2-SPIRITED PEOPLE OF THE 1ST NATIONS

THE GATHERING

MARCH 31, 2023, APRIL 3, 2023

TORONTO, ON



SUPPORTING INDIGENOUS WOMEN AND 2-SPIRIT PEOPLE

THE GATHERING

2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations

Spring 2-Spirited Gathering, 2023

Chelsea Hotel, Toronto

THE GATHERING: COMMITTEES

Elders and Knowledge Keepers Council

Elder Blu Waters
Elder Sharp Dopler
Knowledge Keeper Ash

Organizing Committee

Keith McCrady
Saige McMahon
Amanda Lomas
Missy Fishman
Babe Waters
Shane Lyon
Shiva Acharya

WELCOME NOTE FROM THE ORGANIZING COMMITTEE CHAIR



We would like to thank Creator and Mother Earth for providing us with the resources and space to host the 2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations Gathering 2023. We are honoured that community members from across the province have accepted our invitation and are participating in this event.
In 2022, the Ministry of Indigenous Affairs supported us in organizing five community talking circles. These conversations were created to document the systemic barriers and inequities that 2-Spirit people, Indigenous women and girls face. The goal of the consultation circle was to create an equitable environment for the impacted families of 2-Spirit Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls (2SMMIWG) to share their own stories and experiences as well as share the stories of their loved ones who no longer have a voice. The colonial system has threatened the lives and eroded the rights of 2-Spirited and Indigenous women. A wide range of challenges were identified by the community participants including biased criminal justice and child welfare systems; systematic racism; stigma and discrimination; and inadequate programs and services for the 2-Spirit community. The list of challenges and inequities continues with limited access to housing, employment, education, cultural ceremonies and traditional teachings. The 2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations are working to address those inequities and barriers by delivering tailored 2-Spirit and queer-focused programming, support and services where the community needs it most.
Colonialism has resulted in 2-Spirit, queer and Indigenous communities being depicted and treated as criminals, causing inter-generational trauma and loss of basic human rights. Furthermore, continued colonialism and racism contribute to a higher proportion of Indigenous people in the justice system, compounding to housing, education, employment, and social assistance.

To address these concerns, the 2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations hosted a Town Hall to give voice to the community and come up with community-led solutions. This resulted in resounding confirmation of the need for more 2-Spirit programs and services across Ontario. In 2022, the Board of Directors unanimously agreed to accept the challenge to expand and develop 2-Spirit programming across Ontario. A team from our organization visited numerous cities, towns, suburbs and First Nation reserves across Ontario to collect input and suggestions from Indigenous Elders, Knowledge Keepers, community members, organizations, and allied service providers.

The Spring Gathering 2023 aims to bring 2-Spirit leaders, Elders, and Knowledge Keepers together from across Ontario. The intention of the Knowledge Sharing event is to address the stigma and discrimination as well as challenges, barriers and adversities faced by 2-Spirited individuals. The input collected through dialogue, suggestions, and feedback will be utilized in the provincial expansion of services offered by the 2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations. The gathering will also examine the current availability of programs and services, systemic barriers that prevent access to these services, and daily difficulties faced by our community members. We are hoping to gain more knowledge about the skills and resources required in the various regions.
We welcome your valuable knowledge of your region and any input or suggestions. Your contributions are what make this gathering more meaningful and productive in better serving our community in the coming days. Thank you to all participants for your involvement in this transformative event.

Chi-Miigwetch,
Keith McCrady
Chair, 2-Spirited Gathering 2023, Organizing Committee

ABOUT US

2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations is a community-led agency that has been providing holistic land-based HIV/AIDS treatment care and referral support programs to 2-Spirited, Queer, and Non-binary communities since 1990. We have 55 full-time staff from diverse backgrounds, including people with disabilities, low-income, marginalized groups, and people facing health inequity, among others. We offer a range of services, including western and traditional harm reduction services, culturally supported HIV-Self Testing, education, awareness, and prevention activities for Sexually Transmitted and Blood Borne Infections (STBBI). The Positive Living Program for community members living with HIV aims to eliminate AIDS by ensuring Undetectable = Untransmittable. The program offers various services to support the community members' physical and spiritual well-being, such as Food, Technology, Transportation, Bedbug-free Sleeping, Personal Hygiene kits, as well as Warm Breakfast for Treatment Adherence.

