

At a Glance:

2-SPIRITED PEOPLE OF THE 1ST NATIONS RESPONSE TO COVID-19



2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

First, we would like to extend our sincere thanks to the Creator, Ancestors, and Spirits for providing us with strengths and resources to combat the COVID-19 pandemic. Secondly, we would like to extend our sincere thanks to our community members for helping and walking beside each other during this difficult time. We can care for each other putting hand in hand with the support of each there.

We want to extend our sincere thanks to all Elders for providing their valuable teaching and guiding us through the riddle during this challenging time. We wish to extend our heartfelt thanks to Elder Blue, Elder Pat Green, Elder Dana, and Elder Marlyn for their teachings and support. We want to extend our gratitude to those community members who encourage us by utilizing our services and constantly encourage us with their valuable input and feedback.

We sincerely thank the board and staff team of the 2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations for their commitment and dedication to supporting each other during the pandemic. Thank you, Keith McCrady - Executive Director, 2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations and Saige McMahon - Director of Crisis Response Pilot, 2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations, for your leadership and guidance. We sincerely thank Cultural Program Coordinator Pam Lapointe-Stead for recording and maintaining the programmatic data and inventories. Thank you, Amanda-the COVID-19 program coordinator and your support during the process.

We want to extend our sincere thanks to the Toronto Aboriginal Support Services Council (TASSC) and our donors and stakeholders for their valuable support and cooperation.

Sincerely,
Shiva Acharya,
Lead Researcher
2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations
educator@2spirits.org
September 22, 2022



BACKGROUND



2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations is a community-led agency working with Two-Spirited People of the 1st Nations, Metis and Inuit, who live with or are at risk of HIV across Ontario.

When the First case of COVID -19 was reported in Toronto on January 25, 2020, 2-Spirited people of the 1st Nations started a community outreach and education program right after. We immediately reached out to our community members and began delivering information, education and communication resources as requested by the community.



STRATEGIC PLANNING TO RESPONSE TO COVID-19

Two-Spirited People of the 1st Nations organized a series of Executive Directors Town Hall and Community Talking Circles virtually. We requested community inputs, land-based strategies, indigenous community support techniques, and cultural teachings to craft an effective community response strategy toward COVID-19.

Based on community feedback and information, 2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations designed its program and services as follows and delivered those services. As a result, we created a safer and enabling environment among the 2-Spirited People and indigenous communities in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA).

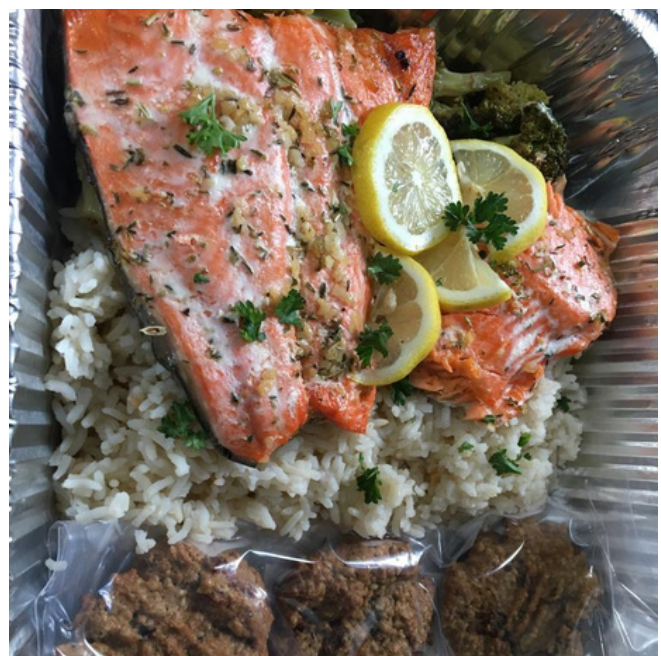


IN THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS TOWN HALL AND TALKING CIRCLE SERIES, COMMUNITY MEMBERS PROVIDED THE FOLLOWING FEEDBACK AND INPUTS.

