

Gender Ally

Warren's Story

Facilitator's Guide

Story Videos can be viewed at:

<http://onmyplanet.ca/mundo/genderally/themes/two-spirit-stories/warren>

Developing Empathy – Inform on trans, Two-Spirit and gender non-conforming issues through personal story.



Acknowledging the Territories

Find out which Indigenous peoples inhabit the land that you are on. Try to find the traditional names of the Nations and Bands in your area as opposed to names given to them by colonists. Time permitting and if the group is committed to doing the whole series – this could be a group exercise/project. The acknowledgement at the head of the introduction document can be used as an example – it is termed for the local area where the materials were developed. The Anti-Violence Project at the University of Victoria has an excellent resource page for identifying and acknowledging Indigenous Communities on Vancouver Island and in BC.

<http://www.antiviolenceproject.org/about/territory-acknowledgement>

Safer Space Guidelines

It is important to establish a working agreement or contract with the students while discussing this type of sensitive subject matter. Time permitting: engage the group members in establishing their own agreement – asking what they think they would need to feel safe to discuss their feelings and/or this type of subject matter. Write the items down on a flipchart or similar so that you can refer back to the established agreement during the session or for subsequent sessions. There is a list of questions below that may help in establishing what a safer space might look like for your group. It is also important to discuss accountability for situations where participants do not follow the group agreement.

The following is a list of Safer Space Guidelines that is commonly used by LGBTQ2 support groups. It was initiated by TransAction in 2010 and edited by Homospun in Victoria, BC, in 2013.

Each individual in the group is asked to:

- Respect your own physical, mental and emotional boundaries
- Please communicate your needs and speak up if you are uncomfortable
- Remember you are welcome to take space away if you need time alone/away/quiet
- Respect the physical, mental and emotional boundaries of others – ask for consent before engaging in physical contact
- Avoid making assumptions about the identity, experiences, and/or histories of other people
- Respect the confidentiality of information and narratives shared with you
- Remember, everyone makes mistakes
- Try to speak with “I” statements and avoid personal attacks when communicating with others about mistakes they made
- Assume that others are acting and speaking from a place of positive intent
- Be aware of the impacts of your own behaviour and take responsibility for what you say and do
- Be open to being approached and talked with if you make a mistake
- Remember that we are gathered to share an open and engaging environment

Participants can add to or change these guidelines. If the group is going to do the whole series of workshops, spend the time to develop the guidelines with the group. Alternatively, you can provide a few and ask for others from the group or simply review the guidelines provided. A verbal agreement, a show of hands or similar, cements the contract. We urge both facilitators and participants to help maintain the group agreement. Once established, the group agreement should promote learning for all involved using respectful communication and discussion. Discuss, establish and record as part of the guidelines, what should happen if someone does not follow the agreement.

Questions To Help Establish A Safer Space

- What do we need to feel safe to share our questions and stories with this group?
- How do we tell the difference between 'not knowing' and 'disrespect'?
- What does it look like to show respect to the person in the video? To your peers?
- What happens to the group when someone doesn't follow the agreement?
- What are our options if we feel someone is being disrespectful?
- What should happen when a group member does not follow the agreement?

The group may agree to choose 5 or 6 key points from the guidelines provided above to review at the opening of each session.

Definition of Ally

- After introducing the purpose of working with the materials — developing empathy, building understanding and taking action — ask each person to write down one or more words that define the term 'ally'.

Group Introductions

Going around the room each participant tells the group their name and their pronouns. Depending on the group this could extend to any other identifier that the participants feel is important to share about themselves (establish this beforehand). This gives everyone a chance to identify themselves as opposed to accepting/enforcing an expected (often binary) identity. It reduces assumptions about gender identity and encourages respect for how individuals expect to be seen and addressed. The facilitator will need to model: "I'm ____ and I go by she/her, ze/hir, they/them. What about you?". An individual may choose more than one. You may indicate that this comes up in conversation normally and using everyone's specified pronouns demonstrates allyship. Someone's pronouns may change over time so it is important to ask everyone and ask frequently.

Witnessing people (most often cis-gender people) jokingly play with their gender can be difficult. Be attentive to how the group responds to their pronoun identification. If you suspect that someone is using a pronoun or gender identification in a disrespectful way — trying to make a joke out of the exercise — we suggest that you investigate this with the group. For example, if someone says that their gender is 'cupcake' or 'dog', to diffuse the situation, you can take this seriously with a question such as: "I'm not familiar with that, can you elaborate on how that works?" or "I'm not quite understanding that one, can you use that in a sentence?"



Icebreaker Activity

This type of exercise is helpful when the group is new to each other. There are a number of other sample Icebreaker activities in the Activities List if you would like to choose a different activity.