We also provides holistic support to communities under a single roof, including client care support to find employment, navigate social assistance, legal services, housing, crisis intervention, cultural support, ceremonies, sweat lodge, trauma counseling, elders support, child mining, grocery support, and transportation support. We offer land-based, culturally supported training to community members, stakeholders, grassroots, and individuals using Indigenous holistic health and wellness philosophies. We have developed cultural safety training for their community members and stakeholders to create an enabling environment to ensure the rights of 2-Spirited people, Indigenous women, and queer and non-binary people in Canada. We provide Toronto Community Crisis support and operate 24/7, offering an alternative to police crisis response support to the 2-Spirited and Indigenous communities in East Toronto. We are working to establish a shelter and transit home for the 2-Spirited, queer, and non-binary people who are vulnerable and displaced from different territories and ended up in Toronto without support and community protection.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, we served about 6500 community members within the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) with various programs and services. Based on community inputs and suggestions, in 2022 our annual general meeting (AGM) decided to expand their program and services across Ontario. A team led by our executive director traveled across the province, including several suburbs, small cities, and reservations, and connected with Indigenous Elders, Knowledge keepers, community members, organizations, and allied service providers across Ontario. We are conducting continuous consultations, circles, and doing community mapping and needs assessment. In 2022, we started a 2-Spirited Bursary Program, awarding 11 low-barrier bursaries to 2-Spirited, Indigenous Women, youth, and LGBTQQIA community members during The Gathering in March 2023. The primary aim of this program is to provide community with the tools and resources necessary to strengthen their ties to the 2-Spiried communities. By offering this assistance, the bursaries hope to create a more connected and empowered community, where individuals are equipped with the skills and knowledge needed to achieve their goals and make a positive impact.

THE GATHERING

The 2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations spring Gathering in 2023 aims to address the historical and ongoing marginalization, intergenerational trauma, and human rights violations experienced by 2-Spirited People, Indigenous Women, Queer and Non-binary communities in Canada. Our communities have been subjected to colonial atrocities and face systemic barriers to accessing basic needs and meeting their spirit, sexuality, and gender-related requirements. The Gathering is an opportunity for community members to unite, empower themselves, and reclaim their space and power to assert their rights in colonial Canada. This event is part of the Supporting 2-Spirited and LGBTQQIA+ Program. It is a capacity-building, networking, and skill-enhancement Program for 2-Spirited People, Indigenous women, and queer and non-binary community members living in Ontario. The Gathering will provide a safe platform to gather and share the issues 2-Spirited People, queer and non-binary people face in day-to-day life in different parts of the province.

The 2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations spring Gathering 2023 is a part of the organization's provincial expansion strategy. Hundreds of community members, leaders, Elders, and knowledge keepers in different towns, reservations, and suburbs requested a regional 2-Spirited gathering to bring members and stakeholders together to share their thoughts and issues collectively. This first provincial Gathering in Toronto aims to develop better strategies to serve communities collectively across the province. One hundred community members and fifteen community leaders from various towns and small cities in Ontario are invited to attend this conference. The Gathering provides a platform for 2-Spirited, Queer, non-binary, and Indigenous Women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ community members and leaders to present their stories and lived experiences on the challenges and barriers we face in accessing culturally supported, land-based programs and services in equitable environments in their day-to-day lives.

