

A History of 2 Spirited People

*There have always been 2- Spirited People
who have been and continue to be vital
contributors to Aboriginal communities.*



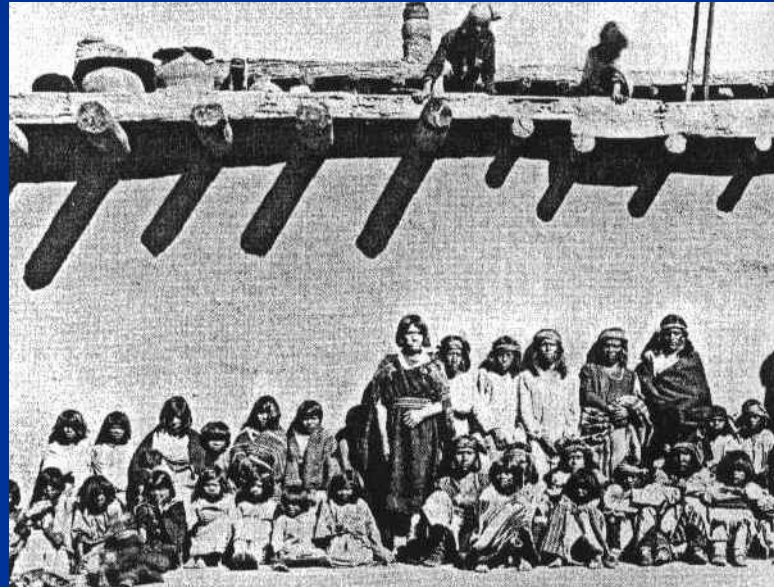
Historical Context

- 2-Spirited Aboriginal People traditionally were valued and respected teachers, healers, care givers educators and if need be, warriors.

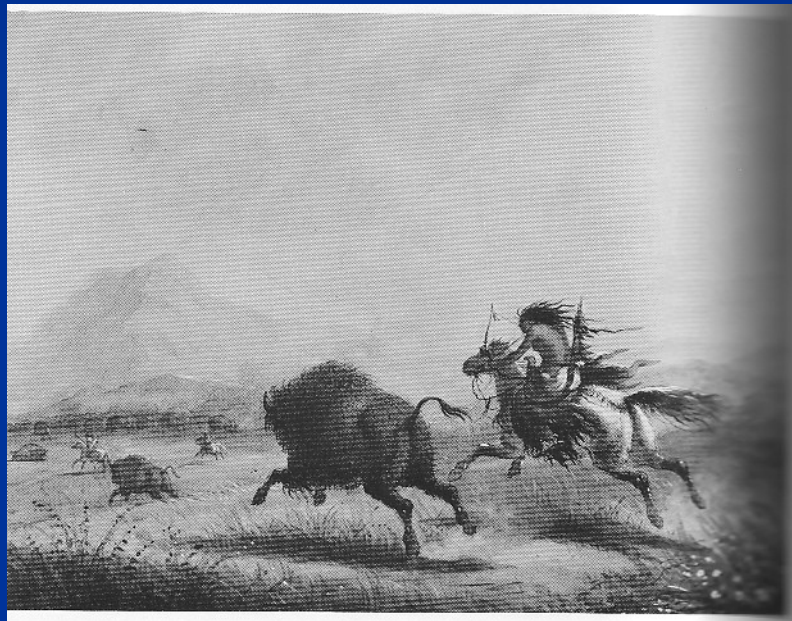
2- Spirited Women like Kulix pictured here assumed the role of Warrior



2 Spirited Men were considered the
Centre of Life as pictured here
between women and men



2 Spirited Women were skilled hunters



2- Spirited Men were great weavers



The people lived in peace
and harmony without
judging each other and in
the spirit of *non-
interference*.



So What happened?

Disruption of our peace

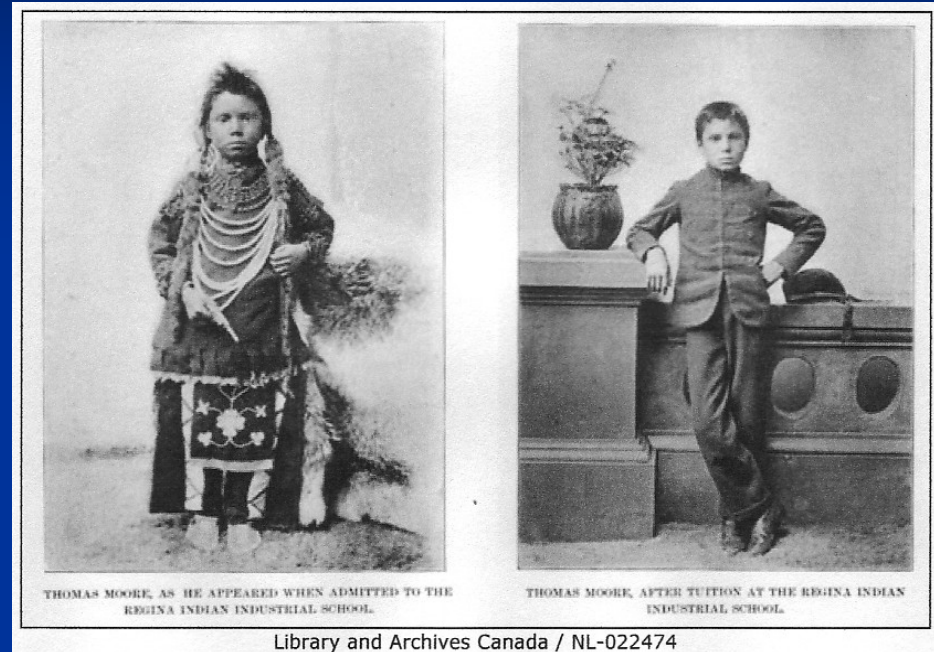
- In 1493, Constantinople falls to the Turks and Europeans no longer have land access to the Orient. They search for another passage West.
- In 1497, John Cabot set into a Bay and named the area New Found Land.
- In 1781, a Small Pox epidemic in Northern Regions of North America kills countless Aboriginal peoples leaving them vulnerable to missionaries and trappers. About 90% of the Aboriginal population died from European diseases.