Looking for similarities:

- Starting in pairs, students talk until they find something that they have in common (it has to be a less obvious thing, not that they live in the same city or that they are in the same class).
- Once they find something in common they join with another pair, creating a group of 4 and continue to find something they all have in common.
- Once they find something they all have in common they join with another group of 4 to make a group of 8 and continue until they are sitting with the whole group.
- Once it is the whole group more obvious things may be sited if no other common denominator can be found.

Video Viewing

Warren's Story – Synopsis

Warren is a Two-Spirit gay man from Ontario. He is the youngest in his family and the only one of 9 children not to be sent to residential school. He talks about growing up with his mother and grandmother with the language, stories and culture of his Ojibwe tradition, of coming to Toronto and losing himself to the 'fast ways of the city' and eventually returning to traditional Two-Spirit ways to regain balance. Warren is now a Two-Spirit activist and advocate for a number of community, health and Indigenous organizations.

Talking Points

Content Warnings (Themes)

Losing Family To Residential School

Losing Himself In The Big City (Mention Of Drugs And Alcohol)

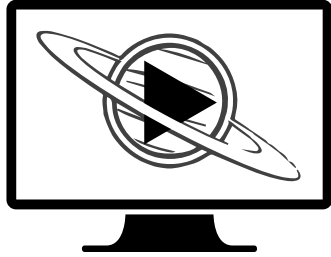
Two-Spirit Roles In Traditional Ojibwe Culture

Healing Imbalance

Reviving Indigenous Culture And Language

Working In Harmony With Creation

Connection To Community



Watch {Title} Video

Exercise For Identifying Themes

- Participants pair off and spend 4 minutes talking about their reactions to the video story.
- While in pairs, ask the participants 3 questions:
 1. What stood out to you — visually or emotionally?
 2. What are you curious to know more about?
 3. What experiences can you relate to from the story?
- One member of each pair presents the reactions that came up in the pair's conversation.
- Record themes brought up by each pair. Ask about themes identified above if themes do not emerge from participants' conversations.

Building Understanding — Provide a safe container in which to discuss pertinent issues and practice difficult conversations.

Discussion Topics

1. What impact has forced placement in Residential schools had on Indigenous peoples? How did that affect Two-Spirit people specifically?
2. Warren describes Two-Spirit people as healers, teachers and medicine people, how might this manifest in reviving culture and language?
3. Living in harmony with Creation is described as a cultural value. What would it look like if your community tried to do that?
4. What kinds of challenges do you think Warren might come up against in being an advocate for Two-Spirit and Indigenous issues in our current Settler's society?

Activities for the Discussion Topics

If time is running short, cut down the discussion section (e.g. one activity instead of two) to insure that the 'Ally Practices' section is included.

There are a number of other sample exercises to use with the discussion topics in the Activities List if you would like to use different exercises.

You can also use the themes and reactions that came up in the previous exercise to create your own questions for the following exercises.



Activity 1

Where do you stand?

- An imaginary line is drawn from one side of the room to the other representing a spectrum or continuum. At one end is 'Always', at the other 'Never' or 'Strongly Agree' and 'Strongly Disagree' (whatever suits the statement).
- Participants place themselves along the line between the two to represent their position about the statement.
- Pose a question or statement — use some story-related items, and some not related. (See list of Talking Points/Themes in segment)
- Sample Statements:
- The impact of residential schools is still being felt today.
- Two-spirit people were separated from their culture by the imposition of church values.
- There is no transphobia or homophobia in Indigenous cultures.

Activity 2

Resonance Statements

- Ask the participants to come up with statements that reflect their own experience or questions about the video. Example statements: 'Bullying happens at school', 'Everyone can feel isolation', and 'Family support is important'.
- The group can choose which statements to use then each one is assigned a place in the room.
- Statements are read aloud one at a time — participants move to the statement that resonates with them the most.
- Discuss and find common experience/reactions among the group.

Taking Action – Assist participants in identifying ways to practice allyship with trans, Two-Spirit and gender non-conforming youth.

Allyship Practices

In this section the empathy and understanding established with the video story and discussion is connected to ally practices. There are a number of ways to practice allyship; educating yourself and others, being inclusive in both your language and your actions, being supportive, standing up, calling out, calling in and others. It is important to understand that allyship involves not just an initial learning curve but ongoing self-education and practice. Becoming informed and developing awareness are the first steps to practicing allyship.



Present the info graphic, discuss the two lists of tips for interactions and go through the examples of Allyship Techniques, before engaging the group in the discussion questions for this section.

There are several good "How to be a Good Ally" lists and documents out there. A few are listed here and there are more in the resources list. "Being An Effective Trans Ally", from the 519 Community Centre in Toronto, outlines a number of elements of allyship quite succinctly (makes a great handout). The info graphic can be downloaded here:

<http://www.the519.org/education-training/training-resources/trans-inclusion-matters/creating-authentic-spaces/being-an-effective-trans-ally>



Present the info graphic to the group and invite discussion.