THE GATHERING

2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations cherish the Ojibwe sayings “shame dies when stories are told in safe spaces”. The primary goal of this conference is to provide safe and non-judgmental space where members of the 2-Spirited community, community leaders, Knowledge Keepers, and Elders can come together and share the barriers, challenges, and setback we face in accessing essential services that cater to 2-Spirited, Indigenous women, queer, and non-binary individuals in Ontario. The Gathering aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. Create a space for key 2-Spirited community members, leaders, Elders, and Knowledge Keepers to convene in a circle and engage in discussions to identify gaps, needs, and challenges for 2-Spirited and Indigenous LGBTQQIA+ community members, particularly in relation to the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) and Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC).
2. Develop a strategy that fosters an enabling environment for 2-Spirited, Queer, non-binary, and Indigenous Women to reclaim and practice their traditional knowledge, social roles, and cultural responsibilities as 2-Spirited People in society. This will be achieved by disseminating knowledge and stories of 2-Spirited, queer, and Indigenous non-binary folks.
3. Support policy reform by sharing the stories and lived experiences of 2-spirited, queer, and Indigenous non-binary folks, which will inform policy decisions that positively impact these communities.
4. Conduct a community needs assessment across Ontario, engage in fundraising and grant writing activities, and mobilize resources to ensure that 2-Spirited programs and services are available across the province.
5. Promote land-based cultural support and healing ceremonies at the local level, which are essential to the holistic well-being of 2-Spirited and Indigenous LGBTQQIA+ individuals.
6. Encourage networking and sharing of best practices to identify shared policy gaps and collaborate on advocacy efforts that support the needs and interests of 2-Spirited and Indigenous LGBTQQIA+ communities.

THE GATHERING

Expected Outcome:

2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations have set their intentions for this Gathering with great spirits and hope. The Gathering aims to achieve the following outcomes:

1. Our community members across the province will share their experiences as 2-Spirited people in the colonial system. The community will speak about the barriers we are facing in their day-to-day lives to access essential services required for our 2-Spirited folks.
2. Our community members from different small towns, reserves, and suburbs will be inspired and encouraged to form their 2-Spirited circles in their respective towns. As a community lead, we will provide technical assistance on grant writing, fundraising, and resource mobilization to support those circles.
3. Based on the input and suggestions of our community members, we will actively lobby and advocate with government and non-government agencies to support our 2-Spirited community members with their basic needs. We will also work to eliminate the barriers we face in accessing the needs of 2-Spirited and queer folks of our region.
4. Our 2-Spirited spring Gatherings papers, community presentations, shared stories and lived experiences will come together to develop a local strategic direction for the 2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations.
5. We aim to develop our first provincial strategic work plan (2023-2026) based on the community inputs, suggestions, and feedback.

AGENDA

MARCH 31, 2023

8:00AM-9:00AM	Breakfast in the Churchill room
9:00AM-10:00AM	Opening by Elder Blu , Welcoming by Keith McCrady
10:00AM-10:30AM	Indigenous AIDS/HIV discussion with Vina and Shiva
10:30AM-10:45AM	Break
10:45AM-12:00PM	Provincial projects & 2S Gender Based Violence discussion with Monica Forrester and Missy Fishman
12:00PM-1:00PM	Lunch
1:00PM-2:15PM	Indigenous Health panel discussion with Percy, Gayle, Sioux, Jordy
2:15PM-2:45PM	Trans turtle teaching with Bella
2:45PM-3:00PM	Break
3:00PM--4:00PM	2-Spirit talk with Lori Campbell on leadership in community
4:00PM-4:15PM	2-Spirit Crisis Pilot information session with Saige McMahon
6:00PM-8:00PM	Dinner in Wren Room, level 3

AGENDA

APRIL 1, 2023

8:00AM-9:00AM	Breakfast in the Mountbatten Salon room
9:00AM-10:00AM	Discussion on child welfare with Katherine Gandy
10:00AM-10:30AM	Announcement of Child Welfare Research project - Keith McCrady
10:30AM-10:45AM	Break
10:45AM-12:00PM	Decolonizing Sexuality with Denise Mcleod
12:00PM-1:00PM	Lunch
1:00PM-2:15PM	Self love discussion with Glenn
2:15PM-2:45PM	2-Spirit Empowerment with Ash
2:45PM-3:00PM	Break
3:00PM-4:00PM	Indigenous Research, Sharing Circles, Data collection and Sharing Protocol Round Table - Elder Blu, Sharp and Ash
6:30PM-10:00PM	Social at Buddies in Bad Times Theatre

