/man) are not related. A person's sex does not necessarily determine their gender (ex. a trans woman is someone who does not identify with the sex she was assigned at birth).

Gender assignment: the gender designation of someone at birth. Usually this is based on genitals. It is assumed that our identities should and will match this assignment but this isn't the case for most trans or nonbinary people.

Gender roles: The expectations imposed on someone based on their gender. Gender roles are the cultural expectations for what people should do with their lives, what activities they should enjoy or excel at, and how they should behave, based on what their gender is (which in our society, is tied to the body parts that they have)

Gender attribution: How others perceive someone's gender —the act of categorizing the people we come into contact with as male, female, or unknown. Gender attribution is a common learned behaviour in our society but it can be harmful. It can lead to misgendering people unintentionally. It is important to remember that we can never know a person's gender identity just by looking at them.



What is Gender Expression | Queer 101 [video], The Advocate:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4AvyVGmpnt0>

The way we think about biological sex is wrong [video], TEDWomen:

https://www.ted.com/talks/emily_quinn_the_way_we_think_about_biological_sex_is_wrong?language=en

FUCK

**GENDER
ROLES**

ART BY @SHANEEBENJAMIN

These realizations have increasingly created spaces for people to have variations of gender expression and identity that is not attached to their sex. This is also political - a person's sex does not determine the unique personality traits and skills of an individual and should not determine what they do in life (ex. women are capable of doing the same jobs as men - they are not biologically destined to stay at home as mothers). It also does not determine who someone is attracted to (our sexual orientations). We often learn from a young age that we should be attracted to the gender on the opposite side of the binary (men should be attracted to women and vice versa) but this is not the case, there are a multitude of different and unique ways that people are attracted to each other. Further, both gender and sex should be view not as binaries, but as a spectrum that includes multiple gender and sexual variations and identities.

Intersex: A person who is intersex is someone whose chromosomal, hormonal, and/or anatomical sex characteristics fall outside the conventional classifications of male or female. People who are intersex generally have a combination of x and y chromosomes that are beyond the the XX and XY pairings and a manifestation of various secondary sex characteristics or none at all. Intersex individuals remind us that biological sex is not a binary but also a fluid spectrum.

- **Speak up #4intersex: How to speak the language on social media:** <https://4intersex.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Talking-About-Intersex-on-Social-Media-Hashtag-and-Language-Guide.pdf>
- **Standing up for the human rights of intersex people:** <https://oiiurope.org/standing-up-for-the-human-rights-of-intersex-people-how-can-you-help/>

Gender Identity: Gender identity is how someone defines their own gender—how you, in your own head, think about yourself. It is a person’s internal and individual experience of gender and the internal and psychological sense of oneself as man, woman, both, in between, neither, or some other understanding of gender. People who question their gender identity may feel unsure of their gender or believe they are not of the same gender they were assigned at birth (ie. a non-binary person may have been labelled as a man because of their body parts when they were born, but as they grow up they realize that they do not identify internally with that gender or any part of the binary gender system). Since gender identity is internal, it is not necessarily visible to others. *You cannot know someone’s gender simply by looking at them.*

Gender Expression: Gender expression is how you express your own identity, especially in terms of clothing and behaviours. It is the way a person presents and communicates gender within a social context. Gender can be expressed through clothing, speech, body language, hairstyle, voice, and/or the emphasis or de-emphasis of bodily characteristics or behaviours, which are often associated with masculinity and femininity. However, individuals may embody their gender in a multitude of ways and have terms beyond these to name their gender expression(s). For example, androgyny is a form of gender expression that is neither distinguishably masculine or feminine, sometimes expressed as a combination of both or as neither.

Sexual Orientation/Attraction: Sexual orientation is who you are physically, spiritually, emotionally, and romantically attracted to based on the other person’s sex, gender identity, and gender expression in relation to your own. Gender identity/expression and sexual orientation may affect one another but they are not the same and are not necessarily correlated.

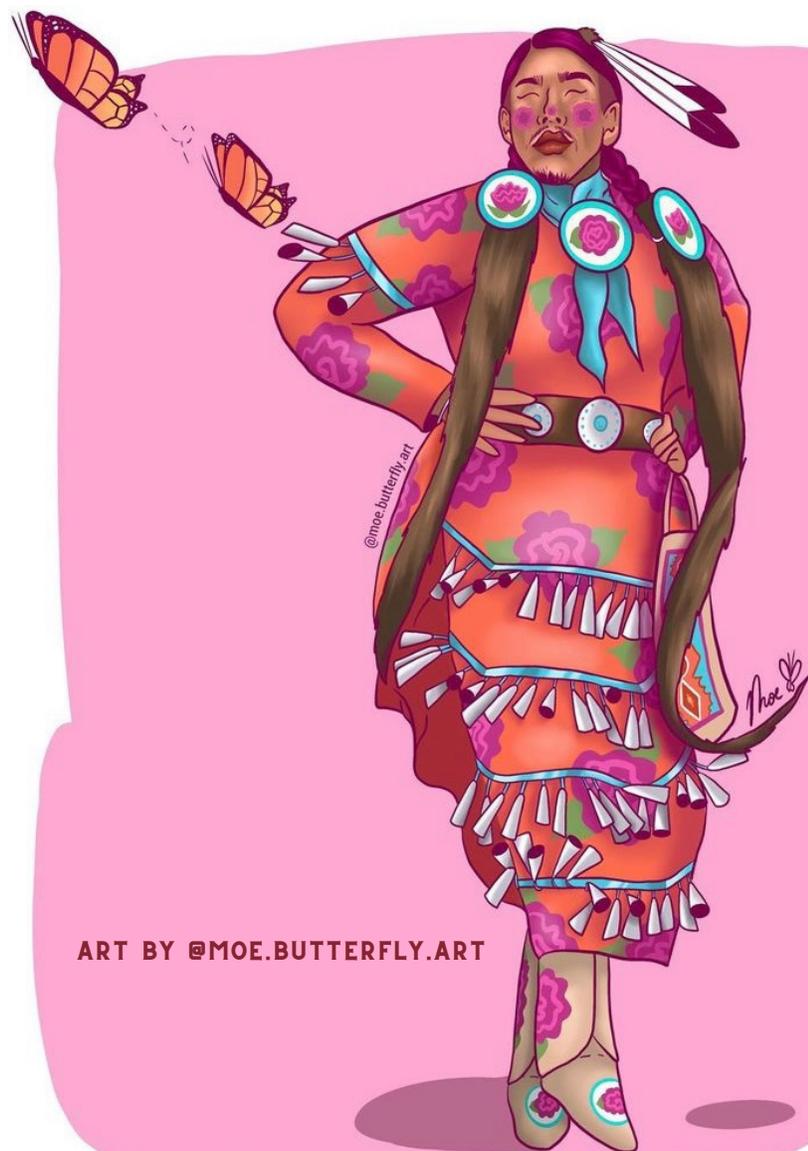
Fifty Shades of Gay [Video], TED:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VAJ-5J21Rd0&t=228s>

Myths and stereotypes [about LGBT2SQ communities], MCCS:
<http://www.children.gov.on.ca/htdocs/English/professionals/LGBT2SQ/guide-2018/myths-and-stereotypes.aspx>

Why kids need to learn about gender and sexuality, TED Residency:
https://www.ted.com/talks/lindsay_amer_why_kids_need_to_learn_about_gender_and_sexuality?language=en



Every person is unique in how they relate to and identify with these categories of sexual and gender identity. These orientations, identities, and expressions are not decided at birth and are not stagnant in nature –they can change and evolve over time. It is important to remember that we have all grown up in an oppressive system that tells us there are only two sexes and two genders, and therefore only two gender identities and expressions, and that we ‘naturally’ are attracted to the gender on the opposite side of the binary. Often people will try to justify these ideas by using ‘biological science’ to claim that gender is natural, but scientists have long argued that the gender binary has no basis in science – both nature and people have always existed on a spectrum of gender and sexual identities (for example, almost half of the animal kingdom is intersex). Many Indigenous nations also had communities that operated outside of this binary gender system prior to colonialism. There was less concern with identity and orientation and individuals often had the freedom to express themselves along a spectrum of sexual and gender variance. This is discussed in greater detail in part 3.



ART BY @MOE.BUTTERFLY.ART

Sex Redefined: The idea of two sexes is simplistic. Biologists now think there is a wider spectrum than that: <https://www.nature.com/articles/518288a>

The gender spectrum: A scientist explains why gender isn't a binary:
<https://cadehildreth.com/gender-spectrum/>

Scientist refutes notion that gender identity is an ‘unscientific liberal ideology’, CBC Radio:
<https://www.cbc.ca/radio/quirks/nov-24-2018-accidental-domestication-an-electric-airplane-the-science-of-gender-identity-and-more-1.4916481/scientist-refutes-notion-that-gender-identity-is-an-unscientific-liberal-ideology-1.4916508>

Stop using phony science to justify transphobia, Scientific American:
<https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/voices/stop-using-phony-science-to-justify-transphobia/>

An abstract painting featuring vibrant, expressive brushstrokes in shades of blue, green, yellow, red, and pink. The colors radiate from a central point, creating a sense of movement and energy. The background is a light, neutral tone, which makes the colors stand out.

PART TWO: SEXUAL ORIENTATIONS AND GENDER IDENTITIES

QUEER!

The previous section emphasized that sexual and gender identities exist on a wide spectrum of variance. This section will provide an overview of some of the more prominent sexual orientations and gender identities that are present in our communities. It is important to know and understand these terms so we can identify the people around us correctly and validate/support their experience living outside the sex and gender binary –an experience which is often referred to as ‘queer’.

Queer: The term queer describes individuals and communities who exist outside of the sex and gender binary. As an identity marker, it can be used to encompass a broad spectrum of identities related to sex/assigned sex, gender identity, or sexual orientation, or by an individual to reflect the interrelatedness of these aspects of their identity. It is a term that is becoming more widely used among LGBT2SQ+ communities because of its inclusiveness and is used by many as a symbol of pride and affirmation of diversity.

The LGBTQ+ Acronym: In the 1990s, LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) emerged as an abbreviation to identify members of the queer community. Over time this term has expanded to be more inclusive, as the language used to talk about queer folks is constantly evolving and new identities and orientations continue to appear as we discover more about the spectrum of gender and sexuality. Often a ‘Q’ and a ‘+’ symbol are now added at the end to cover this diversity and include those who may not identify with the ‘LGBT’ terms. You may see many variations of this acronym.

It is important to note that historically, queer has been used as a slur against people whose gender, gender expression and/or sexuality do not conform to dominant expectations. For many it has been reclaimed as a self-identifying term and as a symbol of pride. Many find the term to be a celebration of not fitting into social norms. However, it is important to remember that this is a reclaimed term that was once (and is still) used as a hate term and thus some people may feel uncomfortable with it.

21 Words the queer community has reclaimed (and some we havent): <https://www.advocate.com/arts-entertainment/2017/8/02/21-words-queer-community-has-reclaimed-and-some-we-havent#media-gallery-media-1>

The ABCS of LGBTQIA+, The New York Times: <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/21/style/lgbtq-gender-language.html>

Defining LGBTQ, It Takes Courage [Video]: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tRvFj3ugdWU>

Acronyms Explained, OutRight Action International: <https://outrightinternational.org/content/acronyms-explained>



ART BY @MOE.BUTTERFLY.ART



While queer is most often used as a term of identification for non-normative sexual and gender identities that fall outside of the gender binary, 'queering' is also a verb that refers to the practice of challenging dominant power dynamics and normative ways of thinking/doing/being. A 'queer' framework or 'queer methodology' acknowledges that gender, sexuality, nature, and human experience exists on a spectrum, as opposed to a collection of independent and mutually exclusive categories. It rejects the homogenizing of human experience and looks outside normative power binaries and hierarchies. In their discussion of *Living a Decolonizing Queer Politics*, Kwagųt scholar Sarah Hunt and co-author Cindy Holmes (2015), define queering as:

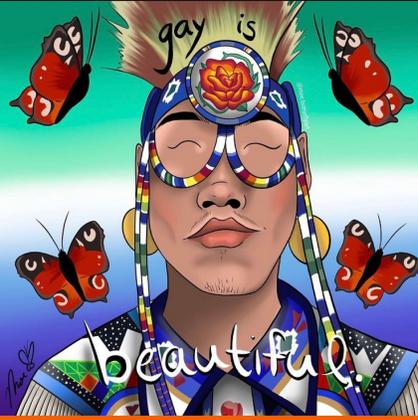
“a deconstructive practice focused on challenging normative knowledges, identities, behaviors, and spaces thereby unsettling power relations and taken-for-granted assumptions. Queerness is then less about a way of “being,” and more about “doing,” and offers the potential for radical social critique” (p. 156).



ART BY @HURIANA.KT.A

Queering is also an important part of decolonization and Indigenous resurgence - colonialism imposed an oppressive binary understanding of sex and gender upon Indigenous communities. Queering works to undo, break down, and look outside of these colonial constructs. It is the process of thinking outside of colonialism, and the systems of gender and sexual oppression it imposed, and embracing all Indigenous expressions of gender, sexuality, and self-expression. This is integral to Indigenous self-determination and the social, political, spiritual, and economic resurgence of Indigenous communities.

SEXUAL ORIENTATIONS



Gay: A person who experiences attraction to individuals of the same sex/assigned sex and/or gender identity. The word “gay” can be used to refer to same-gender attraction experienced by both men and women, or only men.