Points to Cover in Discussion:

- 'Ally' is not an identity. Too many 'allies' claim the label and don't necessarily do the work, so the term 'ally' should be treated as a verb. An ally is only an ally while they are practicing allyship.
- Allyship is never perfect nor will it ever be complete.
- An ally isn't in it to be thanked or even recognized and will never be able to rest on their laurels.
- The reason allies are allies is because understanding your own privilege, learning about people that are different than you, helping others understand their privilege, standing up for equality, and using the right pronouns are the right things to do.
- Ally techniques let the people around you know that "...you want to help change the world for marginalized communities, even if you are not a part of a particular group." (Being an Effective Trans Ally — link below)
- The more people know about and practice allyship, the better it will be for everyone.

If the group is doing more than one workshop segment, a good homework assignment for participants to familiarize themselves with the elements of allyship between sessions is to download and read the entire pdf info graphic. This should significantly improve the discussion.

Gender Ally

12

The following list of things to remember for Trans Allyship is based on 'The Basics' at [Transequality.org](http://www.transequality.org). The full pdf can be downloaded here:

<http://www.transequality.org/issues/resources/supporting-the-transgender-people-in-your-life-a-guide-to-being-a-good-ally>



Discuss the following lists of tips:

- There is no one way to be a 'perfect' ally.
- You don't have to understand someone's identity to respect it.
- You can't always tell if someone is trans simply by looking at them (and do you really want or need to?).
- There is no 'one right way' to be trans, Two-Spirit or gender non-conforming (GNC).
- Continue to educate yourself.

Interacting with Transgender people

- Use the language a trans person uses for themselves.
- Ask everyone and ask often. Pronouns can change, asking regularly is always a good idea.
- Be careful and considerate about what other questions you ask.
- Someone's gender identity is their private information to share, or not.
- Avoid compliments or advice based on stereotypes about transgender people, or about how men and women should look or act. (e.g.: comments about looking like a "real woman or man").

The following techniques outline the first steps of allyship and draw an effective path toward activism:

Examples of Allyship Techniques

1. **Active Witnessing** — making your presence known in the situation.
2. **Supportive Actions** — correcting pronoun/language use when the person in question isn't present, discouraging discriminating conversation or put-down comments when the person in question isn't present etc., regularly including someone in an activity, sitting with or talking to a person who is being bullied.
3. **Standing Up** — calling someone out, telling someone when you witness bullying or discrimination (friends, teacher, parent, counsellor or someone you trust).
4. **Calling In** — calling someone in is very similar to calling someone out in that you are calling attention to oppressive beliefs and behaviour, but it's done with a little more compassion and offers a conversation and some education on the topic. The following article describes the process of Calling In:

<http://everydayfeminism.com/2015/01/guide-to-calling-in>

Some discussions may be emotionally challenging or difficult for some participants. While many facilitators are able to provide appropriate support, if you feel unprepared or out of your depth, consider inviting a counsellor or other supports (i.e. an Elder, a community youth leader, etc.) to join the discussion for the first session or for sessions that are anticipated to be more intense.



In pairs or small groups identify things an individual can do in each of the areas listed below.

Relating Video Discussion Topics and Allyship Techniques

1. **Self-education** — What can you learn to understand the complexity of Two-Spirit issues better?
2. **Active Witness** — When you see a Two-Spirit, or LGBTQ2 person being mistreated, how can you be an active witness? How would this be different when race is part of the equation?
3. **Supportive Action** — What kind of support or interest can you express to Two-Spirit and LGBTQ2 members of your own community?
4. **Standing Up** — What challenges might you issue to someone who wishes to exclude someone based on gender expression, sexual orientation or race?

Practicing allyship is usually uncomfortable and will undoubtedly involve some failure. Don't be afraid to make mistakes, it's bound to happen sooner or later. Best practice is to listen when what you've done has had a negative impact, be accountable for your mistakes without getting super defensive, apologize and move on. This article from Everyday Feminism describes some common mistakes made by trans allies (and praises them for sticking with it):

<http://everydayfeminism.com/2015/06/6-common-mistakes-trans-allies/0>

Using Additional Clips

Additional shorter clips may be available to focus attention on a particular topic – e.g. Two-Spirit, gender identity, bullying, inner conflict and coming out to a parent. Not all videos have additional video clips. The additional clips can reinforce or deepen the conversation about a topic or be provided as an assignment.



Warren's Story – Life in the City

1. Warren describes his experience with drugs and alcohol as a result of feeling lost to his culture in the city, a conflict between Indigenous and settler values. How is he using culture and language to maintain balance? How does family fit?

Research and Larger Projects

Discussion topics can be used by individuals or small groups to do further research or complete a follow-up assignment. Use the Resources List and Glossary to support the work.

