

**WE R NATIVE.  
WE R PROUD.**



**ACCEPT YOURSELF. PROTECT YOURSELF.**

## GENDER IDENTITY AND SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Our social and legal status as women and men is called **gender**. Gender identity is the way each of us *feels* about our gender. People whose gender identity conflicts with their body parts are called **transgender**. Beyond just **man** and **woman**, **two-spirit** is a term for an alternative gender – a group recognized by many American Indian and Alaska Native tribes. It usually implies having one spirit with both masculine and feminine characteristics.

**Sexual orientation** is different from gender and gender identity. Our orientation is defined by the gender we have sexual and emotional desires for. People who have sexual desires for the other gender are called **heterosexual** or **straight**. People who have sexual desires for their own gender are called **homosexual**, **gay**, or **lesbian**. People who have sexual desires for both genders are called **bisexual**. People who are unsure of their sexual orientation may call themselves **questioning**.

Altogether, these terms are sometimes combined to create the acronym LGBTQ2S – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning, and Two-spirit.

## WHERE DO I FIT IN?

For most people, it takes time to figure out who you are. It's okay if you feel confused – **you are not alone**. There are people out there with the same questions and concerns that you have.

## TRADITIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON GENDER

While our modern society divides gender into two domains – man and woman – many traditional cultures have not always viewed gender in this way. Genders were based on societal and cultural roles. Each individual had a place in society and a way to contribute. Two-spirit people were revered leaders, medicine people, representatives in negotiations, and held special ceremonial roles. This way of seeing the world allowed people to be true to themselves and their feelings. Today, the influences of religion and European values have altered the way many tribes view two-spirit people.

# ACCEPT YOURSELF. PROTECT YOURSELF.

- Love and protect yourself. You are a person of worth. In loving and caring for yourself, you allow others to do the same.
- We know that being LGBTQ2S can be tough – many people feel alone or bullied. Reach out to friends and adults who support you, and check out: [www.itgetsbetter.org](http://www.itgetsbetter.org).
- Sex education at school isn't always inclusive – many LGBTQ2S teens do not get the information they need to protect themselves. Seek out information from trusted adults, or use the resources below to protect yourself and your partners.

## RESOURCES

- Look up your local Two-Spirit Society
- We R Native: [www.wernative.org](http://www.wernative.org)
- YouthResource: [www.amplifyyourvoice.org/youthresource](http://www.amplifyyourvoice.org/youthresource)