Lesbian: A woman-identified person who experiences attraction towards other women. As well, some nonbinary people also identify as lesbians.

Bisexual: A person who experiences attraction towards more than one sex/assigned sex or gender identity.

- *The long fight for bi inclusion:*
<https://bi.org/en/articles/the-long-fight-for-bisexual-inclusion>

Pansexual: A person who experiences attraction to individuals with diverse sexes/ assigned sexes, gender identities, and gender expressions.

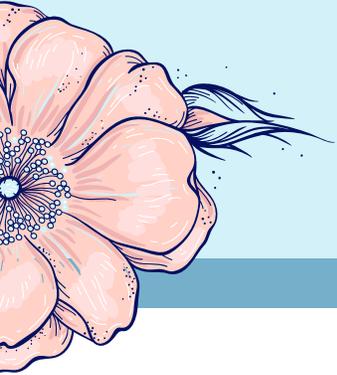
Asexual: A broad spectrum of sexual orientations generally characterized by feeling varying degrees of sexual attraction or a desires for partnered sexuality. Often asexual individuals may not experience sexual attraction or desire to engage in sexual activity, but there are many diverse ways of being asexual.

- *Stop Assuming Everyone Wants a Partner: 5 Ways You're Erasing Asexual & Aromantic People and What to Do Instead:*
<https://thebodyisnotanapology.com/magazine/5-ways-your-erasing-asexual-aromantic-people-and-what-to-say-instead/>

The Sexualitree: The sexualitree is a model that can help us see the different ways we experience (or don't experience) sexuality. View it and learn more here:
<http://sexualitree.org>

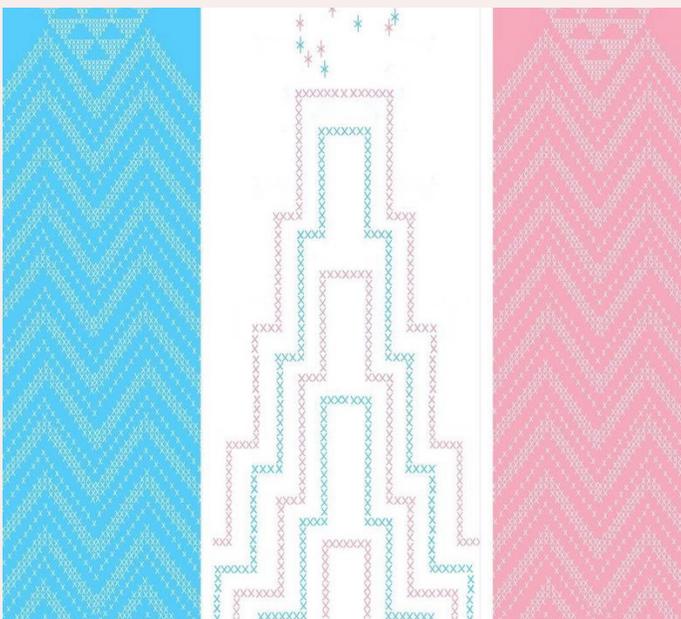


GENDER IDENTITIES



Cisgender: a gender identity, or performance in a gender role, that society deems to match the person's assigned sex at birth. To be 'cisgender' means that society considers your gender identity to "match" the biological sex category you were assigned at birth (i.e. you were identified as a female at birth and you continue to identify as a woman into adulthood). The prefix cis- means "on this side of," in reference to the gender binary model. It is a term used to identify people who are not trans, and the experiences of privilege granted on the basis of being cisgender.

Transgender/Trans: An adjective used most often as an umbrella term and frequently abbreviated to "trans." Identifying as transgender, or trans, means that one's internal knowledge of gender is different from conventional or cultural expectations based on the sex that person was assigned at birth. While trans may refer to a woman who was assigned male at birth or a man who was assigned female at birth, it is an umbrella term that can also describe someone who identifies as a gender other than woman or man, such as non binary, genderqueer, genderfluid, no gender or some other gender identity. The term trans acts as a more inclusive term than transgender (which covers trans men and trans women) for gender non-conforming and non-binary folks (who don't identify with the gender of man or women)



InQuery: What Does the Word "Transgender" Mean?
<https://www.them.us/story/inquery-transgender>

Answers to Your Questions About Trans Individuals:
<https://www.apa.org/topics/lgbtq/transgender.pdf>

Tips for Allies of transgender people:
<https://www.glaad.org/transgender/allies>

Trans Voices Series on Youtube:
<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLH2AwWZu87Pe18dWavqgRUMz4j-xW1PDF>

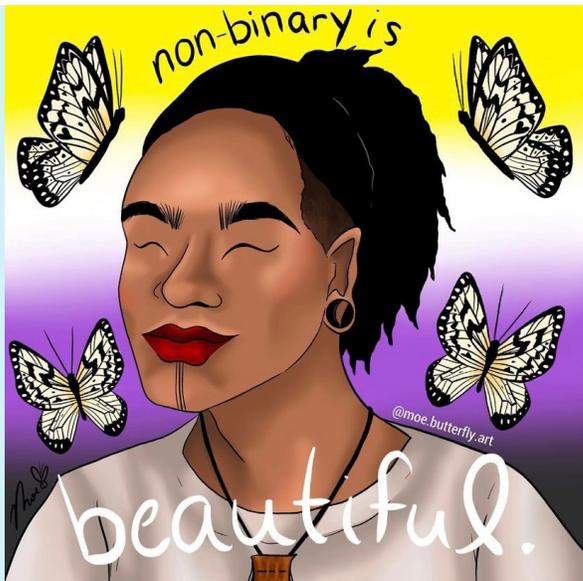
Trans@mit Allies Toolkit: Action Tips for Allies of Trans People:
<https://lgbtrc.usc.edu/files/2015/05/Actions-Tips-for-Allies-of-Trans-People1.pdf>

Straight For Equality: Trans Ally Resources:
<https://straightforequality.org/transresources>

The trans language primer: <https://translanguageprimer.com>

“LIKE THE WATERS THAT SO MANY INDIGENOUS PEOPLES WORK TO PROTECT, IT IS IMPORTANT TO NOTE THAT GENDER AND SEXUAL IDENTITIES ARE OFTEN FLUID AS WELL AND THAT THESE DEFINITIONS MAY CHANGE OVER TIME”

(VIOLENCE ON THE LAND, VIOLENCE ON OUR BODIES, P. 6)



Nonbinary: A gender identity and experience that embraces a full universe of expressions and ways of being that resonate for an individual, moving beyond the male/female gender binary. It may be an active resistance to binary gender expectations and/or an intentional creation of new unbounded ideas of self within the world. For some people who identify as non binary there may be overlap with other concepts and identities like gender expansive and gender non-conforming. Many people who identify as non-binary use ‘they/them’ pronouns.

Genderqueer: A person whose gender identity and/or expression may not correspond with social and cultural gender expectations. Individuals who identify as genderqueer may move between gender identities, identify with multiple genders, or reject the gender binary or gender altogether.

Gender Fluid: This term can be used as a specific identity or as a way of articulating the changing nature of one’s gender identity or expression. People who are genderfluid may feel that their gender identity or expression is constantly changing, or that it switches back and forth. The term refers to the potential for change in ideas, experiences, and expressions of gender at an individual and/or societal level. This concept recognizes the potential for individual movement within a gender spectrum when it comes to self-presentation or expression.

Gender creative: A term sometimes used to refer to children or youth who identify and express their gender in ways that do not align with the social expectations associated with the sex assigned to them at birth.

Alok Vaid-Menon Exists Outside Of Your Heteronormative Gender Binary, StyleLikeU, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j7Gh2n9kPuA>

‘Gender diverse’ will join ‘male’ and ‘female’ categories in a new gender-identity classification for New Zealand: <https://www.stuff.co.nz/nelson-mail/news/70335741/new-diverse-gender-category-affirming-for-local-activist>

Breaking Binaries worksheet: Use this worksheet to understand how you personally understand your assigned birth sex, gender expression, gender identity, and sexual orientation:

<https://bolt.straightforequality.org/files/Straight%20for%20Equality%20Trans%20Allies/2019-breaking-binaries-worksheet.pdf>

ART BY @MOE.BUTTERFLY.ART

L	G	B	T	T	Q	Q	I	A	A	P
Lesbian A woman who is primarily attracted to women.	Gay A man who is primarily attracted to men; sometimes a broad term for individuals primarily attracted to the same sex.	Bisexual An individual attracted to people of their own and opposite gender.	Trans-gender A person whose gender identity differs from their assigned sex at birth.	Transsexual An outdated term that originated in the medical and psychological communities for people who have permanently changed their gender identity through surgery and hormones.	Queer An umbrella term to be more inclusive of the many identities and variations that make up the LGBTQ+ community.	Questioning The process of exploring and discovering one's own sexual orientation, gender identity and/or gender expression.	Intersex An individual whose sexual anatomy or chromosomes do not fit with the traditional markers of "female" and "male."	Ally Typically a non-queer person who supports and advocates for the queer community; an individual within the LGBTQ+ community can be an ally for another member that identifies differently than them.	Asexual An individual who generally does not feel sexual desire or attraction to any group of people. It is not the same as celibacy and has many sub-groups.	Pansexual A person who experiences sexual, romantic, physical and/or spiritual attraction to members of all gender identities/expressions, not just people who fit into the standard gender binary.

IMAGE FROM: [HTTPS://BUFFER.COM/RESOURCES/LGBTQIA-RESOURCES/](https://buffer.com/resources/lgbtqi-a-resources/)

Sometimes we might worry about messing up when when trying to identify people properly, but mistakes are part of the learning process and creating a world outside of heteropatriarchy takes practice and persistence. It is important that we continue to educate ourselves and learn together, and glossaries can help us learn new language that allows us to be respectful and accurate to those around us. Listed below are some glossaries that provide a more comprehensive list of sexual and gender identities:

Defining LGBTQ+, A Guide to Gender & Sexuality Terminology [Free E-Book]. Download at:

<https://killermann.gumroad.com/l/defininglgbtq?wanted=true>

Queer Terminology from A to Q, Queersmart:

https://qmunity.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Queer-Glossary_2019_02.pdf

PFLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbian's and Gays) National Glossary of Terms:

<https://pflag.org/glossary>

Human Right's Campaign glossary: <https://www.hrc.org/resources/glossary-of-terms>

It's Pronounced Metrosexual's Comprehensive List of LGBTQ+ Vocabulary Definitions:

<https://www.itspronouncedmetrosexual.com/2013/01/a-comprehensive-list-of-lgbtq-term-definitions/>

46 terms that describe sexual attraction, behaviour, and orientation, Healthline:

<https://www.healthline.com/health/different-types-of-sexuality>

LGBTQIA Resource Centre Glossary: <https://lgbtqia.ucdavis.edu/educated/glossary>

TWO SPIRIT

Two-spirit is a term used by many Indigenous communities in Canada and the United States to describe individuals with diverse gender identities, gender expressions, gender roles, and sexual orientations. The term Two-Spirit encompasses Indigenous cultures, spiritual beliefs, and values, as well as sexual orientation and gender identity. Two-Spirit people are viewed differently across different Indigenous nations, and not all people who are Indigenous and gender/sexually diverse will identify themselves as Two-Spirit. Two-Spirit is something embodied exclusively by Indigenous people and is not to be taken on by non-Indigenous people!

The term two-spirit emerged in 1990 at the third annual Intertribal First Nations/Native American gay and lesbian conference in Winnipeg and was quickly taken up as a self-identifier for many queer Indigenous people. Defining Two-Spirit is a challenge because the term has multifaceted meanings and will differ from nation to nation. When the term two-spirit first appeared, the meaning attached to it often reflected a binary construction of gender identity – it was seen as an identity for Indigenous people who embodied both masculine and feminine qualities. Overtime, it has evolved to identify Indigenous folks who exist outside the binary system as well. Here are some definitions of how people understand the term ‘two-spirit’:

“...many queer and trans Indigenous people now use the term Two-Spirit to express what are a varied and complex array of gender and sexual identities rooted in Indigenous worldviews and lived experience. The term is not intended to mark a singular identity category, but is an indigenously defined pan-Native North American term that refers to a diversity of Indigenous LGBTQ identities, as well as culturally specific non-binary expressions of gender” (Hunt & Holmes, 2015, p.160)

Two-spirit activist Cheyenne Fayant-McLeod states, “Two-spirit means being queer and Indigenous, not that you are half man half woman. Depending on which tribe you’re from, who your grandparents are and have experienced, there are many, many different stories about what being queer means in Indigenous communities” (Cited in Wilson, 2015).



“The term Two Spirit affirms the interrelatedness of all aspects of identity – including gender, sexuality, community, culture, and spirituality. Two Spirit is an umbrella term that allows for anyone who self-identifies as both Indigenous and as having an LGBTQI identity; it is an English term that captures the many Indigenous words that describe sexual and gender diverse identities. Some Indigenous people choose to identify as Two Spirit rather than, or in addition to, identifying as LGBTQI+” (Egale, 2017)

Two Spirit and LGBTQ+ Identities: Today and Centuries Ago, Human Rights Campaign:

<https://www.hrc.org/news/two-spirit-and-lgbtq-identities-today-and-centuries-ago>

‘Life on hard mode’: the first out trans woman competing in the Iditarod, The Guardian:
<https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2022/mar/04/itarod-apayauq-reitan-first-out-trans-woman>

Prior to European arrival, many Indigenous nations had gender identities that would not fall within the gender binary, and many nations also supported a multitude of attraction preferences. One of the devastating impacts of colonization was the attempted erasure of Two-Spirit people from Indigenous societies, due to the homophobic, transphobic and misogynistic values brought over and enforced by European settlers, which still effects many nations today. Despite this, Two-Spirit people have survived and their presence continues to grow in size and visibility, reclaiming traditional roles in their communities, and strengthening their relationships with their cultures and families.