Disruption of our peace (cont'd)

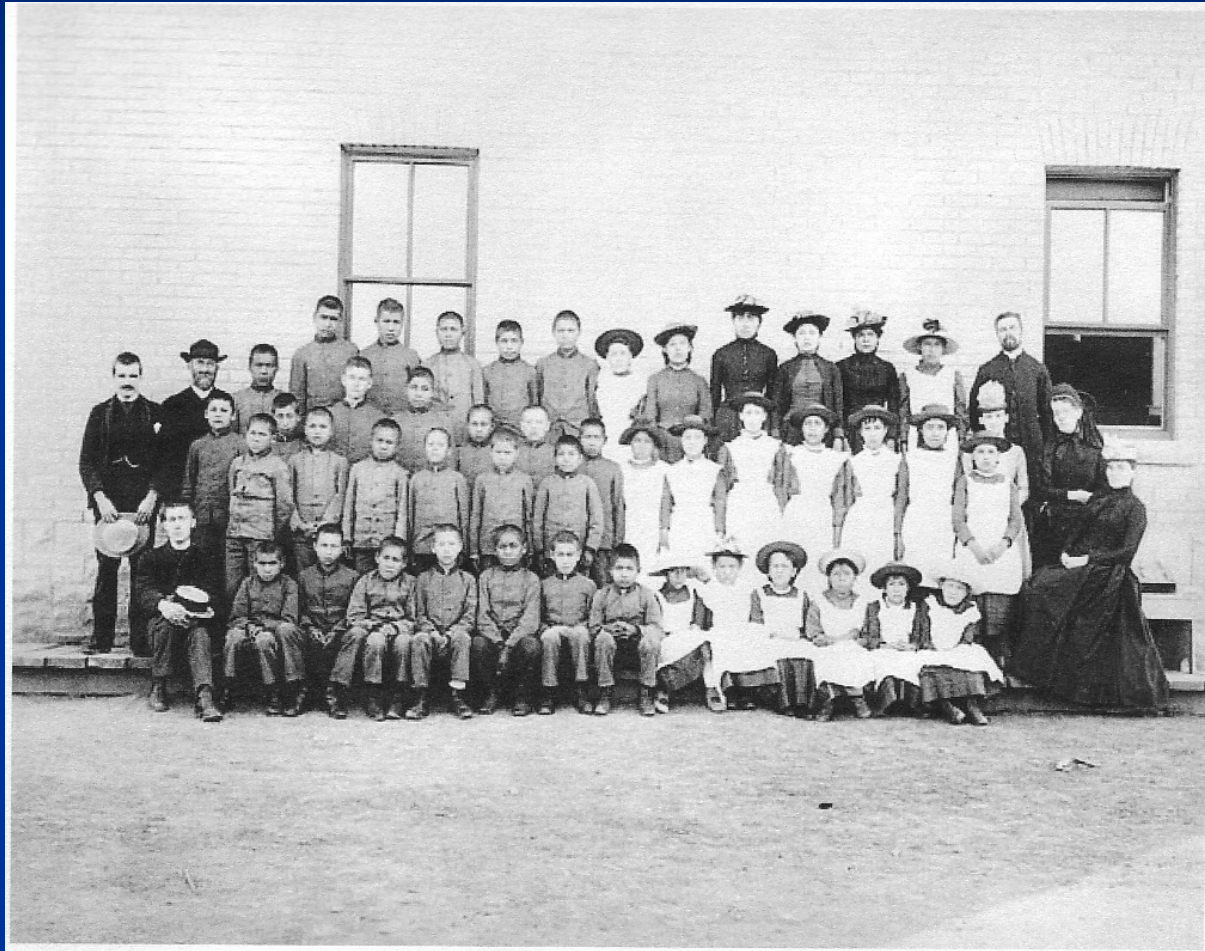
- In 1829, the Beothuk, original inhabitants of Newfoundland are extinct as a result of disease, conflict with settlers and malnutrition due to disruption of their traditional fishing sites by settlers.
- In 1867, the BNA Act is passed by the British Parliament making Aboriginal people wards of the Crown.
- In 1876 the Indian Act is passed detailing Canada's system for controlling and assimilating Aboriginal people.

