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community + education + equity



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Where are you in your understanding, feelings and attitudes about your
_____ (insert your identity) at this moment?

Use the opening prompts below to help start some statements.

I am . . .

I never/sometimes/often . . .

How do I . . .

I don't . . .

They need to . . .

I feel . . .

I would like . . .

I don't know . . .

We need . . .

Are there . . .

When I . . .

Read the overview below to reflect and write about your journey of

Indigenous American Identity

Wilson examines identity development from an Indigenous American perspective, grounded in the understanding that all aspects of identity are interconnected. These aspects include sexuality, gender, culture, community, and spirituality. Given Wilson’s analysis, there is and will be no “developmental model” which helps define the commonality of Indigenous American identity nor one which would do the same for Indigenous American two-spirit persons

| Some important components to identity | My Identity Perspective |
|--|--------------------------------|
| Indigenous Ethnicities (see below) | |
| Sexuality / Two-Spirit | |
| Gender / Two-Spirit | |
| Culture | |
| Community | |
| Spirituality | |
| Ancestors | |
| Earth | |

Wilson's Indigenous American Perspectives on Identity Development and Two-Spirit people

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"How We Find Ourselves: Identity Development and Two-Spirit People" by Alex Wilson
The information below was synthesized by Chap

Two Spirit People

Many lesbian, gay, and bisexual Indigenous Americans use the term "two-spirit" to describe themselves. This term is drawn from a traditional worldview that affirms the inseparability of the experience of their sexuality from the experience of their culture and community. In contemporary European American culture, sexuality is perceived as a discrete aspect of identity, constructed on the basis of sexual object choice (Almaguer, 1993; Whitehead, 1981). This conception stands in sharp contrast to two-spirit identity.

In some cultures, two-spirit people were thought to be born "in balance," which may be understood as androgyny, a balance of masculine and feminine qualities, of male and female spirits. In many Indigenous American cultures, two-spirit people had (have) specific spiritual roles and responsibilities within their community. They are often seen as "bridge makers" between male and female, the spiritual and the material, between Indigenous American and non-Indigenous American. The term two-spirit encompasses the wide variety of social meanings that are attributed to sexuality and gender roles across Indigenous American cultures.

Indigenous Ethics

The Mohawk psychiatrist Clare Brant, in his work with Iroquois, Ojibway, and Swampy Cree people, has identified five ethics that, he believes, underpin these Indigenous peoples' worldview (1990).

An Ethic of Non-Interference - refers to the expectation that Indigenous Americans should not interfere in any way with another person.

An Ethic That Anger Not Be Shown - is demonstrated by the absence of emphasis on or displays of emotions in speech and other forms of communication by Indigenous American people. Implicit in this ethic is a prohibition against showing grief and sorrow.

An Ethic Respecting Praise and Gratitude - appear as a lack of affect to a non-Indigenous observer. Rather than vocally expressing gratitude to someone, a person might simply ask the other to continue their contribution, because voicing appreciation may be taken by an Indigenous American as creating an embarrassing scene. Because the idea of community is inherent in the Indigenous American philosophy and existence, an egalitarian notion of place within a society exists.

The Conservation-Withdrawal Tactic - emphasizes the need to prepare mentally before choosing to act. Thinking things through before trying them or thinking thoughts through before voicing them is seen as a well-calculated preservation of physical and psychic energy.

The Notion That Time Must Be Right - Attention to the spiritual world gives a person the opportunity to examine her or his state of mind before initiating or participating in the task at hand (Ross, 1992). This concern that time should be taken to reflect on the possible outcomes of a particular action and to prepare emotionally and spiritually for a chosen course of action is reflected in the Notion That Time Must Be Right.

Additionally, an important part of Indigenous American traditional spirituality is paying respect to our ancestors, to those who died tens of thousands of years ago as well as those who have just recently entered the spirit world. We thank the spirits of animals, minerals, and plants, and turn to them for strength and continuity. This gratitude helps to maintain or regain the balance that is necessary to be a healthy and complete person. We understand that the spiritual, physical, emotional, and intellectual parts of ourselves are equally important and interrelated. When one aspect of a person is unhealthy, the entire person is affected. This too is true for the entire community; when one aspect of the community is missing, the entire community will suffer in some way.

Indigenous Americans may respond to homophobia and racism in markedly different ways than people from other cultures. For example, if she respects the Ethic That Anger Not Be Shown, she may appear not to react to the "isms" that affect her. If she uses the Conservation-Withdrawal Tactic or the Notion That Time Must Be Right in her response, the strength of her resistance might not be recognized. Also, the Ethic of Non-Interference would require her friends and family to respect and trust the choices she makes.