Some examples of Indigenous Two Spirit Identities from different nations include (Eagle, 2017):

- Cree: A Cree Two Spirit identity is encapsulated by the word “aayahkwew”, which means “neither man or woman”
- Inuit: An Inuktitut word for a Two Spirit identity is “sipiniq”, which loosely translates to “infant whose sex changes at birth”.
- Mohawk: In Kanien’keha, or Mohawk language “on n:wat” means “I have the pattern of two spirits inside my body.”

Videos on What it Means to be Two Spirit:

- **What does “Two-Spirit” Mean?, Them:**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A4lBibGzUnE&t=34s>
- **San Francisco Two-Spirit Powwow:**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N4BQbRnKdIY>
- **“Two-Spirit”, Ingenuity:**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iDyagnNmg28>
- **Being Two Spirit: A Brief Explainer, FUSION:**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S8yUDrn9W4Q>
- **What is Two Spirit?, Sexplanations:**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LRGRevIUswl>
- **A Two-Spirit Journey - Finding Identity through Indigenous Culture, United Way:**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LLmrBGrUy-w>
- **SAMHSA Two-Spirit Webinars:**
<https://www.samhsa.gov/tribal-ttac/webinars/two-spirit>



ART BY @MOE.BUTTERFLY.ART

Two-Spirit Related Resources and Toolkits:

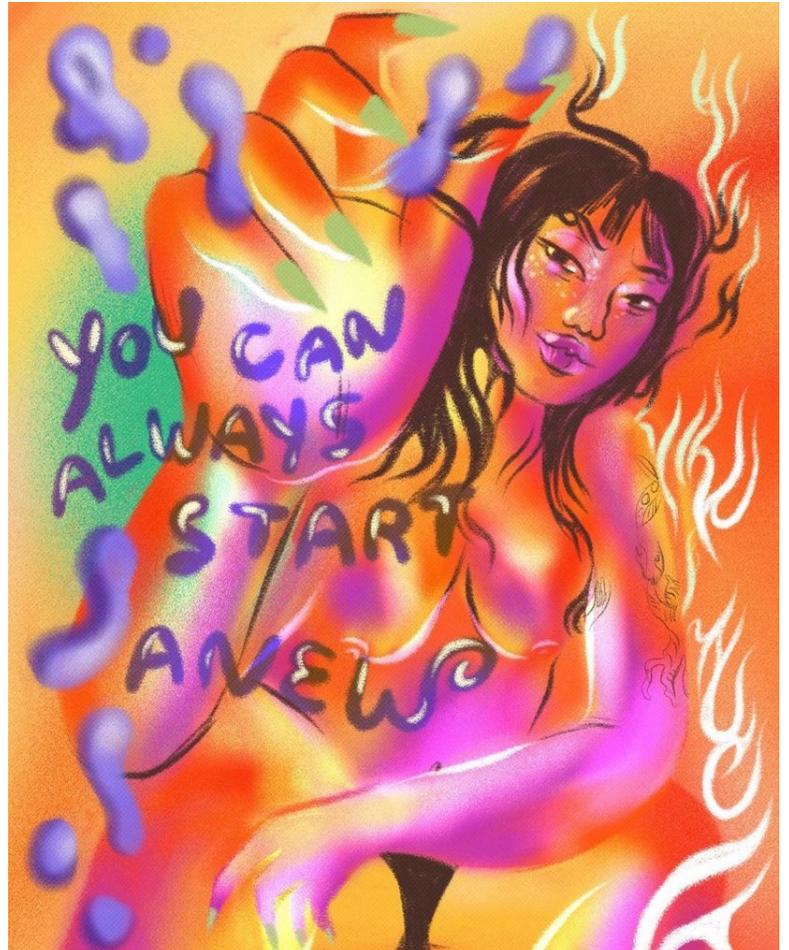
- **Indigenizing Love: A Toolkit for Native Youth to Build Inclusion:**
<https://www.healthynativeyouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/IndigenizingLoveToolkitYouth.pdf>
- **Native Youth Sexual Health Network. Two Spirit Resources Directory 2021:**
<https://www.nativeyouthsexualhealth.com/two-spirit-resource-directory>
- **Native Youth Sexual Health Network. You Are Made of Medicine: A Mental Health Peer Support Manual for Indigiqueer, Two-Spirit, LGBTQ+, and Gender Non-Conforming Indigenous youth:**
<https://www.nativeyouthsexualhealth.com/peersupportmanual>
- **Celebrating Our Magic Toolkit: a culturally-specific resource for AI/AN communities and aims to provide resources for transgender and Two-Spirit youth, their relatives, and their healthcare providers:**
<https://www.healthynativeyouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Celebrating-Our-Magic-Toolkit.pdf>
- **Sharing Our Lived Experiences: 22 Tips for Caring for Two-Spirit and Native LGBTQ Youth in the Child Welfare System:** <http://mendocinocasa.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Two-SpiritTipsSheet.pdf>
- **Two-Spirit Societies: A list of Two-Spirit societies in the US and Canada. These local and virtual communities offer support and can connect 2SLGBTQ+ youth with local services and spiritual leaders that are inclusive:**<https://tribalinformationexchange.org/files/resources/TwoSpiritSocieties.pdf>
- **Celebrating our magic: resources for American Indian/Alaska Native transgender and two-spirit youth, their relatives and families, and their healthcare providers:** https://www.npaihb.org/download/Toolkit_v6_24.pdf
- **Walking in two worlds: supporting the two spirit and native LGBTQ community:**
<https://tribalinformationexchange.org/files/resources/twospiritbrochure.pdf>
- **An Introduction to the Health of Two-Spirit People: Historical, Contemporary, and Emergent Issues, Sarah Hunt:** <https://www.ccnsc-nccah.ca/docs/emerging/RPT-HealthTwoSpirit-Hunt-EN.pdf>
- **Paths (R)emembered —A project that centers the Two Spirit and LGBTQ+ community—its strengths, resiliencies, and histories—in our movement toward health equity:** <https://www.pathsremembered.org>

QUESTIONING



'Questioning' is the process of exploring one's own gender identity, gender expression, and/or sexual orientation. It is sometimes included as a second 'Q' in the longer LGBTQQIAAP2S+ acronym. People who are 'questioning' are curious about some aspect of their sexuality or gender. The term may be used to identify someone who has yet to determine what their sexual orientation and/or gender identity and gender expression is. It is also commonly used as an adjective to describe someone who's currently exploring their sexuality or gender.

Questioning our own identities, bodies, and place in the world can be a beautiful, exciting, and wonderful process. There are endless possibilities for who we can be, who we can love, and how we can express ourselves. It can also be very difficult, traumatic, and scary as we continue to live under a colonial heteropatriarchal system where sex and gender are viewed as a binary. This is especially true for many Indigenous folks who are questioning, as they must also deal with the ongoing legacy of white supremacy and colonialism that is tied up in greater rates of gender violence for women and for those who exist (or want to exist) outside the colonial gender binary system.



ART BY @ASHLUKA



There are more resources and information for those who might be questioning their gender identities and sexual orientations in part four of this toolkit. When you are out on the land at Dechinta, we want you to know that you are free to be whoever you are, no matter where you are at in your journey. We work hard to make the land a safe space for queer and questioning folks.

An abstract painting featuring vibrant, expressive brushstrokes in shades of blue, green, yellow, red, and pink. The colors radiate from a central point, creating a sense of movement and energy. The background is a light, neutral tone, which makes the colors stand out.

PART THREE: COLONIAL DISRUPTIONS OF GENDER AND QUEERNESS

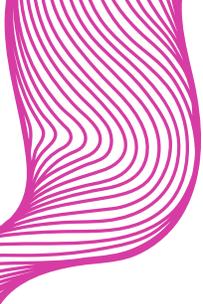
ART BY @JUKIPA_K



Oppression is the discriminatory act of exercising power over people to achieve or maintain control. Gender or sexual oppression is when systems of power (government, pervasive public ideology, education, religion) control how people can identify, express themselves, and be in relationships with each other. This section will provide a brief overview of some of the concepts and terminology that help us understand how colonialism, and the disconnection of Indigenous people from their lands and culture, is tied to oppressive systems of gender and sexual control in Canada.

These are huge topics and we will discuss them in greater detail when we are at camp together. The following is just a short introduction to certain terms and topics that will give you a better idea of how Indigenous gender and queerness was disrupted by colonialism, and why gender and queer people, theory, and liberation are therefore necessary parts of decolonization and Indigenous resurgence projects moving forward.





PRE-COLONIAL GENDER IDENTITY AND EXPRESSION IN INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

Many Indigenous communities were 'gender non-conforming' prior to European invasion and settlement. The historical record confirms the existence of Indigenous individuals who did not fit into the gender binary and other Western categories of relationships and identities, physical presentation and gender expression. Queerness was 'normative' for many Indigenous nations, meaning it was just a normal part of Indigenous life. As Leanne Simpson writes, "...my sense is that my Ancestors lived in a society where what I know as "queer," particularly in terms of social organization, was so normal it didn't have a name" (2017, p. 129).

"Over the years, when I've asked different Nishnaabeg elders about queerness, they often say that we didn't have that. Then when I ask if two women ever lived together intimately, without men, they will remember stories of queer couples, not as queer people, but just people who lived like that, as something that wasn't a big deal, as if it were a normal inconsequential part of life" (Simpson, 2017, p. 123)



Not only did many Indigenous communities fully accept sexually diverse and gender variant individuals, these people often had specialized ceremonial roles and were a key facet of jurisdictional activities and decision-making processes. The diverse gender roles and identities of queer and two-spirit people were respected and honoured, as all individuals were embraced as an important part of life and community (Brown, 1997; Healthy Native Youth, 2019; Yellowhead Institute, 2019; Wilson, 2015)

Colonialism Still Affects How Black and Indigenous People See Gender:

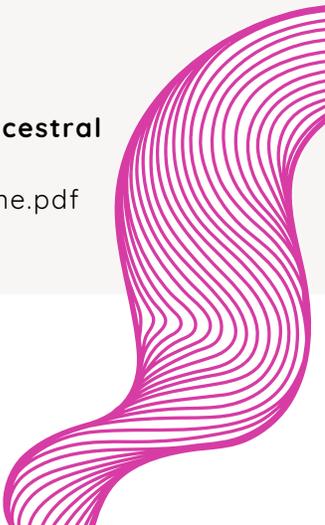
<https://www.them.us/story/colonialism-black-and-indigenous-people-gender-identity>

Pre-colonial communities' history of gender fluidity, BBC:

<https://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-53573764>

Zine: "Stewarding Relationships: An Exploration Rooted in Gender Fluid Ancestral Knowledge Systems":

<https://www.healthynativeyouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Final-Zine.pdf>



In her book, Leanne Simpson discusses how queerness was important to both the ethical and practical foundation of Nishnaabeg society, and how a gender binary did not make sense for Nishnaabeg life, and life for many Indigenous nations who survived on the land. Not only was it at odds with the values and ethics of Nishnaabeg folks (such as consent, body sovereignty, freedom, individual self-determination, compassion, empathy, and caring) it also did not make sense in terms of being able to survive on the land.

- She talks about how Nishnaabeg ‘women’ engaged in tasks such as hunting, trapping, fishing, held leadership positions, engaged in warfare, and also carried out domestic tasks and childcare.
- Nishnaabeg ‘men’ also knew how to cook, sew, and look after children, alongside hunting, trapping, fishing, and leadership.
- Individuals engaged in activities based on a variety of factors (name, clan, family, skills) but most importantly because they had agency to choose what they wanted to do.
- From a practical standpoint, this valuing of individual diversity and skill made sense. The restrictiveness of gendered workloads would not allow for the survival of a nation of people living on the land —having a diverse population of people with diverse skills and ways of being promoted the long-term sustainability of communities.



ART BY @MOE.BUTTERFLY.ART

"Naming the gender binary as colonial is important because when I think about this binary from within Nishnaabeg conceptual thought or from within the reality of so-called hunting and gathering societies, it makes no sense...it is at odds with the practicality of life in the bush because it restricts and prevents relationships, productivity, and, in many aspects, actual survival. If I am to be able to take care of myself on the land, I need to have a reciprocal and respectful relationship with all aspects of creation. I need to have a proficiency in hunting, fishing, gathering, making shelter, traveling, ceremony, warmth, light, and feeding and clothing myself and those reliant upon me. I cannot restrict myself to an exclusively gendered workload and just expect to survive"

Leanne Simpson (2017, p.128)



Language is also an important part of this conversation. Gender systems are encoded in language and for many Indigenous nations, their languages exceeded the binary of men and women, got rid of the binary altogether, or utilized gender in a different way. For example, some Indigenous languages do not gender the natural world in the same way that English does. As Alex Wilson states: “We call the moon grandmother and the earth mother in English but in Cree that isn’t the case. What is important is the relational aspect acknowledging some kind of kinship. In Cree, the land (aski) is not gendered...Same for water. It’s not gendered but it has a spirit of life and it’s fluid.” (NSHN & WEA, 2016, p. 5). In English, the land is gendered, but for many Indigenous languages the land does not conform to a gender binary. It is sometimes the case that when Indigenous stories get translated into the English language, characters and entities are gendered as male or female, when they were originally not gendered (Wilson & Laing, 2018). Colonialism altered many Indigenous languages to make them conform to a gender binary.

