

# **“LAND OF THE CEDAR: TWO-SPIRITS, ONE CIRCLE”**

**23<sup>RD</sup> ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL TWO-SPIRIT GATHERING**

**JULY 27, 28, 29, & 30<sup>TH</sup>, 2011**

**LOCATION: GAMBIER ISLAND, BC**

## **HISTORY OF THE INTERNATIONAL TWO-SPIRIT GATHERING**

The hosting of the 1<sup>st</sup> Annual International Two Spirit Gatherings began in 1988, in Minnesota, when a local group of Native American gay and lesbian community members in Minneapolis saw the need to launch a cultural revitalization movement. It was agreed that having alcohol and drug-free gatherings from that point forward would ensure the continuity of the movement and the building of healthy communities and relationships. The world-wide HIV pandemic had also reached the Two Spirit community at that time galvanizing many local activists to become involved in the HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention movement.

The Minneapolis gathering was organized with the support of allies such as the Minneapolis American Indian Center, Gay and Lesbian Community Action Council, and the Minneapolis Civil Rights Department, along with community businesses and private donors. For the past 22 years annual gatherings have continued to be supported by various levels of government, Aboriginal organizations, foundations and private donations. There is also a component of regional and local fundraising and in-kind support for this event. This year’s Gathering will be hosted in British Columbia on Gambier Island. The Gathering is anticipating approximately 150 participants throughout the four days..

## **GATHERING GOALS & OBJECTIVES**

### **Project Goals:**

To strengthen the identity, dignity, integrity and wellness of Two-Spirit (Aboriginal gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender) people;

To provide opportunities for Two-Spirit people to learn about their cultures, heritage, ceremonies, healing practices and inherent and civil rights;

To educate Aboriginal people about the traditional roles that Two Spirit people held in most communities.

### **Project Objectives:**

To invite and welcome Two Spirit people from across Turtle Island to the traditional territories of the indigenous peoples of British Columbia

To host a gathering of Two-Spirit people focused on healing, ceremony, cultural revitalization and social strengthening;

To promote awareness of indigenous and contemporary laws which prohibit discrimination based on gender identity, sexual orientation and perceived race.

## **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

### **To provide a forum through Truth, Healing and Reconciliation:**

Aboriginal people today are working hard to reclaim the important elements of their culture, history and healing technologies which have become lost, forgotten, hidden or forcibly removed during the past 500 years of contact with outside cultures. Two Spirit people are included in this movement, as we seek to rebuild the family circle that was de-constructed by the Canadian Indian Residential School and US Indian Boarding School systems; and to live according to our inherent rights. The impact of this intergenerational assault on indigenous views of sexuality and gender norms can be seen in the growth of gangs of alienated male youth and the exploited, missing and murdered Aboriginal women.

The participation of Two-Spirit people is an important contribution to Canada's truth and reconciliation process because myths persist that heterosexual students (males in particular) were turned gay because of the same-sex sexual abuse perpetrated against them by IRS staff and other students.

Debunking negative myths and stereotypes about Two-Spirit will contribute toward the healing of broken families that suffer from homophobia and transphobia. The reality is that Two-Spirit people are family; we are parents, grandparents, foster parents and integral members of extended family lineages.

## **GATHERING ACTIVITIES**

One of the primary objectives of the international gathering is to provide an opportunity for the Two Spirit community to learn about their history and culture.

Traditional teachings and ceremonies like the Welcoming Ceremony, Sacred Fire, Pipe Ceremony, Sweat Lodge, Sunrise Ceremony feasts, No-Talent show, Potlatch/Giveaway, cedar crafts, sharing/talking circles, and pow-wow will be organized into the day-to-day rhythm of the Gathering.

Camp Fircom activities include: swimming, canoeing, kayaking, and archery

Two-Spirit leaders will be called upon to share the knowledge and gifts they had learned and earned from their mentors and their home territories.

## **LOCATION**

### **Gambier Island, BC**

As one of the largest coastal islands in Howe Sound, Gambier has retained its pristine environment. With lush green forests and secluded beaches, it is truly a hidden sanctuary for healing. With no roads and a very small year round population, the residents of Gambier are warm and friendly.

Just north of Bowen Island, Gambier has many secluded bays and hiking trails to navigate through. It is also the perfect place for canoeing, kayaking and camping.

While the southwest side of Gambier is deeply indented by a series of bays, the northern aspects are steeper, with a few small bays to invite explorers. Anvil Island to the south of Gambier rises steeply from the sea on all sides. Just to the south, tiny Christie Islet and Pam Rock provide ideal habitat for seals and a multitude of sea birds. These snippets of land are wildlife sanctuaries.

Gambier Island is also a great place for fishing in Howe Sound for salmon, rock cod, ling cod, greenling, flounder, halibut, and crab. With blue skies and the dramatic Coast Mountains, you are sure to feel at peace here. Howe Sound is populated by virtually every form of West Coast invertebrates, octopus, urchins, crabs and sponges. Also a great place for bird watchers, Gambier's skyline is broken by the flight of eagles, hawks, ravens and sea birds.

Web site: [www.campfircom.bc.ca](http://www.campfircom.bc.ca) for more information on the Gathering location.

## **PLANNING and PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE**

Healing Our Spirit BC Aboriginal HIV/AIDS Society  
137 - East 4th Avenue  
Vancouver, BC V5T 1G4  
1-604-879-8884 Ext. 232  
[www.healingourspirit.org](http://www.healingourspirit.org)

APHA Advisory Committee  
Healing Our Spirit BC Aboriginal HIV/AIDS Society

Four Feather Society  
4874 Lanark Street  
Vancouver, BC V5N 3S2  
[fourfeathers@shaw.ca](mailto:fourfeathers@shaw.ca)