AGENDA

APRIL 2, 2023

8:00AM-9:00AM	Breakfast in the Mountbatten Salon room
9:00AM-10:00AM	Open Lead Panel discussion with Executive Director - Keith McCrady. Bring your questions!
10:00AM-10:30AM	Bursary Recipient annoucments with Keith McCrady
10:30AM-10:45AM	Break
10:45AM-12:00PM	Final remarks by Keith McCrady, Closing by Elder Blu

APRIL 3, 2023

9:30AM-10:30AM	Breakfast in Gerrard Room
10:30AM-12:30PM	2-Spirited Community Leaders meeting - Keith McCrady
12:30 PM -1:00PM	Final remarks and way forward

ELDER BLU

Blu's family is from Big River Saskatchewan, Star Blanket Reserve and Bra'dor Lake, Eskasoni First Nations, Cape Breton Nova Scotia, and the Red River. Blu grew up with their grandmother and learned about traditional medicines, learning healing methods and care of the sick. Their grandmother also shared her knowledge of the great teachings.

Blu is currently working at Seneca College as an Elder on campus providing traditional teachings and one-to-one counselling.

Blu spent 2.5 years working for the National Inquiry for Murdered and Missing Women as a Grandmother to Commissioner Brian Eyelfson and sits on the Grandmother Circle.

Blu sits on the Thunder Women Healing Lodge as a Director of the Board.

Blu also sits as the Ontario representative for Metis people with 2 Spirits In Motion Board.

Blu also provides ceremony, teaching, and counselling for 2 Spirited People of the First Nations, in Toronto.

Blu was also the national caucus representative for the Toronto Urban Aboriginal strategies for five years working with the community of Toronto and the government. They are also a graduate of DeVry Institute of Technology receiving their business software micro-computer architecture and A+ certification.

Blu's gifts include: Traditional teachings, giving traditional spirit names, hand drumming, song writer, creative writings, and full moon conductor. Pipe ceremonies and sweat lodge ceremonies and Traditional counselling.

Blu is a 2 spirit person, a mother of 5, a grandmother of 3, a sun dancer, and a pipe carrier.

LAUREEN BLU WATERS (They/Them)
Laureen (Blu) Waters: Istchii Nikamoon: Earth Song, Wolf clan. Cree/Metis/Micmac, Blu is a member of the Metis Nation of Ontario.



LEADS

ASH MOREAU

Ashley Moreau is a 2-Spirited Michif maker of things, originally from the Treaty 3 region in Eagle River, Ontario. Ashley first served as board president of Two-Spirited People of Thunder Bay in 2006 and since has continued these conversations regionally and nationally. They have committed their focus and path to bring awareness and visibility to our rainbow community by pollinating 2-Spirit Teachings and Stories.



DENISE B. MCLEOD (SHE/HER)

Proud Urban Anishinaabe Kwe, whose home territory is Sagamok Anishnawbek F.N located on the north shore of Lake Huron. D.B. along with her comedy sisters founded Manifest Destiny's Child Comedy Collective in 2017, and with burlesque has performed at the Nogojiwanong Indigenous Fringe Festival, Toronto Indigenous Arts Festival, Pride Toronto and the 34th annual Weesageechak Begins to Dance.



LEADS

DONALD CORBIERE (HE/HIM)



ODAWA from the 3 Fires Community of Wiikwemkoong. Donald has a formal education in Social Work and Nursing, a lifelong passion for living well, eating well, and travelling well. He moved home from the COT during COVID, and to spend more time with family.

GAYLE PRUDEN (SHE/HER)



Gayle Pruden was born in Ashern, MB, and when she was young she lived with her grandparents in Little, SK. Gayle is proud to be 2-spirited Anishinabe women and loves helping the youth. She adopted her daughter and helped raise her grandchildren.

Gayle works with CAAN as the vice-chairperson, and she also works with Manitoba Moons, and Voices of Women.

LEADS

GLENN TSSESSAZE (HE/HIM)

Glenn is a 2S person from Lac Brochet, MB, his first language is Denesuline. Glenn studied at the University of Manitoba, and he enjoys sharing the story of his journey to self love, and sharing the self-development tools that he picked up along the way.