1. Mostly 2-Spirited and Urban Indigenous People are living in Poverty and unemployment. We require immediate grocery and food support.
2. Mostly 2-Spirited and Urban Indigenous People do not have access to Phones and the internet. As a result, they are not being able to access updated information on COVID-19 and related support. We require immediate Phone and internet support.
3. Mostly 2-Spirited and Urban Indigenous do not have digital literacy, so we require immediate support of printed resources on education, prevention, and protection of COVID -19
4. Mostly 2-Spirited and Urban Indigenous People are excluded from mainstream service providers. As a result, they do not have access to personal hygiene, personal protective equipment, hand sanitizers, face shield and mask. We require immediate PPE and personal hygiene support.
5. Mostly Urban 2-Spirited communities are living by themselves. Those singles infected and affected by COVID -19 need immediate support and wellness checks.
6. Due to COVID, most of our community members are confined inside the house; we need virtual recreational and wellness support.
7. Mostly 2-spirited and indigenous people living with HIV are going through physical and mental health. Most of them are moving towards alcohol and substance use. We are warm-cooked indigenous meals, regular wellness checks and transpiration support to see doctors and appointments.
8. School and Day Care are closed. As a result, children are at home all day. We need children-specific programs and support.
9. Due to COVID-19 and its isolation, most of our community members are going through loneliness, depression, anxiety, and mental health. We need traditional virtual teachings, ceremonies, elders, and knowledge keepers' teachings and support.
10. Most of us do not have access to our four sacred medicine and related teachings. We need delivery of medicine bundles and medicine teachings from elders.
11. We need access to cultural ceremonies and a sweat lodge.
12. We want Powwow and drumming circle and ceremonies maintaining COVID-19 protocol at the park and open space.
13. We want a community garden and teaching on growing, harvesting and using available medicine at home.

Programs & Services We Delivered

As per the community inputs and suggestions, 2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations delivered 4000 plus personalized food trays and grocery baskets to the community members' addresses in Toronto during the pandemic.



POSITIVE LIVING PROGRAMS

2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations provided personalized support and care packages for the members living with HIV. During this period, we delivered 2100 warm indigenous meals cooked by indigenous community members with a recipe including its health benefits for immunocompromised people, 2000 TTC Pass and 1000 phones and tablets. We paid monthly phone and internet bills for 200 members over this period.



2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations

FOOD FOR POSITIVE LIVING

Warm Cooked Meals
Delivered to Your Home



DIRECT MESSAGE US ON OUR FACEBOOK PAGE FOR DETAILS



2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations

Technology for POSITIVE Living

2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations, Posi+ive Living Initiative is offering on-demand tech-support along with Phone, Tablet and Internet Supports for 2-Spirited people residing in the GTA with Posi+ive Living. Please email educator@2spirits.org for more information.

2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations

Transportation for POSITIVE Living

2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations, Posi+ive Living Initiatives is offering Monthly TTC Pass for the 2-Spirited Community Members Living with HIV.

Please Facebook 437-249-6837 if Posi+ive Living

INFORMATION, EDUCATION AND COMMUNICATION ON COVID -19

We delivered monthly 500 2-Spirited Newsletters along with printed information and education resources on COVID-19, HIV/AIDS, Harm Reduction and STBBI.

For those community members who live in parks and Tent cities, we delivered harm reduction supplies, personal hygiene, food, water, and refreshments along with resources on COVID-19 through Moss Park and neighbourhood streets.

Over the period, we handed over more than ten thousand harm reduction supplies, personal hygiene supplies, masks, sanitizers, toothpaste, tooth brush, sandwich and water bottle, nutrition bar, and snacks.




VIRTUAL ENTERTAINMENT AND COMMUNITY BUILD-UP DURING COVID-19



2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations organized various virtual programs with limited in-person community members to entertain and connect them among the community members. These educational and cultural land-based entertaining and community-building programs aimed to connect their indigenous language, culture, and ceremonies and enhance community members' mental health and well-being.




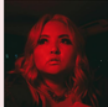

2-SPIRITED PEOPLE OF THE
1ST NATIONS



WRAP THE RIBBON CONCERT

DECEMBER 1, 2021
2:00-4:00PM
VIA ZOOM

Virtual Performances by:

		
Thera11n	Nimkish	Tony Enos

PARTICIPATE IN OUR HIV SELF-TESTING CAMPAIGN AND
KNOW YOUR STATUS
GLOBAL SOLIDARITY, SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

2-SPIRITED FAMILY & CHILDREN'S PROGRAM

2-Spirited People organized various programs to support children, youths and elders during COVID-19.