“Although there is a heteronormative imposed gender often projected onto creation, this is only one telling, a telling that is reflective in my view of a Christianized relationship to the earth, rather than one that is more deeply reflective of Nishnaabeg ethics and practices”

- Leanne Simpson (2017, p.121)



For other nations, their languages included multiple genders that did (and do) not translate into the binary system of women and man that colonialism introduced. As Alex Wilson (2018) states, “In my family, I was taught that our language does not gender people, but of course we have descriptive terms for “man” and “woman.” The existence of those words does not mean that we only acknowledge two genders in general. Rather, they are terms that mark specific gender positions on a continuum” (p. 144). Colonialism targeted Indigenous languages and in doing so, many of the teachings and practices of Indigenous communities that existed outside the gender binary were lost. As well, the history that has been recorded was often done by white anthropologists and historians, who had biased views and often recorded a narrative of Indigenous people that reinforced gender binaries and roles. Wilson argues that through her own research, she found Indigenous cosmologies, legends, and stories that recognized and accepted gender fluidity, gender and sexual diversity, and queerness. She challenges us to find ways to tell our traditional stories that do not reinforce heteropatriarchy and to look for history and stories that are not commonly shared which celebrate and make visible the queerness of Indigenous history and Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing.

Indigenous languages recognize gender states not even named in English, The Globe and Mail:
<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/life/health-and-fitness/health/indigenous-languages-recognize-gender-states-not-even-named-in-english/article29130778/>

Queering Indigenous Education, Wilson and Laing, 2018:
<https://sfsuais.sfsu.edu/sites/default/files/Wilson%20on%20Queering%20Education.pdf>



THE INTRODUCTION OF THE COLONIAL GENDER BINARY

When European newcomers first began to explore and settle Indigenous lands, they brought with them their commitment (rooted in their own cultures, spirituality and ways of being) to heteropatriarchy and gender binaries. They saw the acceptance of gender and sexual diversity that prevailed in Indigenous communities as sinful and threatening. Historic records show that violence on the bodies of Indigenous people who did not conform to the gender and sexual norms of the European newcomers began soon after their arrival (Wilson, 2015).

Colonial Gender Binary: The gender binary is a system that believes there are only two totally distinct, opposite and static genders (masculine and feminine) to identify with and express. It lays out two sets of rigidly defined roles for each of these genders, based on colonial ideas of femininity and masculinity. It then places men and masculinity as more important than women and femininity. In the process, it erases any variance outside of these two genders. This was a key tactic of colonialism. Gender variance within Indigenous communities was attacked and the gender binary was enforced through various means (such as residential schools and the Indian Act) where people were forced to reject gender fluidity. Overtime, the gender binary becomes so engrained it is seen as natural.

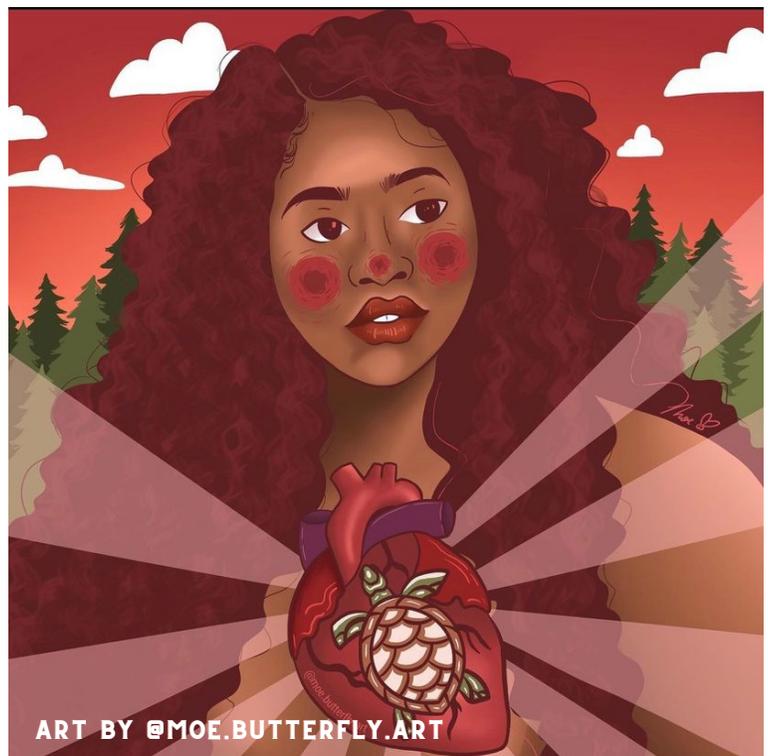
“2SQ (two-spirit and queer) bodies and the knowledge and practices those bodies house as Indigenous political orders were seen as an extreme threat to settler society, sovereignty, dispossession, and the project of colonization, colonialism, and assimilation. The powerful relationships queer bodies house—consent, diversity, variance, spiritual power, community, respect, reciprocity, love, attachment—were the very first thing colonizers sought to eliminate, and they began celebrating what they thought was the genocide of 2SQ people in my nation long before colonization reached nations on the West Coast or in the north”

- Leanne Simpson (2017, p.126)

Gender identity: ‘How colonialism killed my culture’s gender fluidity’ [Video], BBC World Service: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AqEgsHGik-s>

The Gender Binary is a Tool of White Supremacy, An Injustice Magazine: <https://aninjusticemag.com/the-gender-binary-is-a-tool-of-white-supremacy-db89d0bc9044?gj=55fa415b668f>

Transphobia is a White Supremacist Legacy of Colonialism, Medium: https://medium.com/@Michael_Paramo/transphobia-is-a-white-supremacist-legacy-of-colonialism-e50f57240650



ART BY @MOE.BUTTERFLY.ART

The creation of the binary gender system was part of a broader colonial tactic to control Indigenous people and gain access to their lands. The imposition of Christianity, laws such as Canada's Indian Act, and the residential and boarding school systems imposed by the Canadian government, were all part of an ongoing effort to assimilate Indigenous peoples. As Indigenous people were separated from each other, from their lands, from their language, from their culture, and from their ways of being, their bodies, genders, and sexualities were also regulated through violent means:

- The Indian Act: The gender binary was reinforced through the Indian Act. Only men could run for chief and council until 1950, marriage was defined in a heterosexual, monogamous way, and the rules for status and property were gendered and binarized. It created a federal system of Indigenous rights and status along heterosexual lines and suppressed Indigenous social and political systems of sex and gender that went far beyond the gender binary.
- Indian Agents: Indian agents were government officials who controlled and managed Indigenous communities. They imposed the gender binary upon Indigenous people in a variety of ways, such as forcing Indigenous people to take English names which upheld a binary system, preventing the use of traditional languages where gender variance was often present, and policing the intimate relationships of Indigenous people by promoting heterosexual monogamous relationships between men and women only (Simpson, 2017)
- Residential Schools, Day Schools and Sanitariums: The gender binary was violently enforced through residential schools, day schools, and sanitariums, where children were separated into boys or girls, their hair forcibly cut, and their clothes changed to skirts or pants, and where they were punished for normal, healthy expressions of sexuality and gender expressions outside of the rigidity of Victorian masculinity and femininity (Simpson, 2017).

“Heteropatriarchy isn’t just about exclusion of certain Indigenous bodies, it is about the destruction of the intimate relationships that make up our nations, and the fundamental systems of ethics based on values of individual sovereignty and self-determination. The more destruction our intimate relationships carry, the more destruction our political systems carry, and the less we are able to defend and protect our lands, and the easier it is to dispossess”

- Leanne Simpson (2017, p. 123)

The colonial gender binary continues to have a long-lasting effect on Indigenous communities and in particular on women, two-spirit and queer Indigenous folks. Overtime, as Indigenous people were punished for practicing or accepting gender and sexual variance, many Indigenous teachings and practices that existed outside the gender binary were taken underground or abandoned in order to survive. This has meant the loss not only of two-spirit and queer traditions, but also the spiritual, cultural, and political significance of diverse gender roles within Indigenous nations. Women, two-spirit and queer Indigenous people are often excluded from management, jurisdiction, and decision-making in contemporary policy and politics both within and outside their communities. They also face significantly higher rates of violence. As well, some of the present-day cultural teachings within Indigenous nations have been heavily influenced by colonization and Christianity, resulting in cultural practices that continue to be violent against two-spirit and queer Indigenous people.

Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls: https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Final_Report_Vol_1a-1.pdf

Indigenous queer normativity (Chapter 8), As We Have Always Done, Leanne Simpson: (p. 119-144):
https://rampages.us/goldstein/wp-content/uploads/sites/7807/2019/08/Leanne-Betasamosake-Simpson-As-We-Have-Always-Done_-Indigenous-Freedom-Through-Radical-Resistance.pdf

SYSTEMS OF CONTROL OVER GENDER AND SEXUAL FREEDOM

As 'Canada' was built by white settlers in the 19th and 20th century, the colonial gender binary was embedded into the social, political, economic, and ideological systems of the state. This resulted in the creation of a variety of interrelated oppressive systems that aimed to control people's gender and sexual freedom. Settler colonial state formation in Canada was and is a deeply gendered structure and process. For Indigenous people, these oppressive gender systems are also tied to white supremacy and colonialism, as white settlers aimed to control all aspects of Indigenous life and self-determination so they could ultimately gain control over Indigenous land.

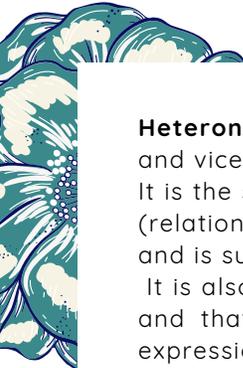
Heteropatriarchy: Heteropatriarchy is a system of social and political dominance whereby cisgender heterosexual men have power over cisgender women and other diverse sexual and gender orientations. It is a structure combining cisgender male power alongside the privileging of cisgender and monogamous relationships, assigning greater importance to male identities and lives than to people of other gender identities. It is a colonial construct which creates a social norm assuming that all of our romantic or sexual relationships are heterosexual (i.e. between a woman and man), and creates a hierarchy of power in which men benefit from systems at the expense of women and two-spirit and queer folks.

*“Queerness provides for and celebrates variance, including straightness, whereas heteropatriarchy sets out to destroy, control, and manipulate difference into hierarchies that position white, straight, cisgendered males as normal, and everyone else as less”
Leanne Simpson (2017, p. 129)*

Mainstream feminists have long identified this as foundational to the social and political arrangement of the Canadian state, while Indigenous feminist and gender scholars have argued it to be a primary tactic and mechanism of maintaining settler colonial power and control. Settler colonization utilized systems of heteropatriarchy as a means of 'civilization' to legitimize settler superiority and access to Indigenous land, and also used heteropatriarchy (along with white supremacy and other systems of domination) as a gendered tool of colonial conquest to disproportionately target Indigenous women for settler state projects of elimination and assimilation.

The introduction of heteropatriarchy through colonialism had particularly violent outcomes for Indigenous women, two spirit, and queer people. While the harms of colonization, dispossession, and residential schools affected Indigenous men as well, the imposition of heteropatriarchy on Indigenous nations aimed to redistribute power and control within communities to men, while women and queer folks were disempowered and removed from systems of governance. Unfortunately, these power dynamics of heteropatriarchy have been reproduced overtime.

*“Women, transgender, queer, and Two-Spirit people were never the intended beneficiaries of new distributions of power introduced through colonization. Rather, they were targeted and disempowered with the intention of removing them from leadership and minimizing any confrontation or challenge they posed to the patriarchy of Western systems of governance. This patriarchal system was internalized by many Indigenous communities and has been reproduced through misogyny in First Nation governments”
(Yellowhead Institute, 2019, p. 10)*



Heteronormativity: Heteronormativity is the assumption that everyone is straight (men like women and vice versa) and that in our society being straight is dominant, normal, and superior to being queer. It is the social, political, and economic roles and structures that reinforce the idea that heterosexuality (relationships of men and women) and patriarchy (men are superior to women) is the presumed norm and is superior to other sexual orientations and gender expressions/roles.

It is also the incorrect assumption that gender is a binary, ignoring genders besides women and men, and that people should align with the conventional expectations of their gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation as a woman or man. For example, someone assigned female at birth is expected to: (1) have a body that is considered “female” by the dominant culture; (2) identify as a girl or woman; (3) act feminine and fulfill the roles associated with girls and/or women; and (4) be romantically and sexually attracted to men (LGBTQIA Resource Centre, 2020)

Homophobia or Heterosexism: Homophobia encompasses a range of negative feelings, attitudes, beliefs, and prejudices towards queer people. It is the fear or hatred of, aversion to, and discrimination against queer folks and queer/same-sex behaviour. There are many levels and forms of homophobia, including cultural/institutional, interpersonal, and internalized homophobia. Many forms of homophobia are related to how restrictive binary gender roles are (i.e. a lesbian who is harassed with homophobic language for being perceived to be masculine). Some people choose to use the term ‘heterosexism’ instead because ‘phobia’ does not accurately describe this phenomenon. It is not an irrational fear, but a system which involves biases and the discrimination of queer people in favour of those who are straight.