JORDY IRONSTAR (THEY)

Jordy Ironstar is a Two Spirit Nakoda Oyaté and member of Céga Kịnna First Nation. They are the Saskatchewan representative of the MMIWG2SLBTQQIA+ National Action Committee, co-founder of 2 Spirit Alliance of Saskatchewan, and an Indigenous Health Coordinator.



LEADS

KATHERINE GANDY



As a Secwepemc, St'at'imc and Ojibway lifegiver, expert child welfare change activist and sovereignist, Katherine Gandy has dedicated more than 15 years to advancing changes to Canada's child welfare system through support, advocacy and education within Indigenous communities.

In 2020, she founded Matriarchal Circle, a Toronto-based First Nation grassroots-led organization rooted in advancing Inherent Sovereignty and Self Determination Rights for Indigenous caregivers to care, raise and protect their children.

LORI CAMPBELL (SHE/HER)



I am a 2-Spirit Indigiqueer Tastawiyiniwak. She/Her are my pronouns. I am Cree Metis and have membership with Montreal Lake Cree Nation.

LEADS

MAYBELLA REYNOLDS (SHE/HER)

Maybella Reynolds is an Anishinabek person, a 2-Spirit Trans Kwe, Ojibway person and her home territory is that of the Potawatomi people. She is from Moose Deer Point First Nations on the Northern shores of Georgian Bay. She carries two Spirit names – Thunderbird of the South and Walks with Medicine. Her clan is Eagle and her Spirit helper is Bear.



MONICA FORRESTER

Monica Forrester is a Program and Outreach coordinator for Maggie's Toronto Sex Workers Action Project. Since 1999, she has worked in various agencies to educate and make services accessible for trans* folks, and actively works to promote awareness and visibility of trans women.



LEADS

DR. PERCY LEZARD

I am outma sqilxw, and my relations are the Lezards in sn'pinkton, the Krugers from Arrow Lakes and the Baptistes from Chopka.
As sqilxw people, we have lived on the territory known as the Okanagan Valley since the beginning of people on those lands. My traditional territories stretch from Mica Creek, just north of modern-day Revelstoke, [unceded] British Columbia (BC) and east to Kootenay Lake, south to Washington state and west into the Nicola Valley.



SHARP DOPLER (THEY/HE/SHE/ANY)

Sharp is a non-binary, niizh-manitowag (2S) person of Sauk/Fox/Cherokee and Irish ancestry. They live, work and play in Ottawa - the unceded traditional territory of the Anishinaabeg, Omamiwanini people. Sharp is a pow-wow dancer, singer, carrier of ceremony, educator, advocate and researcher who uses ALL the pronouns in every context. She is a military veteran (LGBT Purge Survivor), martial artist, and self-employed as a psychotherapist.



LEADS

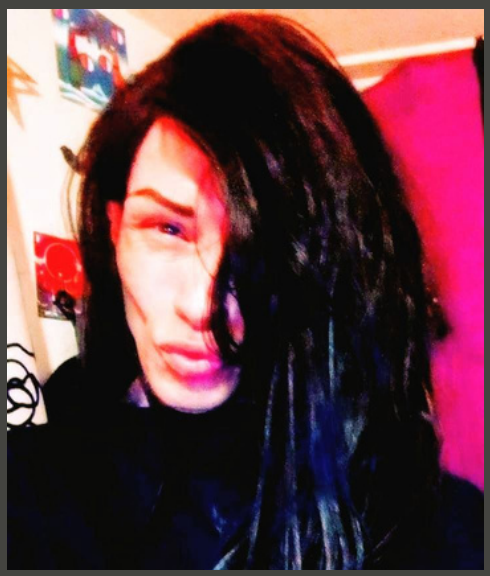
SIOUX LAMURE

Sioux is a transgender man, a 2-Spirited person, and an Algonquin native from the Algonquins of the Pikwakanagan First Nation. Previously, Sioux was the President of the board of directors of 2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations.



