

2 Spirit Indigiqueer Storytelling Project Annual Report

Introduction

The 2 Spirit/Indigiqueer storytelling project is a project focused on storytelling with a modern twist. The project began in July of 2021 and the purpose of it is to help youth engage in dialogue across the country and potentially around the world. The YDSP project is overseen by 2 Spirit Indigiqueer Youth and it's for 2 Spirit Indigiqueer youth across Turtle Island. This report will focus on the 3 main components of the storytelling project which are the following: Youth Council, Website & App and a podcast.

Vision

2 Spirits in Motion will create, maintain, and strengthen a safe and supportive social environment for 2 Spirit people to feel and be loved, succeed, and become empowered to make their own decisions and to find and express their purpose in life. Serving as a national sounding board, the organization works to advance the interests of 2 Spirit people.

Mission

To create, maintain, and strengthen a safe and supportive environment for 2 Spirit people to express themselves through cultural ways of knowing and being around gender and sexuality; and to succeed and be empowered in all areas that are grounded in the medicines that 2 Spirit people carry.

About the Organization

The '2 Spirits in Motion Society' (2SiMS) is a registered national non-profit society incorporated in July 2018 under the relevant society laws of the Government of Canada. The organization is governed by a ten (10) member provisional Board of Directors from various locations throughout Canada. 2SiMS held its first Annual General Meeting (AGM) on January 26, 2020 in Toronto, Ontario during the 2nd Wind Forum on 2 Spirit People. 2SiM was born from discussions at Two Spirits in Motion: the 1st Canadian Forum on 2 Spirit Peoples, HIV/AIDS and Health held in Edmonton, Alberta in February 2003. There were just over 82 delegates at the inaugural Forum where a number of key recommendations were made to advance 2 Spirit community needs and issues in Canada at the national level. Two significant recommendations were to create a national 2 Spirit organization and to continue hosting national Forums on 2 Spirit people.

We look forward to continuing the good work started by the many who came before us like Gay American Indians (GAI) who helped establish the first Gay and Lesbian Gatherings in the 1980's. The first Native American Gay and Lesbian gathering was held in Minneapolis in the summer of 1988. It was decided then that future gatherings would be held in natural spaces as opposed to urban centers. Since then we have traveled across North American to honour

Two-Spirit people in their traditional territories. In this way, we reclaim our sacred roles and spaces.

Main purpose of the Youth Council

The National 2Spirit / Indigiqueer Youth Council is currently a 7 member council run by and for youth ages 18-29 who identify with one or more umbrella terms 2Spirit, Indigiqueer, or other gender, sexuality, gender identity/expression and 2SLGBTQIAA+ terminology. The 2Spirit Youth Council's main purpose is to provide governance on the development of the 2 Spirit Indigiqueer Storytelling Project through recommendations and monthly meetings.

Youth Council Meetings

The Youth Council meets once a month, to date there have been 11 official council meetings. If a Youth Council member is a part of the sub committees, which are the Podcast Committee and the Website/App Committee, they also meet once a month. The committees were implemented so that we were able to have meetings focused solely on the podcast and solely for the website, and with a more relaxed setting, we were able to brainstorm creative ideas. Council members are expected to come prepared to make informed decisions. The coordinators are responsible for reporting back on project updates and other important information.

Youth Council Meeting Minutes

All meetings are held and recorded through Zoom in order for the coordinator to review and make changes to their notes prior to creating the official minutes. Templates were created to assist the coordinator create the minutes just like the Board's.

Below are the condensed versions of the minutes to fit them all in this report.

- **November 2021-** During the month of November the Youth Council had to decide which one of them was going to be Youth Board Representative. The action item for the previous Coordinator was to email the Youth Council members that were not present to see if they were interested in being the Youth Board Representative. During that same meeting the Youth Council collectively decided to remove the Executive Committee. The motion to remove was passed. The sub committees were then implemented and the Youth Council was encouraged to join them if they were interested.
- **December 2021-** During the month of December the focus was the Podcast, the Youth Council met on November 29, 2022 and came up with the themes for the podcast episodes. The themes were the following: 2 Spirit Resurgence, Between 2 Communities, Between 2 Drag Kings, Between 2 Mediums Expression through Art & History between 2 Spirit People. A Youth Council Member brought up the fact that they wanted the term 2 Spirit being on the front page of the website. They wanted to make sure youth who visited the site knew what the word meant and the history. In December the website had

- not received many story submissions. The previous coordinators had planned to meet to discuss how to further promote the project and get more submissions.
- **January 2022-** In the January meeting the Youth Representative had stepped down and another member had put their name forward. The action item was for the coordinator to email the rest of the council to see if they were interested. The Executive Director mentioned that training on governance was being offered to the Youth Council on January 21-22. The training was hosted by Andrea Johnston. The website was still slow at this point, not many submissions were handed in. The coordinators were working on how to sell the stories. One of the Youth Council members had previously put forward the creation of an App that could correlate with the Website. The Executive director said that he was in the process of finding someone to create it. The coordinators and Youth Council then talked more about the promotion of social media to get more followers on their accounts.
- **February-** During the February meeting the coordinator had shown the Youth Council the Cover art and intro music for the Podcast. The Youth Council approved both items. The coordinators brought forward a new writer in residence program. The program implemented 2 Spirit writers to promote the website. They then went on to choose a person to attend the ICGA Conference in Long Beach California. At this point in time the podcast episodes had all been edited and ready to be released.
- **March-** In the March meeting the coordinator let the Youth Council know that all of the podcast episodes were completed and uploaded to Spotify and Apple Podcasts. They had set a date for the Podcast listening party which was held on March 12, 2022. The contractor for the website and app entered the meeting and asked the Youth Council what they had envisioned for the app. What they wanted it to look like, what functions they wanted it to have. The Youth Council had great ideas, they suggested the following: an event calendar, videos and a chat box so they could speak with other 2 Spirit youth.
- **April-** There was no meeting for the month of April.
- **May-** During the May meeting, the coordinator explained to the Youth Council that the alternating chair was not working and that they needed to choose a permanent chair. One of the Youth Council members raised a question about if the Youth Council was still trying to decolonize the language that is used in the meetings. The Executive Director explained that the Board is still in the process of changing the by-laws and if the Youth Council wanted to make any changes, now is the time to do so. The action item was that the coordinator was going to do some research on anti-colonial boards and councils and then present the information to the Youth Council. The Executive Director brought up the fact that the by-law committee would be taking the Youth Council out of the by-laws which means the minimum age can now be lower and the youth council can change the terms of reference as well as how long a term on the youth council will be and other