Cis-Supremacy/Cis-Normative: The power structure that privileges cis people (those who identify with their assigned gender/sex at birth) over trans people or people who do not comply with Western assumptions of gender. It is a system of attitudes, bias and discrimination in favour of cisgender people that marginalizes and renders invisible trans and non-binary people and treats their needs and identities as less important than those of cisgender people, who are considered to exist within ‘social normalcy’. For example, cis people don’t have to worry about violence and institutionalized discrimination due to the fact they are cis.

Transphobia/Genderism: The fear and dislike of, and discrimination against, trans people. Transphobia can take the form of disparaging jokes, rejection, exclusion, denial of services, employment discrimination, name-calling and violence. Another term to better describe this phenomenon is cis-sexism/cis-supremacy/genderism, which refers to the power structure that privileges cis people over trans people or people who do not comply with Western assumptions of gender. It is the belief that there are, and should be, only two genders & that one’s gender or most aspects of it, are inevitably tied to assigned sex. In this society, cisgender people are the dominant group and trans/gender non-conforming people are the oppressed group.

Sexism/Misogyny: Sexism is the prejudice, stereotyping, or discrimination, typically against women, on the basis of sex. Misogyny is the hatred of women and a fear of the power of femininity that leads to the belief or attitude that masculinity, and specifically maleness, is not only desired, but more powerful and naturally dominant over femininity, and specifically femaleness. It is a form of sexism that keeps women at a lower social, political, and economic status than men. It manifests in various ways, such as men claiming public spaces (i.e. cat-calling); maleness being understood as the default; men being overrepresented in media, television and film roles; and overwhelming statistics related to men’s violence against women.

Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) Crisis: While the Canadian genocide targets all Indigenous Peoples, Indigenous women, two-spirit, and queer people are particularly targeted. Statistics consistently show that rates of violence against Métis, Inuit, and First Nations women, two-spirit, and queer people are much higher than for non-Indigenous women in Canada, even when all over differentiating factors are accounted for. Colonial violence, as well as racism, sexism, homophobia, and transphobia against these groups has become embedded in everyday life – whether this is through interpersonal forms of violence, through institutions like the health care system and the justice system, or in the laws, policies and structures of Canadian society (MMIWG 2019 report, p. 3-4).



“Gender non-conforming Indigenous people are often perceived as threats because their bodies, gender and sexual identities present in ways that are outside of Western norms. Due to this perceived threat, they often face increased amounts of violence”

- Violence on the Land, Violence on our Bodies (2016, p. 6).

These systems disproportionately target women, two spirit, and queer Indigenous folks with violence. It is so important that we take care of ourselves and each other. If you need support or know someone who needs support, the following resources might be helpful:

YOU ARE MADE OF MEDICINE, PEER SUPPORT MANUAL:

<https://www.nativeyouthsexualhealth.com/peersupportmanual>

FIREWEED COLLECTIVE'S CRISIS TOOLKIT:

<https://fireweedcollective.org/crisis-toolkit/>

NATIONAL INDIAN RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL CRISISLINE: The Indian Residential Schools Crisis Line is available 24-hours a day for anyone experiencing pain or distress as a result of their Residential school experience.

- 1-866-925- 4419
- Or text 686868 for free, 24/7
- <https://www.irsss.ca/faqs/how-do-i-reach-the-24-hour-crisis-line>

CANADIAN MENTAL HEALTH ASSOC:

- 1-833-456-4566 Toll free (in QC: 1-866-277-3553), 24/7
- www.crisisservicescanada.ca

TRANS LIFELINE: 24/7 phone support from trans and non-binary volunteers, available in English and Spanish.

- 1-877-330-6366
- <https://translifeline.org/>

LGBTQ2+ YOUTHLINE: Text and chat support for 2SLGBTQ youth (up to age 29) in Ontario. Available Friday-Sunday, 4pm-9:30pm (EST).

- Call toll free 1-800-268-9688 (In the Toronto Area: 416-962-9688)
- Text: 647-694-4275 or chat online.
- <https://www.youthline.ca/>

FIRST NATIONS AND INUIT HOPE FOR WELLNESS HELP LINE: 24/7 free phone and chat support, available in English, French, Cree, Ojibwe and Inuktitut.

- 1-855-242-3310
- <https://www.hopeforwellness.ca/>

THE KAMATSIAQTUT HELPLINE: 24/7 free phone support for folks in the North, available in English and Inuktitut

- 1-867-979-3333 (Nunavut) OR toll free at 1-800-265-3333

Look after yourself: take a walk, call or text a friend, nourish your body with a snack, show your emotions!

MOVING FORWARD

“We need to work so that no Indigenous bodies feel the pain and hurt of exclusion, shame, or outright violence in our most intimate spaces” (2017, p. 122).

As a result of the ongoing influence of colonialism, supporting Indigenous people to ‘self-actualize’ in relation to their gender expression, sexual identity, and relationship orientation is often not part of the political projects of Indigenous reclamation, decolonization, and resurgence (Simpson, 2017). There is an ongoing erasure of women, two-spirit, and queer people from leadership positions in nation-building projects. Often times heteropatriarchy is reproduced in communities through rigid (colonial) gender roles, pressuring women to wear certain clothing items to ceremony, excluding two spirit and queer folks from ceremony and community, and the dominance of male-centred narratives regarding Indigenous experience (Simpson, 2012). It can be very difficult for women, queer and two-spirit folks to embrace and practice their identities and sexualities when they have to navigate the ways these oppressive systems are reproduced in their communities.

Sometimes, our communities are not safe places for us. We know that homophobia, biphobia and transphobia are invasive species - our nations, peoples, and communities have teachings based on respect and self-determination that go back much farther than the hateful ideas brought over by colonizers (NYSHN, p. 15)



ART BY @MOE.BUTTERFLY.ART

“Resurgence is not just about bringing queer individuals into straight Indigenous spaces. Queer Indigeneity cannot be reduced to just sexual orientation. It is about a web of supportive, reciprocal, generative relationships that we often do not have names for in English and that exist outside of the hierarchy and the imagination of heteropatriarchy—a hierarchy that places the relationship of cisgendered, married, monogamous men and women at the top, and de-emphasizes or erases all other relationships. Ceremonies, ritual, social organization, and mobilization that replicate this invisibility and hold up the hierarchy also center heteropatriarchy. Radical resurgence is then about the destruction of the colonial hierarchy that heteropatriarchy embeds in us, our communities, and our nations, and restoring all Indigenous bodies as political orders within our political systems and nationhood” (Simpson, 2017, p. 134)

Queering Resurgence: taking on heteropatriarchy in Indigenous nation building, Leanne Simpson: <https://blogs.cc.umanitoba.ca/mamawipawin/2012/06/01/queering-resurgence-taking-on-heteropatriarchy-in-indigenous-nation-building/>

The reproduction of colonial gender norms and heteropatriarchy both within and outside of Indigenous communities has increasingly been brought to light by Indigenous women, two-spirit, and queer scholars, activists, and community members, who are advocating for the creation of resurgence movements and nation-building projects that do not uphold heteropatriarchy. They have argued that Indigenous nations must critically interrogate how colonialism is upheld through oppressive systems of gender both within and outside Indigenous communities. Leanne Simpson has argued that a dismantling of heteropatriarchy has become “the crucial nation-building exercise of our time” (2017, p. 93). These scholars, activists, and community members have done the important work of helping us to recognize the colonial gender systems we live under so that we can work to dismantle them as we move forward.



*“Indigenous people have the concepts and ethics to build Indigenous nations where queer people have body sovereignty, self-determination, influence, and freedom and bear crucial political orders, and where homophobia, transphobia, heterosexism, and heteronormativity are unacceptable”
- Leanne Simpson, (2017, p. 130)*

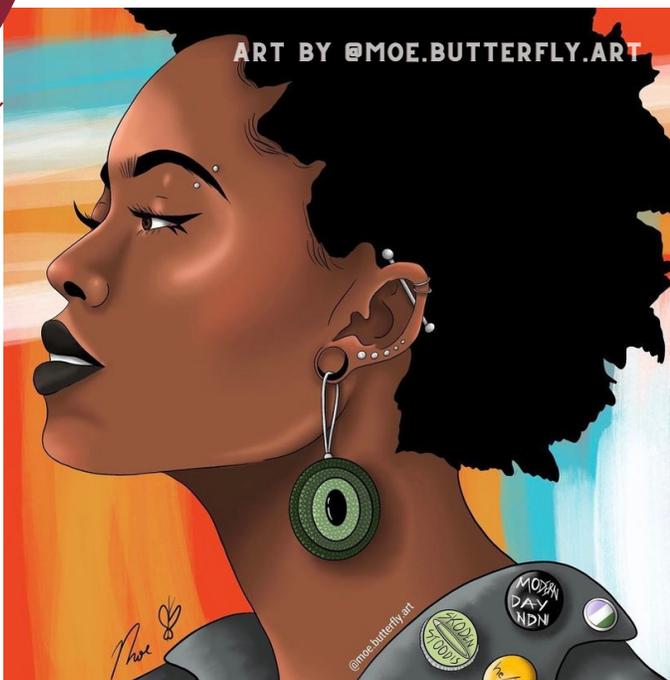
While it is important to understand and critique the oppressive systems discussed in this section, it is also important to focus on celebrating the beauty and brilliance of Indigenous women, two-spirit and queer folks. Despite the ongoing violent and gendered colonial project of Canada, these individuals persist and thrive! They continue to care for themselves, each other, and the land despite the systems of gender and sexual oppression that continue to disproportionately oppress them.

Check out these social media accounts of amazing two-spirit, LGBTQ+, and queer Indigenous artists, writers, and organizations:

@nativeboytoy
@moe.butterfly.art
@hurianakt.a
@wanahae
@coffinbirth
@adamgarnetjones
@mo_thunder
@niizh_manidook_hide_camp
@teaandbannock
@jacksaddleback
@vientoxsol
@pieces.to.pathways
@2slgbtq
@navajo_nation_pride
@twospiritpowwow
@w2salliance

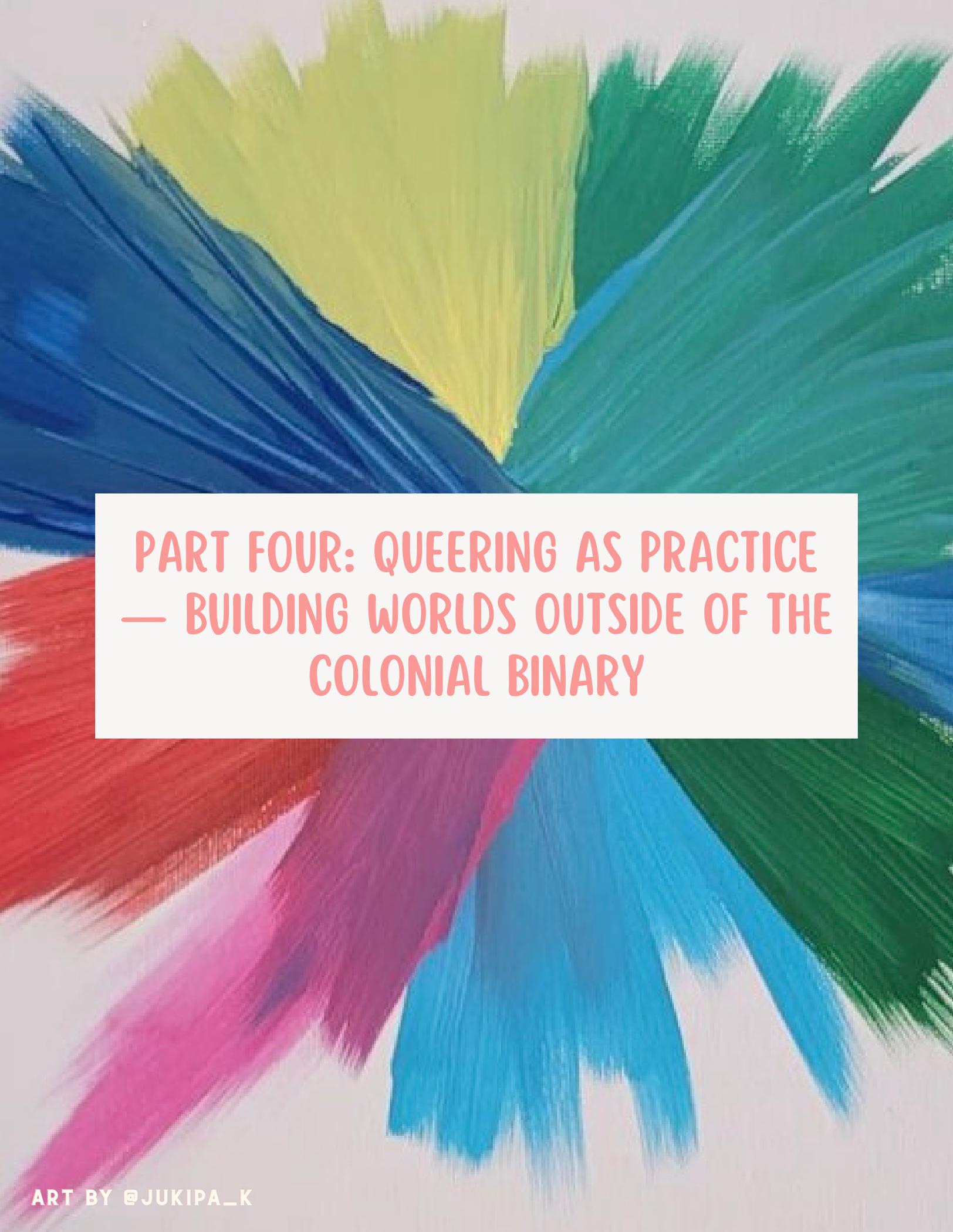
Check out the following articles to learn more about how Indigenous women, two spirit, and queer folks continue to resist colonialism and build radically queer Indigenous worlds:

- **Wet'suwet'en strong, Jas Morgan:**
<https://canadianart.ca/features/wetsuweten-strong/>
- **(Indigenous) Governance is Gay, Emily Riddle:**
<http://gutsmagazine.ca/indigenous-governance-is-gay/>
- **Land back means protecting Black and Indigenous trans women, Jaye Simpson:**
<https://briarpatchmagazine.com/articles/view/land-back-means-protecting-black-and-indigenous-trans-women>



If I could offer a final message... I'd say, Two Spirit folk have always been here. We are still here. We will be here until the end of time. Respect existence, or expect resistance.

