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<p>1</p>	 <p>John Sneezy, San Carlos Apache</p>	<p>The reason I chose to come here and participate is because I, myself, am two-spirit. Every year I come and dance in women's regalia to honor those who could not dance and could not be themselves, who are ashamed or being shamed. I dance in honor of those who committed suicide because they couldn't handle the bullying. I dance for those who were murdered because they were two-spirited. I feel when I come and dance I put all my heart into it and I gather their spirit and release it into the arena, because they couldn't</p> <p>I felt honored to be asked to be the head man dancer this year. I came into grand entry as a grass dancer then I did a wardrobe change and put on the Apache wing dress for my special 'team dance fancy style' with my best friend Lacey. It was really a good combination to have an LGBTQ along with their ally, or you know 'their straight best friend'. I called my special 'unifying our spirits through harmony' to bring together the two spirits and the 'straight spirit' and they're dancing together in harmony. It was a way to show that we can all be as one. We are actually all as one.</p>

<p>2</p>	 <p>Cody Ferguson, Cupik</p>	<p><i>Do you have any advice for young people?</i></p> <p>Cody: I struggle with this, but everybody has a voice inside of them that tells you what's right from wrong. You can't fool yourself. Everyone has the answer and I encourage them to listen to that. Because you know, you're going to know who you are more than anyone else. Because you're you of course.</p> <p>I encourage people to give themselves some credit and believe in yourself because if you don't you're going to go through a lot of tough times and difficulties that you could have avoided if you have that confidence within you.</p> <p>I didn't have that growing up and now that I found it I feel like a whole new, different person. I wish I had the ability and confidence to trust and believe in myself when I was younger. I know my life would have been something entirely different, but I understand that it happened for a reason. Love yourself. Believe in yourself and don't be so hard on yourself when things don't go as planned.</p> <p>But also learn your language! Geez, everybody.</p>
<p>3</p>	 <p>Miko Thomas, Chickisaw</p>	<p>"A lot of people and scholars look into the past histories of Native Americans and they say they were welcoming places, but that's not the reality for many tribes now that Christianity has moved in. They say, "we never had Two Spirits" because people prefer the Disney-fied version of things. But there are old stories - like the story of 'Long Nails' – these legends are not told and are lost. Tribes have been so Christianized that they ignore that part of our history. You have to go back to the old stories to know that we've always been here."</p> <p><i>What do you say to young Two Spirits that struggle with this truth?</i></p> <p>"They always have those campaigns that say 'it gets better'... and the reality is that it does. But the big acceptance they have to learn is self-acceptance. To learn to love yourself. For many two-spirit people, they have to remember that there is a wider world outside their own community. But if you really want to cause change, you have to do it within your own community start small and let it grow, like this pow wow."</p> <p>- Miko Thomas</p>

<p>4</p>	 <p>- Spider, Tsalagih Ayeli</p>	<p>“I was speaking to someone earlier [at the San Francisco Two Spirit Powwow] about what it has meant to be a Two Spirit in this day and age. In an age where if we tell others that we are Two Spirits, they believe that we are poisoning others. When once upon a time we were medicine, we were considered healers and sharing our stories healed others and helped them grow- and so we went hiding. All of us hiding believing that we were poison. But I think that the true poison is hiding and I think that the more people who share their true spirit with others, the more healing will spread.”</p> <p>“To our Two Spirit youth, just be you. Just be yourself. Seems like such a simple thing. It’s incredibly difficult. Unbelievably difficult in this world when it shouldn’t be. That’s what I would want to say. Be yourself. Even if the cost is really high. I think that they would see more people decide to be themselves. All of us would see people being who they are and the easier it would be for everyone. Which is why you have to do it. That’s why you have to.”</p>
<p>5</p>	 <p>Travis Goldtooth AKA Buffalo Barbie Dine, Navajo Nation</p>	<p>“When I’m out and about, I present myself as more androgynous, or more female. At work, I am fully male. I don’t wear any makeup or anything like that. But even when I’m at work and I’m not wearing makeup, I still get called ‘maam’.</p> <p>People are going to make mistakes. So with that, you have to accept those mistakes. Because you have made those mistakes too. A lot of the male to female transgender get offended when they are misgendered, and so they start correcting people. ‘Hey I’m a male. Can you identify me as male?’ They get upset about their pronouns. But yet they want the people to accept them. + It’s about how you carry yourself. That is how you will be respected down the road. They say that how you treat others and how you treat yourself is a presentation of who you are. So I try to treat people with as much respect as possible in the given moment.</p> <p>For me, people mistaken me for whatever, and I am like ‘You know what, that’s okay. Down the road they’ll understand it’. For me, I’m cool with it</p> <p>When I first started dancing, I never had a problem. I never corrected anybody. I had these values. It was a great thing. Even to this day, when I go to powwows and stuff, I go to the women restroom and I change with the women and I never have a problem. One time there was a security person that came in and said, ‘Aren’t you supposed to be in the mens restroom’?, and all the women were like, ‘Oh no you didn’t...’ and the security guard was like, ‘Oh shit’, and later on he said, ‘I’m sorry, I didn’t know you were well accepted in the community’.</p>