changes that they may want to make. He then went on to say that the chairs from the board will be offering more mentorship and someone will be sitting in on future youth council meetings. A Youth Council brought up the idea that everything sounds good, except the idea that the youth council will no longer have a seat on the board and won't have a voice at the table. The Youth Council motioned to keep a seat on the board.

- **June-** There was no meeting for the month of June as there was no Coordinator.
- **July-** The focus of July has been planning the National 2 Spirit/Indigiqueer Forum and starting up the podcast. The first Youth Council meeting with the new Coordinator was on July 7th 2022 at 6:30pm CST. The council had previously agreed that the rotating chair wasn't working so they chose a member to be the chair for 3 continuous months to try it out. The Youth Council had said that they wanted to try to decolonize the language used so the coordinator emailed the council the terms of reference and let them look over it. The coordinator found someone to come in and help them decolonize it and that meeting will take place on August 11th 2022. We had a meeting on July 27th 2022 with some of the podcast committee members. During the meeting they chose the podcast promotion poster. Picked out the themes which are: grassroots organization, media arts, beading, collecting medicines, 2S people in film, 8 directions, meditation and a few more they just didn't decide. The podcast committee decided on alternating hosts, they will be doing 2 episodes as well as interviewing 2 people each. The committee decided on posting 1 episode a week. They want to post the episodes on Tuesdays and call it 2 Spirit Tuesday. For the music, I reached out to two different Indigenous artists to use their music as our intro and outro music. The podcast committee agreed to start the recording process in the first 2 weeks of September. The launch party date is set for October 11, 2022.

Special Events:

The youth council has been sent on many excursions, some of which include: World Pride in Winnipeg, MB. Members of the Youth Council as well as the 2SiMS staff, walked in the parade alongside other 2 Spirit organizations and carried a banner. While in Winnipeg the staff and Youth Council attended the Human Rights Conference and also volunteered at a booth for 2SPM. One youth council member went to Manito Ahbee located in Winnipeg, MB and another went to the ILGA Conference in Los Angeles.

Below is what one of the Youth Council members had to say about their trip.

ILGA Conference

How thrilling to have spent an entire week amongst fellow 2SLGBTQIA+ community members in Long Beach California. With the support of Rainbow Railroad I was able to attend the ILGA

Conference as a guest. I would later be invited to join as a speaker in the Digital Divide discussion and speak to the projects our youth committee bolsters with 2SiMs, such as the Digital Storytelling Project. I was genuinely both surprised and pleased with the diversity

provided by the discussions. I attended roundtables ranging from Sexuality and Gender through an Indigenous Lens, UN Advocacy Conferences, Engaging Youth in Research to Promote Positive Outcomes, Sex Work Alliance and Decriminalization, Legal Landmark Developments for LBQ Women, Data Collection for Young Activists, and Queer Bodies vs AI Censoring on Social Media. Each discussion was dense and fruitful, and I found myself surrounded by other curious minds and full hearts eager to connect and ignite change with collective action. I am privileged to have attended ILGA on behalf of 2SiMs. I am privileged to have made lifelong connections. And I am privileged to hold the knowledge gained for years to come. I look forward to sharing what I have learned and adapting the information as time passes.

Human Rights Conference

2SiMs afforded the opportunity for me to return to my homelands – Treaty 1 – in order to attend the Human Rights Conference for youth. I found myself drawn to learning about Queer Histories in the Prairies. There were numerous cases impacted 2SLGBTQIA+ folks that I was unaware of, and was able to learn and ask questions alongside younger members of our community. Beyond creating new connections, I was able to meet fellow board members at long last! How special to sit the same room as those whom I've only ever been able to see over zoom meetings for one year. We were able to share meals, thoughts, and conversation while also sharing a new bond. I look forward to an upcoming moment where more of our members are able to gather, whether at a future conference or otherwise, and continue to grow together.

Podcast

The podcast is called “Between 2 Spirits” and it’s a series that is featured on many streaming platforms as well as our very own website, it currently has 5 completed episodes with 10 more episodes on the way. The podcast was created to promote 2 Spirit youth’s voices across Turtle Island as well as creating more space within this digital world. The first episode was released on March 4, 2022.

Website

The website launched on November 1st, 2021 through Zoom. The website is currently called “2spirityouth.ca” and it’s a digital publishing platform for promoting 2Spirit and indigiqueer youth mental wellness and connection to other youth in urban centres, remote communities across northern Turtle Island. We were able to do this by sharing positive influential stories onto the website as well as the multiple social media platforms for maximum outreach to 2Spirit youth. The Co-National Youth Coordinators also create content (Indigiqueer events, artists, lists, etc) outside of the weekly storytelling posts.

What's coming in the Future?

With better marketing and communications, the future of this digital storytelling project is promising and will have an overall positive impact not only on the mental health of 2 Spirit youth, but the cultural development of Indigenous communities who have forgotten the important cultural roles of the 2 Spirit person.