Closing the Session

At the end of each segment, remind the participants of some of the key elements of your safer space group agreement, and/or some key ally practices e.g.:

- Respect the confidentiality of information and narratives shared with you.
- Avoid making assumptions about the identity, experiences, and/or histories of other people.
- Assume that others are acting and speaking from a place of positive intent.
- Be aware of the impacts of your own behaviour and take responsibility for what you say and do.
- Remember that we are gathered to share an open and engaging environment.
- You don't have to understand someone's identity to respect it.
- Continue to educate yourself.

Definition of Ally

- At the close of the session, ask each person to write down how the definition of 'ally' has changed as a result of working with the materials.

Terms and Definitions

1. **Two-Spirit** – Two-Spirit is an English language term used to describe individuals who are Indigenous and are on the gender expression spectrum and/or the sexual orientation spectrum. There are a number of other terms in each Indigenous language to further describe the cultural roles of Two Spirit people within each Nations' distinct culture.
2. **Advocacy** – Activity by individuals or groups to influence decisions within the public realm, e.g. human rights.
3. **Activism** – Efforts to promote, impede or direct reform with an idea to make improvements in society.
4. **Residential Schools** – What was the Indian residential school system?

"The term residential schools refers to an extensive school system set up by the Canadian government and administered by churches that had the nominal objective of educating Aboriginal children but also the more damaging and equally explicit objectives of indoctrinating them into Euro-Canadian and Christian ways of living and assimilating them into mainstream Canadian society. The residential school system operated from the 1880s into the closing decades of the 20th century. The system forcibly separated children from their families for extended periods of time and forbade them to acknowledge their Aboriginal heritage and culture or to speak their own languages. Children were severely punished if these, among other, strict rules were broken. Former students of residential schools have spoken of horrendous abuse at the hands of residential school staff: physical, sexual, emotional, and psychological. Residential schools provided Aboriginal students with an inferior education, often only up to grade

five, that focused on training students for manual labour in agriculture, light industry such as woodworking, and domestic work such as laundry work and sewing.

Residential schools systematically undermined Aboriginal culture across Canada and disrupted families for generations, severing the ties through which Aboriginal culture is taught and sustained, and contributing to a general loss of language and culture. Because they were removed from their families, many students grew up without experiencing a nurturing family life and without the knowledge and skills to raise their own families. The devastating effects of the residential schools are far-reaching and continue to have significant impact on Aboriginal communities. Because the government's and the churches' intent was to eradicate all aspects of Aboriginal culture in these young people and interrupt its transmission from one generation to the next, the residential school system is commonly considered a form of cultural genocide".

http://indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/the_residential_school_system

5. **Rainbow in LGBTQ culture** — The rainbow flag, commonly known as the gay pride flag or LGBT pride flag, is a symbol of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) pride and LGBT social movements. Other uses of rainbow flags include a symbol of peace and the colors reflect the diversity of the LGBT community. While it originated in Northern California, the flag is now used worldwide.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rainbow_flag_\(LGBT_movement\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rainbow_flag_(LGBT_movement))

Resources

Articles, websites, services and books (available at the library) to provide additional information.

1. **Two Spirit Resource Directory** — Prepared by Harlan Pruden (Nehiyawe/First Nations Cree), Managing Editor Two-Spirit Journal — TwoSpiritJournal.com, January 2016:

<http://www.ohtn.on.ca/northern-exposures/wp-content/uploads/sites/8/2016/01/Two-Spirit-Resource-Directory-Jan-2016.pdf>

2. **KidsHelpPhone.ca** — Youth phone line/mental health resources — 1(800) 668-6868 phone line and live chat with a counsellor, or

<https://kidshelpphone.ca/search?keys=LGBTQ>

3. **Translifeline.org** — An American non-profit organization dedicated to the well being of transgender people, based in San Francisco, CA. Canada Phone: (877) 330-6366

<http://www.translifeline.org>

4. **Indigenous Alcohol and Drug Treatment Centres** (National Directory)

<http://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/substance-abuse/get-help/addictions-treatment-first-nations-inuit.html>

5. **First Nations Health Authority** — Treatment Centres in BC listing:

<http://www.fnha.ca/what-we-do/mental-wellness-and-substance-use/treatment-centres>

6. **National Association of Friendship Centres**

<http://nafc.ca/en/friendship-centres>

7. **Truth and Reconciliation Commission Canada**

<http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/index.php?p=3>

8. **"Indigenous Canada"** – Free Online Course offered at University of Alberta

<http://www.coursera.org/learn/indigenous-canada>

9. **Apology to LGBTQ2 Canadians** – Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau apologizes for the government's role in "the systemic oppression, criminalization, and violence against the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and Two-Spirit communities" on Tuesday, November 28th, 2017.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nRp7C-cMyo0>