- Liam (Four Transgender Indigenous and Two-Spirit People On What They Need From Allies, 2018)

An abstract painting featuring vibrant, expressive brushstrokes in shades of blue, green, yellow, red, and pink. The colors are layered and radiate from a central point, creating a sense of movement and depth. The background is a light, neutral tone, which makes the colors stand out.

**PART FOUR: QUEERING AS PRACTICE
— BUILDING WORLDS OUTSIDE OF THE
COLONIAL BINARY**

THE IMPORTANCE OF LANGUAGE AND PRONOUNS

The language we use to identify each other holds immense power. Our language choices can be used to validate, include, affirm, and uplift an individual's gender identity, but they can also be used to dismiss, deny, exclude, and oppress someone's orientation and/or identity. One of the easiest ways we can validate a person's gender identity is by using the pronouns that properly identify them. For trans folks, this could also involve using the name they wish to be called after transitioning if it is different from the name they were born with.



ART BY @THEMISTAKEBEAD

Why asking someone what gender pronoun they use is so important, Teen Vogue:

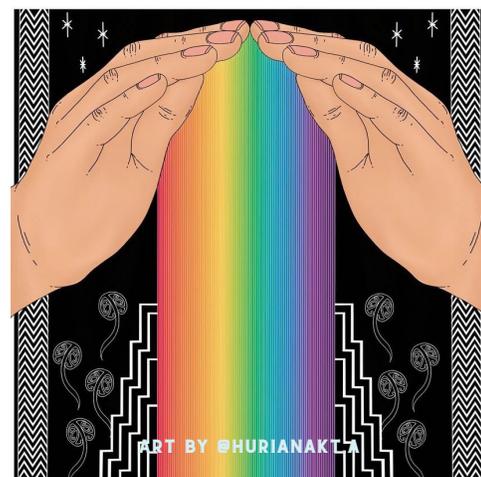
<https://www.teenvogue.com/story/gender-pronouns>

Why gender pronouns matter [video], Seventeen:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9iKHjI5xAaA>

Can you Choose Your Pronouns?, MTV Impact [Video]:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kCXY4RVPcW4>



ART BY @HURIANAKT

Pronouns: How a person chooses to refer to themselves. For example, she/her/hers, they/them/theirs, ze/hir/hirs, he/him/his, one's name, or respectful and personally approved culturally connected terms/words. In English and some other languages, pronouns are tied to gender and are a common site of misgendering (attributing a gender to someone that is incorrect.) Many non-binary folks will choose to use they/them pronouns! It is preferable to always ask someone their pronouns if possible, and to not make assumptions about a person's pronouns.

- **A guide on personal pronouns:** <https://www.mypronouns.org>.

Misgendering: The act of attributing a person to a gender with which they do not identify (i.e. a person refers to another person as a man but this person is actually non-binary). Misgendering people can be minimized by trying to not assume people's genders based on what they look like and by asking people their pronouns when appropriate

- **Misgendering: What it is and why it matters**, Harvard Health Publishing: <https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/misgendering-what-it-is-and-why-it-matters-202107232553>
- **You Just Went Full Sir on the Ma'am: How to Apologize for Misgendering Someone:** <https://the-toast.net/2014/03/26/how-to-apologize-for-misgendering-someone/>
- **Misgendering is an Act of Violence and it Needs to Stop**, Brown Girl Magazine: <https://browngirlmagazine.com/2020/06/misgendering-is-an-act-of-violence-and-it-needs-to-stop/>

Deadnaming: Deadnaming is the act of referring to a transgender or non-binary person by a name they used prior to transitioning, such as their birth name. Deadnaming may be accidental, or an intentional attempt to deny or invalidate a person's gender identity.

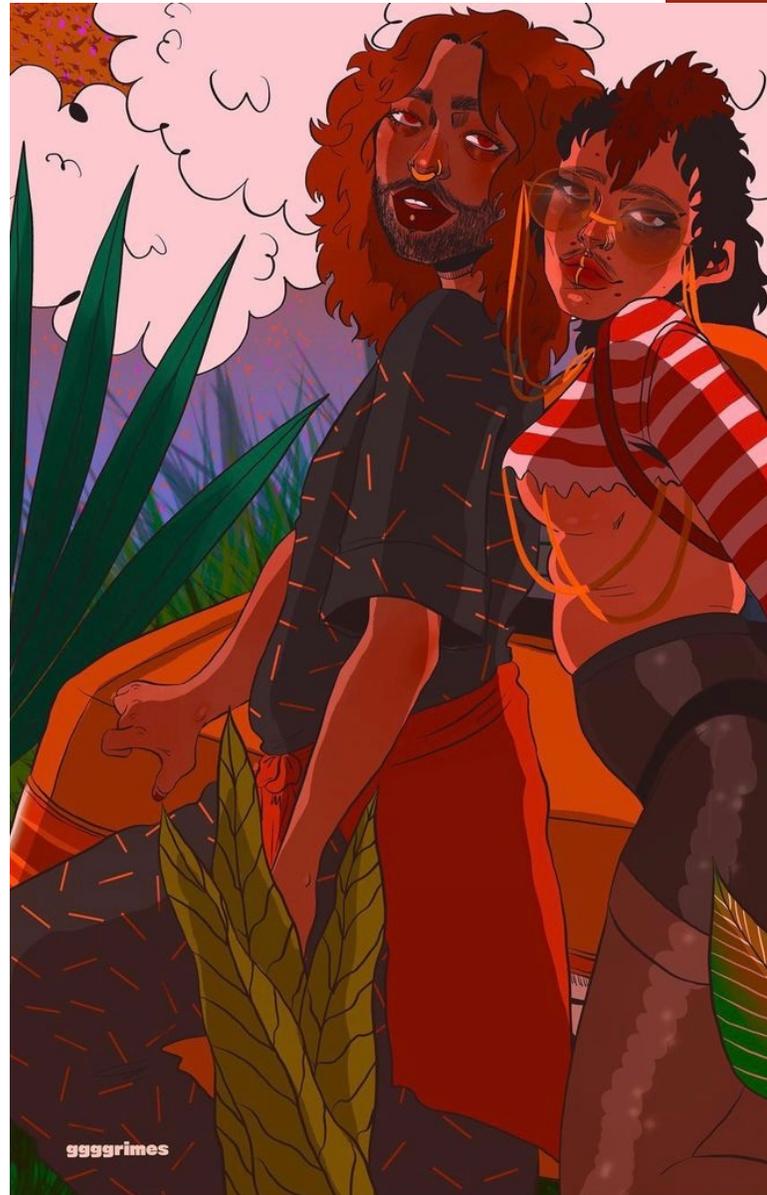
- **Overview of the harm of deadnaming**, Queer Cafe: <https://queercafe.net/deadname.htm>

Using they/them to address someone is always a good alternative if you aren't sure of someone's pronouns! Resources for shifting towards gender-neutral and inclusive language:

- **Gender Queeries: Gender Neutral/Queer Titles:** <https://genderqueeries.tumblr.com/titles>
- **Until I'm told otherwise, I prefer to call you 'they':** <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2021/09/15/until-im-told-otherwise-i-prefer-call-you-they/>
- **I <3 Singular They: An Animated Love Letter to a Pronoun:** <http://iheartsingularthey.com>
- **7 Ways to Make Your Language More Transgender and Nonbinary Inclusive:** <https://www.theodysseyonline.com/ways-language-transgender-nonbinary-inclusive>
- **Why Some People Say "Partner" In A Relationship Instead Of "Boyfriend" Or "Girlfriend":** <https://www.mindbodygreen.com/articles/people-use-word-partner-girlfriend-boyfriend-husband-wife>
- **Words for every body: Some critics say that terms such as 'chestfeeding' and 'front hole' erase cis women's identities. Here's why we disagree:** <https://aeon.co/essays/why-trans-inclusive-language-is-no-threat-to-cis-women>

The Native Youth Sexual Health Network offers these following guidelines for respecting the pronouns of other people (p. 10-12): If someone takes the time to share their identity, pronouns, name, experiences, or diagnosis with you, they are sharing their story. Everyone's story and identity should be respected. Some people may use multiple different sets of pronouns (ex. using she/her and they/them interchangeably), and some folks choose not to use pronouns at all, and simply go by their name. Some folks may also use pronouns from their Indigenous languages, or pronouns that are specific to their cultures - for example, some Indigiqueer Inuit use Inuk as a pronoun.

- **Ask:** You cannot tell someone's name or pronoun just by looking at them. If you find yourself unsure of someone's pronoun, be attentive to how others refer to this person. If you are still unclear or concerned that people might be using the incorrect pronoun, politely and privately ask that person what pronoun they use.
- **Respect:** If someone takes the time to let you know their name and pronoun, use and respect it. It's not up to you to decide someone else's identity.
- **Practice:** If you have difficulty using someone's pronoun and name, practice. Ask co-workers, peers, and friends to point out when you've made a mistake.



COMING OUT (OR COMING IN)

As we have discussed in this handbook, we all live under the systems of heteropatriarchy, heteronormativity, and cis-supremacy that work to erase and oppress gender and sexual diversity. In our current world, it is 'against the norm' to identify as queer, two-spirit or trans. It can therefore be a long and difficult process for individuals to understand themselves outside of the gender binary. It can be even harder to come out and live publicly as a queer person —outside of the expectations the colonial gender binary has imposed on us. The term 'coming out' refers to the process of telling other people what your sexual orientation or gender identity is. It is not usually a one-off event. When we live under systems which assume everyone to be straight and cis-gendered, the process of coming out is often a life-long one.



Coming out: the process of voluntarily sharing one's sexual orientation and/or gender identity with others. The term "coming out" is a shortened form of "coming out of the closet", which is a metaphor for revealing one's sexual orientation and/or trans status. The process of coming out is unique for each individual and there is no right or wrong way to come out. It can involve:

- sharing about a same-gender or similar gender sexual or romantic attraction or experience
- identifying as LGBTQIA+
- disclosing one's specific gender identity, gender expression, or sexual or romantic orientation

Being out: when someone does not conceal their sexual orientation or gender identity from others.

Outing: a term used for making public the sexual orientation or gender identity of another person who would prefer to keep this information secret. You should never out someone without their consent. For different and always valid reasons, some individuals do not wish to share their sexual orientation or gender identity with others. This should always be respected.

How do you present to the world? Writing our own dictionary, It Gets Better Project:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6eRbhu5BAUs>

LGBTQ | How You See Me, Participant [Video]:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wxHHstcyP4I>

Thank You for Coming Out: Host Dubbs Weinblatt talks to lesbian, gay, trans, bi, non-binary and more members of the queer community about their coming out stories.

<https://podcasts.schnepsmedia.com/podcast/thank-you-for-coming-out/>

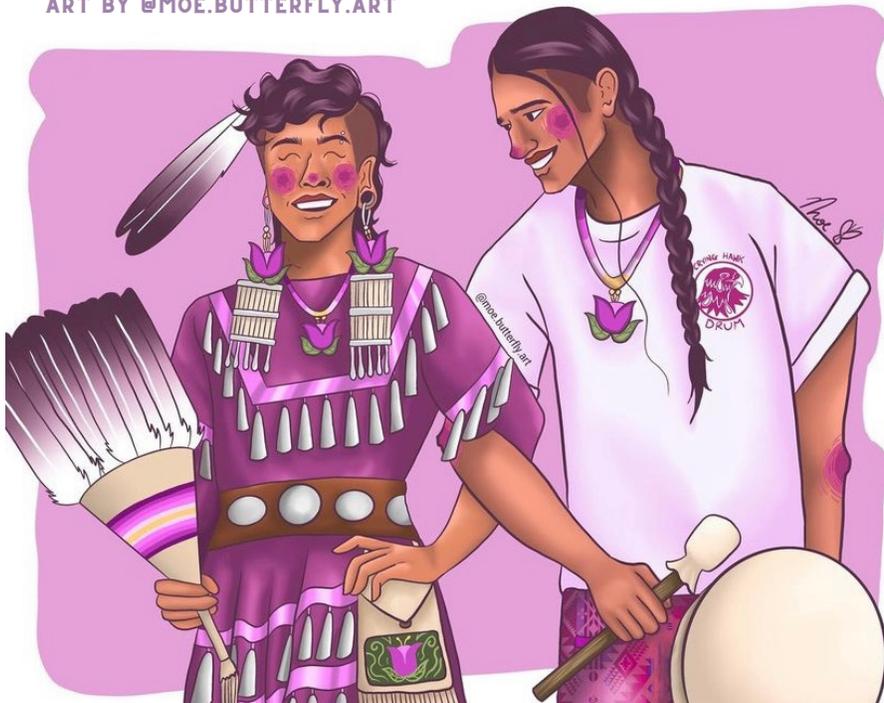


ART BY @SHANEEBENJAMIN

Coming In: For some Indigenous people, the process of coming out involves a return to an identity, culture, and practice that existed before colonialism. When queer and/or two-spirit Indigenous people are able to be themselves, they reclaim the authority to define who they are in a way that aligns with their culture, history, and Indigenous ways of being, outside of the imposed identities and structures of colonialism. Alex Wilson, a two-spirit scholar, describes this process as ‘coming in’, rather than ‘coming out’. She states:

“When we call ourselves two-spirit people, we are proclaiming sovereignty over our bodies, gender expressions and sexualities. In my own research with Cree and Ojibwe two-spirit people, I heard many stories of ‘coming in’. Coming in does not centre on the declaration of independence that characterizes ‘coming out’ in mainstream depictions of the lives of LGBTQI people. Rather, coming in is an act of returning, fully present in our selves, to resume our place as a valued part of our families, cultures, communities, and lands, in connection with all our relations” (Wilson, 2015).