Disruption of our peace (cont'd)

- In 1879, Sir John A. MacDonald's government created *church run* boarding (residential) schools to assimilate Aboriginal children into white culture.



**Non- Aboriginal values were thought
of as superior to Aboriginal values**



Children were imprisoned in these places and *mug shots* were routine



Side View



Her Sister's *Mug Shot*



With Ear Infection



- In 1907, the Montreal Star reports that 42% of children attending residential schools die before the age of 16 calling the situation a *National disgrace*.



M. Meikle / Library and Archives Canada / PA-101771

2 Spirited Youth

- For 2-Spirited youth the situation was even more grave. They were routinely beaten for any expression of intimacy or for any attempt to act other than what was prescribed as a male or female role.

Male Role as prescribed by the Church



Female Role as prescribed by the Church



Photo: The Shingwauk Project - Ruth A. (Cox) Ingle's Photo Albums

- 2- Spirited youth and other children were routinely abused sexually, physically, emotionally, mentally and physically. The *pain* they endured still resonates today. While traditionally, 2-Spirited people were respected and valued, these views have often been replaced by homophobia and internalized racism as a result of church doctrines and assimilation techniques.

- In 1943, the Department of Indian Affairs superintendent of welfare and training, on receiving from the principal of one of the residential schools, a set of shackles that had been used routinely to *chain runaways to their beds* and reports of other abuses at school wrote,

“I can understand now why there appears to be such a widespread prejudice on the part of Indians against residential schools. Such memories do not fade out of the human consciousness very rapidly.”

Disruption of our peace (cont'd)

- In the 1960's, thousands of Aboriginal children were taken out of their homes, families, communities and cultures and raised in white, middle class homes where they were thought to be *better off*.
- Many children wound up in the United States and some as far away as Europe. Many of these children continue to search for their people.

- In 1960, Indians finally receive the right to Vote. They first get to exercise this right in 1962.
- In 1969, the Canadian government released its White Paper on Indian Policy, calling for the complete assimilation of First Nation's People into Canadian society by eliminating *special status*.
- The National Indian Brotherhood successfully lobbied Parliament and the public to defeat the White Paper.

- In 1984, the last *residential school* closes.
- In 1985, Bill C-31 is passed in Canada to legally eliminate discrimination against Indian women as originally prescribed in the Indian Act.
- In 1989, Anishnawbe Health of Toronto started a street patrol and began an outreach program to Aboriginal people living on the streets of Toronto.

Disruption of our peace (cont'd)

- In 1990, the Oka Crisis took place. Kanesatake Mohawks take a stand after 270 years of land encroachment by governments, religious and secular non-Aboriginal groups and in 1990, a golf course developer.
- In 1995, Dudley George, an unarmed protester occupying Ipperwash Provincial Park, was shot by OPP equipped with riot gear. He was given no medical treatment and died after protesting the failure of the Federal Government to return land that had been *temporarily* expropriated 50 years earlier.

- In 1998, the Aboriginal Healing Foundation was implemented to promote healing from residential school trauma. Through the Foundation it comes to light that secret sexual abuse has occurred to 2 generations of men in one southern Ontario Aboriginal community. One priest is responsible for this assault on an entire community.

Disruption of our peace has resulted in a painful legacy

- Lower educational attainment, compared to other Canadians
- Unemployment rates that mirror third world countries
- Living conditions are below acceptable standards including the lack of safe drinking water, appropriate sewage disposal and adequate sources of heat etc.
- Poor nutrition
- FAS, FASD
- High rates of suicide, substance use, homelessness and mental illness

Disruption of our peace has resulted in a painful legacy

- High rates of disease including , but not limited to, HIV/AIDS, Diabetes, TB etc. (one Aboriginal person per day is infected by HIV)
- While Aboriginal people make up 2.8% of the Canadian population they represent 18% of the federally incarcerated population
- Aboriginal people make up a large percentage of street workers and those involved in the sex trade
- Aboriginal women and children suffer from emotional, sexual and physical abuse at alarming rates
- The life expectancy of Aboriginal people is less than the Canadian public.

So what of the 2-Spirited People?



2 Spirited People are organizing themselves to support each other and to educate the community.



2- Spirited People including gay, lesbian, transgendered, transexual and intersexed are:

- Once again reclaiming their place as respected members of the Aboriginal community. They are, healers, teachers, trainers, care givers, activists and artists.



We are Loving Parents



We are families



We are proud activists



We are valued



We are a vital part of the community



Acknowledgments:

- Ontario Aboriginal HIV/AIDS Strategy for developing the “timeline exercise” used in their Harm Reduction training “*Mending Our Circle*”.
- 2- Spirited People of the 1st Nations member’s personal photographs.
- Public Archives of Canada
- The Spirit and the Flesh, Walter Williams.