Participants and family members reported that these programs and activities primarily helped enhance their mental health and well-being.



2-SPIRITED LAND-BASED TEACHINGS AND CEREMONIES

2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations conducted various land-based teaching and ceremonies virtually and in-person, adhering to the COVID-19 protocol and restrictions. Virtual sessions on growing, harvesting, using four sacred medicine, medicine walks, sharing circles on Grand Fathers Teachings, drum making, and drumming circle, Online land-based counselling, Cooking with Robin, Youth Talking circle, virtual feast, Candy Grams, Nutritious Dishes for youth and families, Turkey and Ham give away, Yoga, virtual drag shows were the most participated events.



ACCESS TO CULTURAL CEREMONIES AND A SWEAT LODGE



During COVID-19, 2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations invested its resources and efforts to connect its members to land-based culture, ceremonies and rituals, including sweat lodge, Elders' Talking Circle, Powwow, Youths Circle virtual feast and medicine harvesting. Amid the pandemic and its restriction, 70 community members attended sweat lodges, and hundreds of community members attended virtual talking circles and community feasts.

2-Spirited People the 1st Nations delivered 5000 plus medicine bundles with teachings postcards on Seema and its use. We had thousands of copies of 2-Spirited Newsletters and resources on land-based teachings and ceremonies to the member's address.



2-SPIRITED POWWOW, 2022

2-spirited People of the 1st Nations organized its first grand Powwow in June 2022, where thousands of community members across the country participated. During the Powwow, 70 community vendors displayed and shared their cultural goods and services with the community members during the Powwow. Along with the cultural ceremonies, we distributed 1500 traditional and western harm reduction, safer sex and education resources on HIV/AIDS and STBBI along with HIV self-Testing. Seventeen community members did their HIV self-test during the event, and 500 community members received education and resources on HIV Self Testing.



PROGRAM MONITORING AND EVALUATION: UTILIZATION OF COVID-19-RELATED PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

In 2021/22, 2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations conducted a series of talking circles, the Executive Director's Town hall and community consultations on utilizing the 2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations program and services. Altogether, 120 community members, including 2-spirited People of the 1st Nations' board of directors and stakeholders, participated in the virtual self-administrated survey.

In the survey, we asked members about their experiences of COVID-19, the effectiveness of the program and the services 2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations provided. The survey also asked for community feedback and inputs for further strategic direction for the agency to serve 2-Spired communities.

Questions	yes
Have you lost your family or friend due to the COVID-19	24%
Were you treated differently in health care settings while accessing the. COVID-related services due to your indigenous and 2spirited identity?	32.5%
Did you lose your employment or sources of income due to the COVID-19	71%
Did you evicted or threatened by the landlord due to rent payment delay during the COVID-19 Pandemic?	62%
Did you have enough resources to buy food and supplies during the COVID-19 Pandemic?	4%
Did you utilized 2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations Grocery and Medicine bundle support program?	86%
Did you have reliable sources of internet and phone during the COVID-19 Pandemic?	31%
Did you receive adequate information and resources on COVID-19 and available support from 2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations?	92%

PROGRAM AND SERVICES 2-SPIRITED PEOPLE OF THE 1ST NATIONS

CEREMONIES WE ORGANIZED	# EVENT	# SUPPORTED
Weekly grocery and food basket support	80	3200
Personalized grocery and vegetable basket support for members with diabetes and immunocompromised.	60	4450
Medicine Bundle Support	85	2100
Mail-out 2-Spirited Newsletters and information, education and communication resources	22	11000
Mailout Resources on HIV/AIDS, STBBI, PrEP, PEP and on-demand Western and Traditional Harm Reduction Bundle	25	270
Pet Foods Delivery	65	700
Food for Positive Living	80	750
Technology for Positive Living	On Demand	200
Warm Breakfast for HIV Treatment Adherence	On Demand	20
Cozy Bed for Positive Living	On Demand	25
Transportation for Positive Living	On Demand	400
Monthly TTC and Presto Card support	On Demand	1000
Personal Hygiene Kits support for HIV Prevention	4	40
Community Phone and tablet support program	On Demand	200