ART BY @MOE.BUTTERFLY.ART



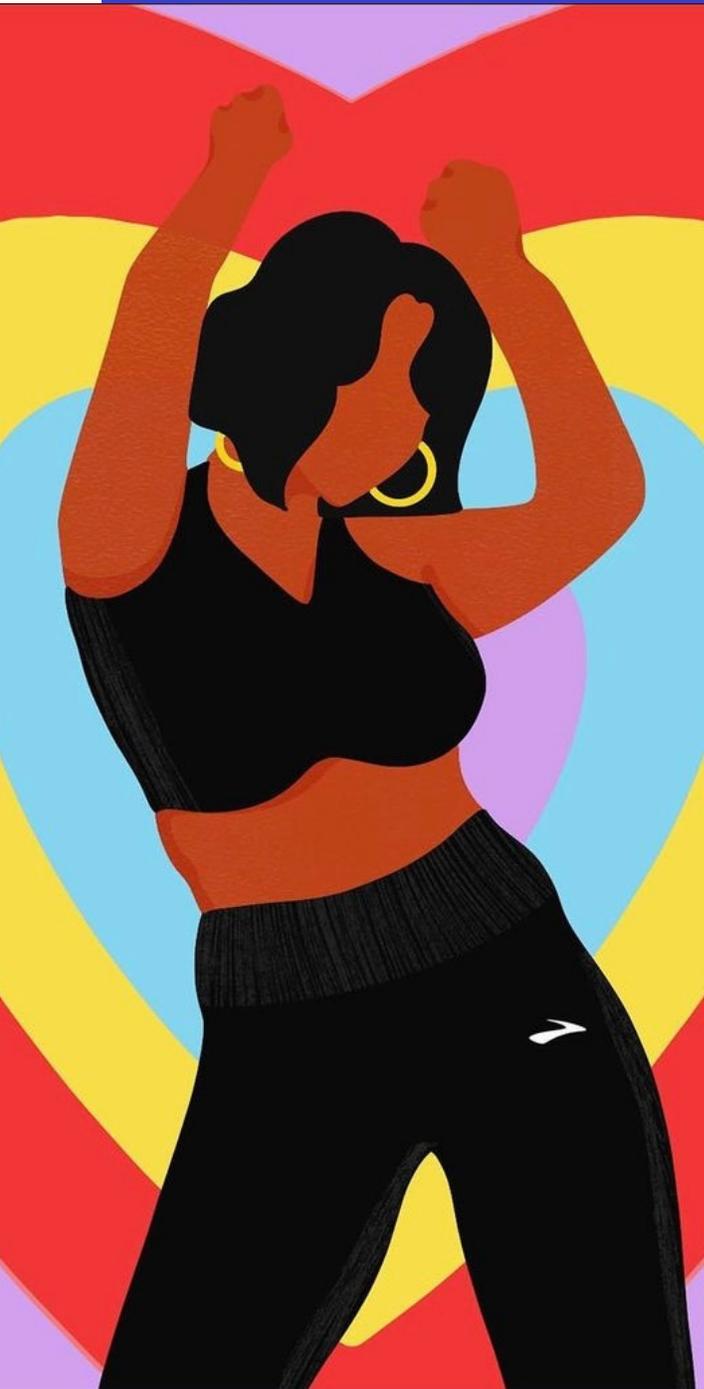
“Two-spirit identity is about circling back to where we belong, reclaiming, reinventing, and redefining our beginnings, our roots, our communities, our support systems, and our collective and individual selves. We “come-in”

Alex Wilson (2008, p. 1)

Coming in is a process of gender and/or sexual liberation and identity affirmation that is inseparable from Indigenous resurgence and the reclamation of Indigenous ways of knowing/being/doing. You can learn more about the process of ‘coming in’ here:

- **Our Coming In Stories: Cree Identity, Body Sovereignty and Gender Self-Determination**, Alex Wilson: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hXK9qD1Beh8>
- **N’tacimowin inna nah’: Our coming in stories**, Alex Wilson (2008):<https://cws.journals.yorku.ca/index.php/cws/article/view/22131/20785>
- **How two-spirit people are ‘coming in’ to their communities**, CBC Radio: <https://www.cbc.ca/radio/unreserved/how-two-spirit-people-are-coming-in-to-their-communities-1.6272654>

The process of 'coming out' or 'coming in' can be intimidating and complicated. There are many resources online to help with this process. We have included a few here.



ART BY @SHANEEBENJAMIN

We Matter Campaign: We Matter is an Indigenous youth-led and nationally registered organization dedicated to Indigenous youth support, hope and life promotion:
<https://wemattercampaign.org/what-is-we-matter>

It gets better project: The It Gets Better Project's mission is to uplift, empower, and connect lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) youth around the globe:
<https://itgetsbetter.org>.

Coming Out: A Handbook for LGBTQ Young People, The Trevor Project:
<https://www.thetrevorproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Coming-Out-Handbook.pdf>

Coming Out: Living Authentically as Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual+, Human Rights Campaign Foundation:
<https://hrc-prod-requests.s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/ComingOut-LGB-Resource-2020.pdf>

Coming out: Living Authentically as Black LGBTQ People:
hrc.im/BlackLGBTQComingOut.
Download directly at:
https://assets2.hrc.org/files/assets/resources/Black-ComingOut-Resource-02122020.pdf?_ga=2.258738698.1449025488.1645376282-1404347259.1645376282

Two-Spirit and LGBTQ+ Indigenous Resources and Toolkits, The Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board:
<http://www.npaihb.org/2slgbtq/#seeus>

Sassy Sassafrass —A Two Spirit ebook:
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/120o6XEa8KopcLxOn1kcW2YvQid2vlaWQ/view>

Surviving the Apocalypse Together is a toolkit designed to help queer and trans folks navigate the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic: [https://arcmnnesota.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Surviving the Apocalypse Together Workbook.pdf](https://arcmnnesota.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Surviving%20the%20Apocalypse%20Together%20Workbook.pdf)

We R Native —Support for Native youth by Native youth:
<https://www.wernative.org>

Coming out resource guide:
<https://lgbtqia.ucdavis.edu/support/coming-out>

DISMANTLING THE COLONIAL GENDER BINARY ON THE LAND

“Each generation has to figure out how to make our spirituality relevant to all our people. That’s the philosophical and practical challenge we have a responsibility to undertake in ways that do not replicate homophobia, transphobia, heterosexism, heteronormativity, and heteropatriarchy”
- Leanne Simpson (2017, p. 122)

As mentioned in previous sections of this toolkit, colonialism imposed a gender binary upon Indigenous communities in an attempt to erase the diverse gender continuum practiced by many Indigenous people. The gender binary was also imposed upon the land in a number of ways:

- a. plants and animals were viewed by white settlers as either male or female, with no acknowledgement of the vast array of sexes that exist in between these two categories in nature. This idea was encoded in language and continues to be taught in schools to Indigenous and non-Indigenous people;
- b. the English language that was imposed upon Indigenous people described the land as feminine or female, and Indigenous languages that viewed the land in gender-neutral or gender-expansive ways were condemned through residential schools;
- c. gendering the land as ‘female’ meant that it was subservient to ‘man’ and thus open for exploitation and dispossession by white settlers, reinforcing the Euro-centric idea that humans and nature are separate and hierarchical, oppressing Indigenous understandings of humans and land as interconnected and interdependent entities in living relationships.



ART BY @BROOBS

“There is a heteronormative imposed gender projected onto creation as a result of colonialism and a christianized view of the earth, rather than one of Indigenous ethics and practices” - Leanne Simpson (2017, p. 121)

The binary of male/female that was forced upon Indigenous communities under colonialism exists in tension with many of the core values/ethics of Indigenous nations. Many Indigenous communities embodied queerness in formation –as practice, ethics, and process, where individuals had body sovereignty, self-determination, and the freedom to be themselves and to self-actualize to the best of their abilities. As Leanne Simpson writes: “Our thought systems, which were grounded in ethical relationships with the land, were fluid, dynamic, and responsive. They were intended to build strong societies of individuals functioning as their best selves” (2017, p. 122). Knowledge systems were not intended to oppress individuals so that others could have more power. It is important to break down the ways that heteropatriarchy was imposed upon Indigenous communities and their land so that we can engage in practices of Indigenous resurgence and knowledge reclamation that are firmly rooted in Indigenous ways of knowing/being/doing, outside of oppressive colonial knowledge systems which serve to reproduce violence against queer and two-spirit Indigenous people.

ART BY @COFFINBIRTH



“connecting with the land, defending the land and our relationship to the land as nations should not reinforce violent binaries in which certain people are left out of our communities. Within land-based work we must remember that there are more than two genders (female/male) that exist on the land, otherwise we often exclude Two Spirit, gender non-conforming and non-binary people”

– Violence on the Land, Violence on our Bodies Toolkit (2016, p. 5)

Zine: “Stewarding Relationships: An Exploration Rooted in Gender Fluid Ancestral Knowledge Systems”:

<https://www.healthynativeyouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Final-Zine.pdf>

All My Relations Podcast: A podcast hosted by Matika Wilbur (Swinomish and Tulalip) and Adrienne Keene (Cherokee Nation) to explore our relationships— relationships to land, to our creatural relatives, and to one another: <https://www.allmyrelationspodcast.com>

Indigenous land-based education inherently questions and works to undo these colonial gender and sexuality constructs while also strengthening our relationship to the land. There is an increasing amount of interest in the process of 'queering land-based education' in order to create Indigenous education systems that do not recreate colonial constructs on the land and instead break-down the binaries imposed by colonization. Here are some resources which discuss the ways that the land and Indigenous land-based education is queer:

Land as teacher: understanding Indigenous land-based education. Canada Commission for UNESCO:
<https://en.ccunesco.ca/idealab/indigenouland-based-education>

Queering Indigenous Land-Based Education, Dechinta Centre for Research and Learning [Video]:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tEhUkCp2UZw>

Reading land, querying land, queering land education [Video], Alex Wilson: <https://vimeo.com/328673589>

Queering Land-Based Education During COVID-19, Alex Wilson:
<https://www.journalofglobalindigeneity.com/article/19438-queering-land-based-education-during-covid19>

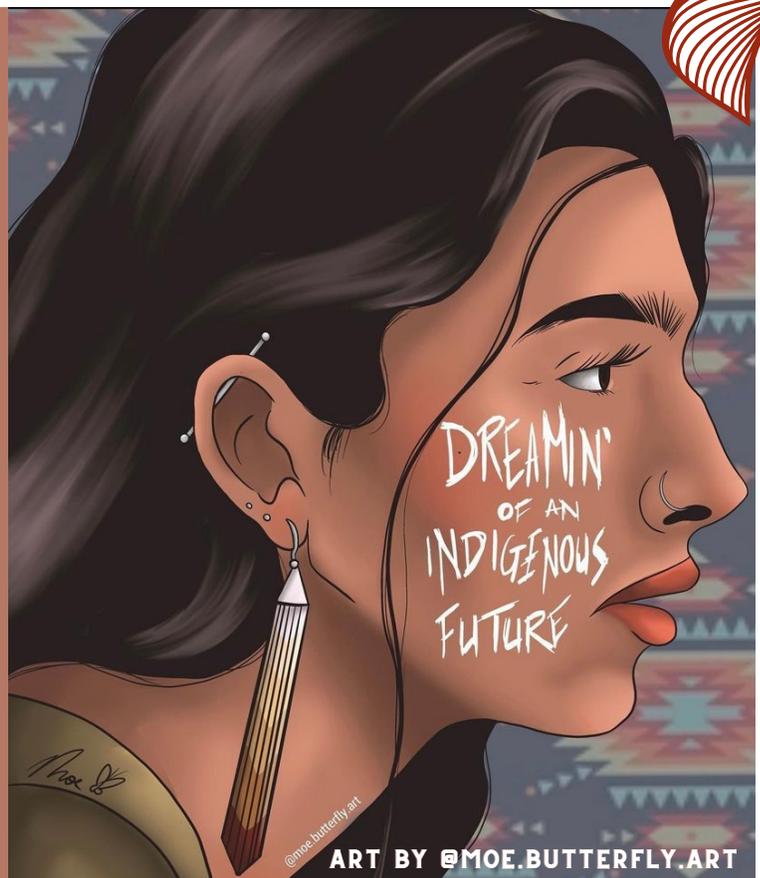
Teaching beyond the gender binary in the university classroom, Vanderbilt Centre for Teaching:
<https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/teaching-beyond-the-gender-binary-in-the-university-classroom/>

The Violence on the Land, Violence on our Bodies Toolkit offers several exercises for dismantling colonial heteropatriarchy out on the land. A link to their toolkit is below. Some simple reminders they offer us for when we are at camp:

- Part of the diversity of creation (land/water/four-legged) is that non-binary life exists and is critical to the survival of our nations and communities
- While on the land we can all support different forms of gender/sexualities

Violence On The Land, Violence On Our Bodies: Building an Indigenous Response to Environmental Violence, Women's Earth Alliance and Native Youth Sexual Health

Network: landbodydefense.org or
<http://landbodydefense.org/uploads/files/VLVBReportToolkit2016.pdf>



It is imperative that we remove shame and create spaces of belonging for Indigenous women, two spirit, and queer people in all of our communities. Understanding the land from an Indigenous perspective –as a teacher, as non-binary, as something to be in relationship with– teaches us about ourselves and how to be in healthy and supportive relationships with each other.

