

# Two-Spirit: A Sacred Tradition



Let's explore the rich history of Two-Spirit people in Native American cultures. Two-Spirit is a contemporary term that describes Indigenous individuals who embody both masculine and feminine spirits, transcending traditional Western gender binaries. Two-Spirit people have been documented in over 155 tribes across North America, holding respected positions in their communities for centuries. Many Indigenous cultures believe that being Two-Spirit is a special gift, with these individuals often serving as healers, shamans, and teachers.

## Cultural Significance

- Two-Spirit people were traditionally seen as having unique insights and empathy due to their dual-spirit nature.
- In many tribes, they fulfilled important roles such as caretakers, medicine people, and treaty negotiators.
- Same-sex relationships involving Two-Spirit individuals were often considered normal and even lucky in love.



## Modern Relevance

Today, the Two-Spirit concept helps many Indigenous LGBTQIA+ individuals reconnect with their cultural heritage and find strength in traditional understandings of gender and sexuality. This connection can be a powerful source of resilience and recovery for those facing mental health challenges or substance misuse issues.



For confidential support from anywhere in the U.S., call the **Trans LifeLine: 1-877-565-8860**

For Relatives living in Nebraska  
**All Nations Crisis Textline**  
Text "Support" to 33464 to chat with an All Nations team member.

Monday-Friday: 6pm-2am  
Saturday/Sunday: 10am-2am



## How can you support Transgender and Two-Spirit loved ones?

### Use Affirming Language and Practices

Using a person's chosen name and pronouns is crucial for supporting their mental wellbeing. Consistently using the correct name and pronouns can significantly reduce depression and suicidal ideation in transgender individual. Healthcare providers and support systems should ask for and use preferred names/pronouns, and gently correct others who make mistakes.

### Foster Social Support Networks

Strong social support is associated with better mental health outcomes for transgender people. Encourage connections with:

- Supportive family members and friends
- LGBTQ+ community groups and organizations
- Online support communities



Family support, in particular, has been shown to have the strongest correlation with reduced anxiety and depression symptoms.

### Help Address Co-occurring Mental Health Conditions

Transgender individuals have higher rates of depression, anxiety, and substance use disorders. Regular screening and appropriate referrals are essential for their safety and wellbeing.

- Seek referrals to trans-affirming mental health professionals when needed



### Encourage Cultural and Community Connections

For Two-Spirit and Indigenous transgender individuals, connecting with cultural traditions can be particularly beneficial. Providers and loved ones can:

- Encourage participation in cultural activities and ceremonies
- Validate the use of traditional medicine alongside Western treatments
- Provide resources for Two-Spirit community groups and events