



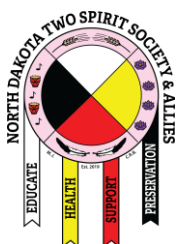
Testimony in Opposition of HB1333
Cardinal Red Bird, President
North Dakota Two Spirit Society and Allies
March 20th, 2023

My name is Cardinal Red Bird. I am the Founder and President of the North Dakota Two Spirit Society and Allies and we support cultural diversity. I oppose HB 1333. I am also a Two Spirit Elder from New Town, ND and an enrolled member of the Mandan Hidatsa and Arikara Nation of the Fort Berthold Reservation. My nationality is Mandan/Sisseton Sioux, and a member of the Water Buster clan. I currently reside in Bismarck, ND. In the Mandan language, the word Two Spirit is 'Nii-Dii-Gah'. In the Hidatsa language that word is 'Miati'. In the Arikara language that word is 'Squad'. If these words exist in our Native languages, it's proven that the Two Spirit individuals existed as well.

I would like to share a brief history of what is Two Spirit. Under the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Indian Health Services states that traditionally, Native American two-spirit people were male and female individuals who combined activities of both men and women with traits unique to their status as two-spirit people.¹ Before the Europeans came to this continent, the Two Spirit individual was respected as being a sacred being. In most cultures there was a puberty right where a young individual moved from childhood into manhood. A lot of our indigenous tribes had this type of puberty ceremony. The medicine man or medicine woman of the village would take the individual out and away from the village and have them fast and pray for three days and three nights. Whatever vision they saw, they would tell the medicine leader. Some would possibly see a horse for livelihood, a buffalo for strength or a bear for swiftness. So, if a young man saw himself wearing a dress, or a young woman saw herself hunting with a bow and arrow – those were indications of being gay or lesbian. Those are of the terms we use today, but the villagers always respected the vision.

Two Spirit individuals also worked as matchmakers amongst their tribes or villages. If a young man had a hard time courting a young lady or young lady had a hard time courting a young man, it was a Two Spirit person that intervened and helped both. Two Spirit individuals also helped when times were tough. I'm going to use the example of the Two Spirit male. Not only was he comfortable and respected for wearing what he saw in his dream, but he also helped with the men. If there was buffalo hunting, helping to provide for the villagers or the elderly, he got out there and helped with the hunting. He wasn't just wearing the women's dress the whole time. The same applied for the Two Spirit females. She may be out there hunting for the villagers, but when it

¹ <https://www.ihs.gov/lgbt/health/twospirit/>



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A Non-Profit Organization



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came to help being the midwife or bringing a baby into the world, she had to do the part of what other women did as well.

In 1990, the Native gay and lesbians from Winnipeg, Canada came together with the intention of bringing back the Two Spirit individual. They realized that each indigenous culture has a word in their Native language that describes the Two Spirit individual. They had to come up with an English umbrella term to describe the different languages- Two Spirited was adopted.

Now we have the Two Spirit Societies forming across the nation- including our own Turtle Mountain Reservation, Florida, Texas, with Montana being the oldest in existence for 27 years. Some organizations host a Two Spirit Powwow where the men wear a woman's dancing regalia, and the women wear the men's dancing regalia. We hope to bring a Two Spirit powwow to North Dakota. With the way HB 1333 is written, this could be viewed as male or female impersonators providing entertainment, when in fact, it is part of our culture.

Growing up as a Two Spirited individual there was name calling and bullying. It took me a long time to build the strength within myself to even start the North Dakota Two Spirit Society and Allies. According to The Trevor Project, 21% of the Native/Indigenous LGBTQ+ Youth surveyed in 2022 attempted suicide, 55% considered suicide.² The current bill is simply another way to bully LGBTQ+ and Two Spirit Youth by suppressing their freedom of expression.

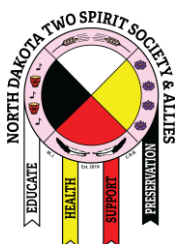
In 2013 Russia passed a gay propaganda law to protect their minors, which is similar to this bill - it intended to protect children from being exposed to content that portrays homosexuality being as a behavioral norm.³ Many of you sitting here are descendants of the German and/or Russian culture. Are we here in North Dakota going to follow in the footsteps of Vladimir Putin of Russia and the late Adolf Hitler of Germany?

In our Native American culture, Two Spirit people were respected as entertainers because they made people laugh during hard times. Male and female impersonators are not always lewd. Today, we need to understand the difference between lewd and cultural entertainment.

We all come from different cultural backgrounds. Let us come together as a bouquet of humanity in North Dakota!

² <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/survey-2022/#suicide-by-race>

³ <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/audio/kremlins-favorite-scapegoat-latest-attack-lgbtq-rights-russia>



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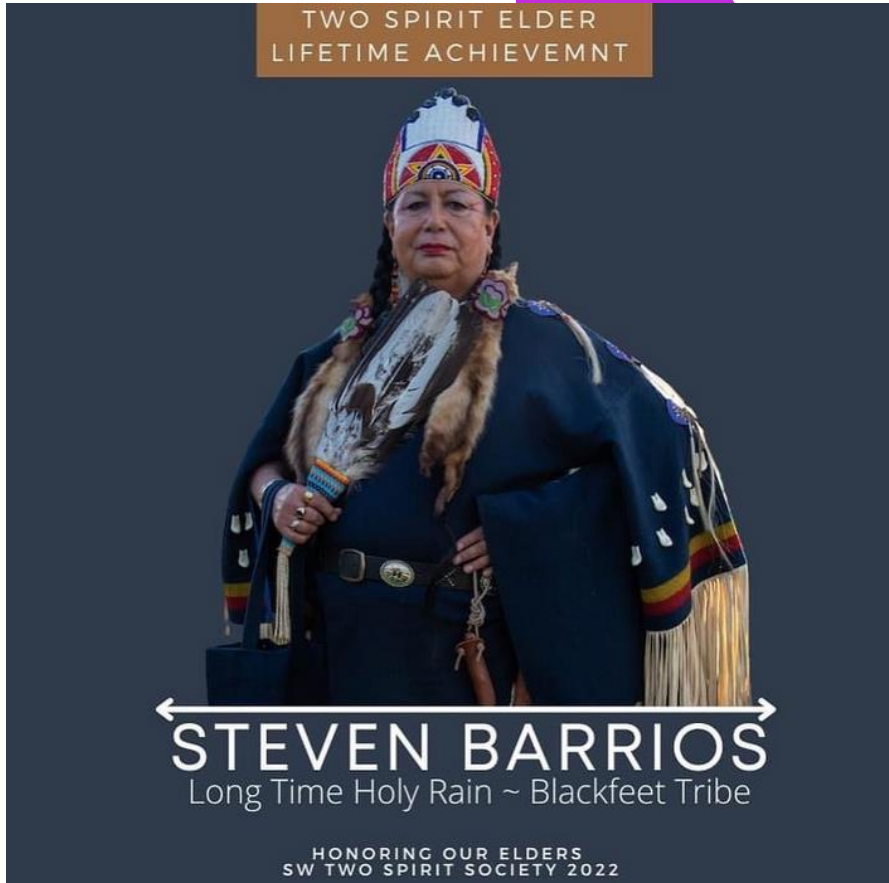
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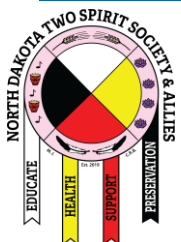
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Founder of the Montana Two Spirit Society.

⁴ <https://www.mttwospirit.org/>



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