BEING AN ALLY

The information in this handbook is not just for those who are queer, two-spirit or LGBTQ+. In fact, it is especially important for those who do not identify as part of these groups to know and understand these concepts, history, and lived experiences. If we want to live in a world outside of heteropatriarchy and the colonial gender binary, those who are straight and/or cis-gendered must do the work of breaking down oppressive gender and colonial systems so that Indigenous queer folks can more easily build up their own queer Indigenous worlds in its place.

Ally: Allyship is a process of standing up for and with people who experience marginalization. An ally is someone who believes in the dignity and respect of all people and takes action by supporting and/or advocating with groups experiencing social injustice. An ally does not identify as a member of the group they are supporting. Allyship is a never-ending process of education and continual learning about institutions that continue to isolate, stigmatize, and discriminate against racially diverse, Indigenous, queer, trans and gender diverse people. Only through education can allies gain the skills and language to recognize and help to disrupt the workings of a system which they themselves are not negatively impacted. Only through acting in allyship, including engaging in processes of educating oneself, listening to those who experience social injustice, and addressing issues of social injustice, can that person be able to help create a safer space (Egale, 2017, p. 2)



It can be helpful to think of allyship with Indigenous women, queer, two-spirit, and LGBTQ+ people as consisting of two important and interrelated projects:

- a. A project of resistance — resisting and working to break down the structures and process of settler colonialism, white supremacy, and heteropatriarchy that shape our current reality and disproportionately target Indigenous women, two-spirit, and queer folks
- b. A project of resurgence — supporting and uplifting the Indigenous women, queer, two-spirit, and LGBTQ+ people and communities who are already building their own movements and spaces.

When allies work to dismantle structures like the colonial gender binary and resist the ongoing persistence of white heteropatriarchy in the world around them, they are also doing the work of creating more safe and supportive spaces so that Indigenous queer resurgence has an increased capacity to thrive.

What does this look like in practice?



- **Using the right language** — it is important that we work hard to identify folks correctly and to use their proper terminology even when they are not around. If you mess up, correct yourself and move on!
- **Listening** — listen to what Indigenous queer and two spirit people have to say about their own experiences. They know what they need in terms of allyship. It is also important to not talk over those who you are trying to support.
- **Educating yourself and learning** — The more educated we become, the more equipped we are to support queer Indigenous folks in their fight against colonial gender violence and oppression. It is important to take on this work yourself and not rely on Indigenous queer and two spirit people to educate you.
- **Speaking up** — when you see or hear something violent or offensive it is important to try and speak up and educate those around you, but only if it is safe and appropriate to do so.
- **Recognizing your privilege/power** — begin to identify how you may be benefiting from systems of heteropatriarchy, colonialism, or white supremacy and figure out ways to use the privilege you have to uplift others or work against the system in small or big ways.
- **Financial support** — this is not always possible, but offering financial support to Indigenous women, queer and two-spirit organizations or individuals is a concrete way to make a difference on the ground for folks.
- **Think differently** — work to see the world outside of the colonial gender binary as much as you can, learn to believe, support and encourage other worldviews and Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing.

“Listen to us. Listen when we tell you something is harmful to our culture. Stand with us, when we need you to. If you see one of us is in danger, and you’re able, step up. That goes for anyone, though!”

- Liam (Four Transgender Indigenous and Two-Spirit People On What They Need From Allies, 2018)

“The Two Spirit — specifically the trans Two Spirit — community is already doing work to uplift ourselves and to better our lives against colonialism and transphobia. The best way that accomplices can help is by uplifting our efforts, the things that we are already doing, because only we know how to support the things that we need”

- Xemi (Four Transgender Indigenous and Two-Spirit People On What They Need From Allies, 2018)



A list of resources for those who are working towards being an ally to those in the Indigenous (and non-Indigenous) queer community:

Allyship and Ambassador Guide: Suggestions for acting in allyship with the two spirit community on campus:

<https://egale.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Two-Spirit-Ally-Ambassador-Guide-FINAL.pdf>

All My Relations —Supporting Two Spirit Youth, Indigenous Perspectives Society:

<https://ipsociety.ca/2014/07/all-my-relations-supporting-two-spirit-youth/>

Four Transgender Indigenous and Two-Spirit People On What They Need From Allies, Into:

<https://www.intomore.com/impact/four-transgender-indigenous-and-two-spirit-people-on-what-they-need-from-allies/>

Call to Conversation Findings: Two spirit and Queer Trans People of Colour, Calls to Action 2019:

https://www.winnipeg.ca/c2c/docs/c2c_calls-to-action_final.pdf

10 ways to be an ally to Black LGBT people:

<https://www.stonewall.org.uk/about-us/news/10-ways-be-ally-black-lgbt-people>

5 Tips for Being an Ally [Video], Chescaleigh: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_dg86g-QIM0

50+ Resources for LGBTQIA Allies, Buffer:

<https://buffer.com/resources/lgbtqia-resources/>

True or False: LGBTQ Edition, BuzzFeed Video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z1oOYD6fuGI>

Here's what a good LGBTQ ally looks like, Vox:

<https://www.vox.com/identities/2019/6/22/18700875/lgbtq-good-ally>

The Guide to Being a Straight Ally (4th Edition), Straight for Equality:

<https://bolt.straightforequality.org/files/Straight%20for%20Equality%20Publications/2019-4th-ed-guide-to-being-an-ally.pdf>

Trans@mit Allies Toolkit: Action Tips for Allies of Trans People:

<https://lgbtrc.usc.edu/files/2015/05/Actions-Tips-for-Allies-of-Trans-People1.pdf>

Straight For Equality: Trans Ally Materials and Resources:

<https://straightforequality.org/transmaterials>

Being an LGBTQ Ally resource, Human Rights Campaign:

<https://hrc-prod-requests.s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/ComingOut-Ally-Resource-2020.pdf>

The Better Allies email list shares 5 weekly actions to create a more inclusive workplace:

<https://betterallies.us19.list-manage.com/subscribe?u=cc808df089bf312fc1a37916d&id=575137cdc6>

How parents can support their trans children:

<https://phys.org/news/2021-04-parents-trans-children.html>

The Safe Zone Project: Free online resource for powerful, effective LGBTQ awareness and ally training workshops: <https://thesafezoneproject.com>

A Guide for Understanding, Supporting, and Affirming LGBTQ!S Children, Youth, and Families:

<https://www.socialworkers.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=jjq0-NcZIU0%3D&portalid=0>



CONCLUSION

This concludes your Dechinta gender terminology toolkit! We hope that it has been helpful in guiding you through some of the main terminology and concepts around gender and sexuality, both generally and in relation to colonialism and Indigenous people in Canada. It is so important that we work together to be informed and create a safe and accepting community for each other during our time out on the land together. We look forward to seeing you soon! Mahsi.



REFERENCES

Some of these are academic articles that you may not be able to access without having access to a university library. If there is something here you would like to read but do not have access to, please contact Sydney at sydney@dechinta.ca and she can download and send it to you.

Abrams, M. (2019). 46 terms that describe sexual attraction, behaviour, and orientation. Healthline. Retrieved from: <https://www.healthline.com/health/different-types-of-sexuality>

Driskill, Q., Finley, C., Gilley, B. and Morgensen, S. (2011). *Queer Indigenous Studies: Critical Interventions in Theory, Politics, and Literature*. UBC Press.

Egale. (2017). *Allyship and Ambassador Guide: Suggestions for acting in allyship with the Two Spirit Community on Campus*. Retrieved from: <https://egale.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Two-Spirit-Ally-Ambassador-Guide-FINAL.pdf>

Geneseo. (2022). *Understanding Gender Identity and Gender Expression*. Retrieved from: <https://www.geneseo.edu/lgbtq/gender-identity>

HRC Foundation. (n.d.). *Human Right's Campaign glossary*. Retrieved from: <https://www.hrc.org/resources/glossary-of-terms>

Hunt, S., Holmes, C. (2015). *Everyday decolonization: Living a decolonizing queer politics*. *Journal of Lesbian Studies*, 19(2), p. 154-172.

Killerman, S. (2020). *Comprehensive* List of LGBTQ+ Vocabulary Definitions. It's Pronounced Metrosexual*. Retrieved from: <https://www.itspronouncedmetrosexual.com/2013/01/a-comprehensive-list-of-lgbtq-term-definitions/>

LGBTQIA Resource Centre. (2020). *LGBTQIA Resource Center Glossary*. Retrieved from: <https://lgbtqia.ucdavis.edu/educated/glossary>

MCSS. (2018). *Serving LGBT2SQ Children and Youth in the Child Welfare System: A Note on Language*. Retrieved from: <http://www.children.gov.on.ca/htdocs/English/professionals/LGBT2SQ/guide-2018/notelanguage.aspx>

Montz, B. & Solomon, M. (2021). *Acronyms Explained*. OutRight Action International. Retrieved from: <https://outrightinternational.org/content/acronyms-explained>

New York Times. (2018) *The ABCS of LGBTQIA+*. Retrieved from: <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/21/style/lgbtq-gender-language.html>

National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. (2019). *Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls*. Retrieved from: https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Final_Report_Vol_1a-1.pdf

Native Youth Sexual Health Network (NYSHN). (n.d.). *You are Made of Medicine*. Native Youth Sexual Health Network. Retrieved from: <https://www.nativeyouthsexualhealth.com/peersupportmanual>

Native Sexual Health Network and Women's Earth Alliance (NSHN & WEA). (2016). *Violence on the Land, Violence on Our Bodies*. Retrieved from: <http://landbodydefense.org/uploads/files/VLVBReportToolkit2016.pdf>

Queersmart. (2018). Queer Terminology from A to Q. QMUNITY. Retrieved from: https://qmunity.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Queer-Glossary_2019_02.pdf

PennState. (n.d.) Gender Diversity Terminology. Retrieved from: <https://studentaffairs.psu.edu/campus-community-diversity/lgbtq-community/explore-lgbtq-resources/identity-based-resources/gender-terms>

PFLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbian's and Gays). (2021). PFLAG National Glossary of Terms. Retrieved from: <https://pflag.org/glossary>

Roughgarden, J. (2013). Evolution's Rainbow: Diversity, Gender, and Sexuality in Nature and People. California Press.

Simpson, L. (2017). As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom Through Radical Resurgence. Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press.

Simpson, L. (2012). Queering Resurgence: taking on heteropatriarchy in Indigenous nation building. Mamawipawin. Retrieved from: <https://blogs.cc.umanitoba.ca/mamawipawin/2012/06/01/queering-resurgence-taking-on-heteropatriarchy-in-indigenous-nation-building/>

Thomas, H. & Hirsch, A. (2016). A Progressive's Style Guide. Sum of Us. Retrieved from: https://s3.amazonaws.com/s3.sumofus.org/images/SUMOFUS_PROGRESSIVE-STYLEGUIDE.pdf

UNESCO. (June 21, 2021). Land as teacher: understanding Indigenous land-based education. Canada Commission for UNESCO. Retrieved from: <https://en.ccunesco.ca/idealab/indigenousland-based-education>

Western States Center. (2019). Indigenizing Love: A Toolkit for Native Youth to Build Inclusion. Retrieved from: <https://www.healthynativeyouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/IndigenizingLoveToolkitYouth.pdf>

Wilson, A. (2015). Our Coming In Stories: Cree Identity, Body Sovereignty and Gender Self-Determination [Video]. Journal of Global Indigeneity, 1(1), 2015. Watch at: <https://ro.uow.edu.au/jgi/vol1/iss1/4/>

Wilson, A. & Laing, M. (2018). Queering Indigenous Education. In Indigenous and Decolonizing Studies in Education. Retrieved from: <https://sfsuais.sfsu.edu/sites/default/files/Wilson%20on%20Queering%20Education.pdf>

World Health Organization. (n.d.) Gender and health. Retrieved from: https://www.who.int/health-topics/gender#tab=tab_1

Yellowhead Institute. (2019). Land Back: A Yellowhead Institute Red Paper. Retrieved from redpaper.yellowheadinstitute.org

ART CREDITS:

[@moe.butterfly.art](#)

[@broammed](#)

[@jukipa_k](#)

[@lex.app](#)

[@coffinbirth](#)

[@broobs](#)

[@shaneebenjamin](#)

[@gggrimes](#)

[@themistakebead](#)

[@hurianakt.a](#)

[@ashluka](#)



DECHINTA

Centre for Research and Learning