



## Kekinua'tul – I am Letting You Know

Education on Indigenous oppressions.

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### What is 2-Spirit?

Two-Spirit is a contemporary term that puts a name to an old traditional concept. In many Indigenous tribes, Two-Spirit people were people who experience differing gender identity, specialized work roles, same-sex attraction and spiritual identity. The creator gives everyone either a masculine or feminine spirit, but the creator gives select individuals both. Two-Spirited people carry both a feminine and masculine spirit, thus they carry the knowledge between the two realms as they walk between genders or sexualities.

It is a belief that Two-Spirit people are a bridge between men and women.

These people are honored and occupy positions as visionaries, healers, and medicine people. In addition, they worked and engaged in both typically male and female cultural practices, gender norms, clothing, and other behaviors.

This term means more than just queer. Being Two-Spirited is also a cultural and spiritual identity, thus this term is only open to use for Indigenous people.

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### Appreciation versus Appropriation

Culture appreciation is when an individual seeks to understand and learn about other cultures they do not belong to in order to widen their perspective socially and politically, or to connect cross-culturally.

Culture appropriation is an act of cherry picking or taking certain aspects of a culture that is not their own and either claiming it or using it for their own interest and gain. This could be wearing clothing or displaying cultural ceremony pieces with the intent of gaining personal status or to be “cute” and “trendy”.

Taking a piece of another culture without understanding what it truly means can be harmful - it trivializes or fetishizes it. In addition, many cultures were forbidden by law to practice their culture, and when a privileged person decides to appropriate it's another layer of disrespect.

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In addition, some symbols, practices, and clothing cannot be used by people outside of the culture, and a part of becoming a good ally is recognizing this and keeping those boundaries.

### 21 Things You May Not Know About the "Indian" Act

1. Denied women Status
2. Introduced Residential Schools
3. Created reserves
4. Renamed individuals with European names
5. Restricted First Nations from leaving Reserves

6. Enforced enfranchisement of any First Nation in University
7. Could expropriate portions of reserves
8. Could lease uncultivated land
9. Could not form political organizations
10. Prohibited First Nations from soliciting for legal claims
11. Prohibited sale of alcohol
12. Prohibited sale of guns and ammo
13. Prohibited access to pool halls
14. Imposed the "Band Council" system
15. Could not use native language
16. Could not practice traditional religion
17. Wearing cultural clothing prohibited
18. Made cultural ceremonies illegal
19. Denied voting rights
20. Created a permit system
21. Created under British rule for the purpose of subjugating Aboriginal people

(Robert, 2018)

Residential Schools, "Indian" Day Schools, reservations, smallpox blankets, and the 60's Scoop were direct attempts at genocide.

**Language to Avoid**

**Indian** - "Indian" was a name given to Indigenous people by colonizers and is reinforced by an oppressive government with the use of the "Indian" Act and "Indian" status; this name is inaccurate and has racist implications and overtones in modern society when used to describe First Nations people. The term "Indian" carries with it a reminder of racism, violence, land theft, decimation, and genocide.

When speaking about First Nations people, try not to group all tribes together as each tribe is different, use the individual tribe name when possible. First Nations, Native Americans, and Indigenous peoples are suitable alternatives when the grouping together of the whole race is necessary.

**Savage** - The definition of savage is, animalistic in nature, violent, and uncontrolled. Colonizers used (and still use) the term savage to describe and label Indigenous people in order to dehumanize them and justify genocide and oppression.

Once again, continuing to use a word or slur and ignoring the past and present harm it causes in favor of using it as slang is disrespectful and trivializes systematic oppression and racism along with the minority group as a whole. Savage is also a reminder of residential schools, genocide, violence, discrimination, and racism.

**Residential Schools**

In 1920 under the Indian Act, Indigenous children were forcibly taken from their homes to attend residential schools run by churches and the Canadian government. The purpose of these schools according to Sir John A. Macdonald was to "take the Indian out of the child" (LaForme et al., 2019) by prohibiting the language and culture. They reinforced this through severe physical, sexual, and

psychological abuse. Children faced extreme illness and mass murder with the last school only closing in 1996.

In recent times, the Every Child Matters Movement has gained traction in connection to over 1,000 unmarked graves found on Residential School sites, and this number is growing.

### **The 60's Scoop**

The Sixties Scoop was an event in Canada where upwards of 20,000 Indigenous children were taken from their homes from 1960-1990 (Sinclair, 2020). Oftentimes children had not needed relocation, and welfare agencies did not notify bands when taking children (Sinclair, 2020). These children were placed into white families where abuse was not uncommon. Children consequently lost connection to their families and culture.

This problem is ongoing, the Government of Canada reported in 2020 that 52.2% of children in foster care are Indigenous while only accounting for 7.7% of the population.

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### **Citations & Resources**

Government of Canada (2020), Reducing the number of Indigenous children in care <https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1541187352297/1541187392851>

LaForme, H. S., Smith, D. B., Miller, J. R., Stoehr, C. M., Kaslik, I., & Woolford, A. (2019, December 23). Yes, Genocide. Literary Review of Canada. Retrieved October 6, 2022, from <https://reviewcanada.ca/magazine/2019/10/yes-genocide/>

Robert, J. (2018) 21 things you may not know about the Indian Act : helping Canadians make reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples a reality. Indigenous Relations Press

Sinclair N., Dainard S. (2020) Sixties Scoop, The Canadian Encyclopedia <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/sixties-scoop>

Written and researched by Marin Smith

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### **Contact**

[capebreton@youthproject.ns.ca](mailto:capebreton@youthproject.ns.ca) / (902) 562-3510 / 20 Townsend St, Sydney N.S.

Instagram: youthproject.cb / Facebook: Cape Breton Youth Project