VINA

Vina is a two-spirited Cree trans woman from Edmonton, AB. Adopted at the age of 2 and raised in Collins Bay, Kingston, ON. Vina was a competitive Olympian gymnast for 17 years at Queens University and is now a licensed hairstylist, part time elite model, photographer, and fashion stylist/fashionista.



CRISIS PILOT

Indigenous peoples in Toronto have historically been, and continue to be, disproportionately negatively affected by police intervention in crisis situations. There is a need to create an alternative framework for crisis response. This is fundamental to protecting our community from harm and continued forms of colonization and trauma.



SERVICES AVAILABLE

-Crisis support
-Harm reduction
-System navigation
-Referral support
-Individualized support
-Follow up support
-Housing referrals
-Primary health care referrals
-Child and family support

PILOT VISION

Indigenous Led Crisis Response: grounded in an understanding of historical, social and justice inequalities. We serve both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Division 14. We provide greater access to traditional ways of doing in times of crisis through ceremonies, access to medicines, and land-based programming.

How to Access: Call 211

2-SPIRIT BURSARY PROGRAM

This Bursary Program was started to give 2-Spirit Community Members access to low-barrier bursaries. The funds are to be self-determined for whatever needs the members have, and however they prioritize the spending of funds as well will require little or no reporting back. It is also a way for those who can give funds, a space to demonstrate their own philanthropy in hopes they inspire others to do the same. Take what you need, give what you can.

The Copenace & Sinclair Bursary
2-Spirited Traditional Medicine Talk Scholarship
Leonor Mendoza Tan Memorial Bursary
Kenda Hoffer 2-Spirited Womyn Bursary
Ella Giizhig Ga Ikwe Bursary
Red Sky Candles Bursary
David McCrady Jr. Memorial Bursary
Mahogany Mawka Bursary
Budhiraja Family Bursary

Bursary recipients will be announced on April 2, 2023 at The Gathering

HARM REDUCTION & SELF TESTING

2-Spirit HIV Self testing Program

HIV -Self Testing is part of the 2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations land-based HIV Testing, treatment and care and support program where test kits were specially packed along with four traditional medicines and resources of Indigenous agencies, elders and knowledge keepers for support. 2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations have the provision of culturally supported land-based HIV-pre test counselling, post-test counselling, referral and linkage to PrEP/PEP and treatment cascade, and community-led positive living program.

https://getakit.ca/2spirits/

Naloxone Training

Naloxone is a lifesaving medication that can stop/temporarily reverse an opioid overdose. Naloxone can save a life in case of an opioid overdose. Be prepared and carry a kit.

Did you know we offer free Naloxone training? Find our Harm Reduction table to see how you can get trained today.



Harm Reduction

Harm Reduction is an evidence-based, approach that seeks to reduce the health and social harms associated with addiction and substance use, without necessarily requiring people who use substances from abstaining or stopping. 2-Spirits provides harm reduction with a wholistic Indigenous lens to those folks living within Toronto.

If you are in need of harm reduction supplies or would like to find out more, our harm reduction team will be happy to help.

2-SPIRITED PEOPLE OF THE 1ST NATIONS

2nd Annual

2-SPIRIT POWWOW



Downsview Park
15 Carl Hall Rd
Toronto, ON
M3K 2E2

May 27, 2023
10:00am-6:00pm

VACCINE CLINIC

In partnership with Auduzhe Mino Nesewinong, we will be offering a vaccine clinic and STI testing on March 31, 2023 at The Chelsea hotel during The Gathering. Please ask a 2-Spirit staff member how you can take part in this clinic.

Vaccines and services being offered:

- Covid -19 vaccines
- Flu vaccines
- HPV
- Meningococcal to those eligible
- On site STI Testing

2-SPIRITED PEOPLE OF THE 1ST NATIONS

2-SPIRIT SOCIAL

You're invited to join us for a night filled with drag performances, music, dirty bingo, raffles and more!

APRIL 2, 2023 | 6:30pm -10:30pm

Buddies in Bad Times

12 Alexander St, Toronto, ON M4Y 1B4

NOTES

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