PROGRAM AND SERVICES 2-SPIRITED PEOPLE OF THE 1ST NATIONS

CEREMONIES WE ORGANIZED	# EVENT	# SUPPORTED
Free To Live Authentically	18	360
Full Moon Ceremonies & New Moon Ceremonies	22	250
Youth Talking Circles	22	220
Traditional Teachings	27	510
Beading/Sewing	4	40
Seniors Supporting Seniors	28	60
Talking Circles on SEEMA	4	85
Talking circle om MM2SIWG	5	75
Senior Bingo	5	120
2S Bike Program	11	110
Moccasin Making Workshop	10	120
Drag Workshop	7	70
Cooking with Robin	120	1200
2-Spirited Community Garden	2	120

PROGRAM AND SERVICES 2-SPIRITED PEOPLE OF THE 1ST NATIONS

CEREMONIES WE ORGANIZED	# EVENT	# SUPPORTED
Reclaiming Our Stories	5	60
Anishinabemowin Language Class	9	45
Traditional Naming Teachings/Name Receiving	6	45
Red Road to Wellness	24	98
Jammin' & Jarrin'	8	72
Virtual Bingo	9	180
Traditional Songs & Languages	18	82
2S Youth Bingo Night	1	35
Eye Exam Clinic	3	30
Creative Writing Workshop	14	120
Children's Book Support	3	250
Cannabis Education	2	25

PROGRAM AND SERVICES 2-SPIRITED PEOPLE OF THE 1ST NATIONS

CEREMONIES WE ORGANIZED	# EVENT	# SUPPORTED
Effects of Intergenerational Trauma Workshop	2	22
Effects of Intergenerational Trauma Workshop	2	32
Effects of Intergenerational Trauma Workshop	7	70
Cooking with Allison	8	98
Pat Green Talking Circle	12	120
Izhigin	4	48
BooBoo Wabooz (Aroma Bunnies)	3	36
Regalia Making	8 weeks	12
Personal Wellness Support (Hair & Nails)	12 weeks	98
Jingle Dress Teaching	2	24
Medicine Mandala	2	24

PROGRAM AND SERVICES 2-SPIRITED PEOPLE OF THE 1ST NATIONS

CEREMONIES WE ORGANIZED	# EVENT	# SUPPORTED
Drum Repair Workshop & Rebirthing/ Reawakening	2	16
Cultural Wreath Making	2	18
Lovely Family Crafts	1	16
Traditional Dance Workshop with Nicole and Naz	5	72
Youth Drum Workshop	1	12
Family Drum Workshop	1	14
Adults Drum Workshop	1	14
Indigenous Worldview and HIV Webinar series	26	320
PrEP and PEP Education Series	8	32
Yoga with Shiva	24	96
2S Sexual Health Education	2	32
Medicine Making Workshop	1	12
Wiingashk-SweetGrass	1	14
Reconnecting to our Roots	1	12
Swaddled by Love- Moss Bag Making	4	48

LESSON LEARNED

1. Pandemics and adverse times are not always unfavourable. If we use it properly, hostile times also could be productive. During COVID-19, 2-spirited People of the 1st Nations reached significantly wider community members and expanded its programs and services by 1000 times.
2. Eliminating the eligibility to access programs and services for Two-Spirited and non-binary community members at 2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations reduce stigma and discrimination and creates enabling environment to access services.
3. Positive Living programs significantly supported Two-Spirited community members living with HIV to maintain treatment adherence.
4. 2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations Indigenous-led one-stop service delivery strategy encouraged community members to utilize all the programs and services effectively.
5. Poverty among the Two-Spirited and non-binary indigenous in Toronto is so high even the working professional failed to secure the food and basic needs during the COVID-19 pandemic.
6. Significant numbers of Two-Spirited and non-binary community members living in Toronto do not have access to sacred medicines and related teachings.
7. There is internal solid stigma and discrimination towards two-spirited and non-binary people within the indigenous communities in Toronto. As a result, many two-spirited and non-binary community members are prevented from accessing cultural teaching and ceremonies.
8. More than 90% of two-spirited and non-binary community members live in precarious housing. A slight financial adversary could make them homeless immediately.
9. Land-based indigenous ceremonies and teachings brought the community together and supported us in building a community even during the adverse pandemic.