<p>6</p>	 <p>L. Frank, Tongva and Ajachmem</p>	<p>“Our people are becoming whole again. That's what this pow wow does, I've watched people change. It's only been around for 6 years. One year, he'll wear something a little feminine, next year maybe a top and those earrings, and then it's a full-on skirt and everything. He's alive and whole. They're finding their wholeness and I've seen it there at one pow wow and I know it's happening all over the place. To the two-spirit youth we need your skills, your love, your laughter. We need you. If you don't think the world needs you. We do. We need you. Your people need you. They can't be whole if they leave out a big part of the wholeness. You're more than o.k. You're necessary.” - L. Frank</p>
<p>7</p>	 <p>Xochitl Selena Martinez</p>	<p>My advice for you for younger trans folks right is to stand strong, hold your head high, and be proud because your identity is you it's who you are. For me growing up here in San Francisco, I had no idea what transgender was. I remember being like maybe 14 or 15 and walking by a pornographic store on Market Street and there were these fetish magazines with transvestites on the cover and that freaked me out. I thought, "That's not me". Back then, I felt there was no support for me, you know. None. And it breaks my mom's heart.</p> <p>She says “If I had known when you were 10 years old I would have been there for you.” I'm her oldest daughter now.</p> <p>I can't go back but I'm grateful and proud that I get to be the generation that helps make our youth feel safe and strong in their self identity because it's those youth that are the ones that really create change. It is a an honor and I have so much gratitude to be able to be an elder. To share this with them and to lead the path. - Selena Martinez</p>
<p>8</p>	 <p>Sheldon Raymore, Cheyenne River Sioux</p>	<p>Meet Sheldon Raymore (Cheyenne River Sioux) dope fashion designer, performing artist and educator based in NYC. We had the pleasure of meeting with him at this year's BAAITS Two Spirit Powwow where we asked him about his latest project: PrEPahHontoz.</p> <p>PrEPahHontoz is a Native American spokesperson for PrEP, HIV/AIDS Prevention and Awareness. A community often underserved and under-reported, PrEPahHontoz gives a voice to the Native American/First Nations/Indigenous communities in the PrEP and HIV movement. The mission of PrEPahHontoz is to promote awareness, sexual health education, and accessibility of PrEP efforts in more urban areas like NYC, many Two-Spirit individuals from Tribes across North America remain unaware of PrEP as an option for their HIV Prevention method arsenal.</p> <p>“Two Spirits are dealing with a lot of lateral oppression and violence and a lot of stigma. I created PrEPahHontoz to combat those stigmas and to bring a Native voice to the larger HIV/AIDS movement. Her message is HIV prevention and adhering to the medication, but really her purpose is to go out to communities and educate on topics that maybe people are too shy or too silent to say anything about.” +</p> <p>Learn more at www.prepahhontoz.com</p>

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(different photo)
Ethan Petticrew, Unangax

"I remember being suicidal over it in my teenage years. At one point I tried pills because I thought, 'Who am I? I don't fit in anybody's world. There's too much white in me, and in the white world I have too much Native in me.' I think that we get lost sometimes, but the ones that love us the most are our own.

We have huge suicide epidemic appear with young people. I mean it happens all the time. It's an epidemic in our villages we have one and then five more will follow suit. And I'm sick of seeing that. I'm sick of it and it's a product of a colonization.

I can't stand to see any more of our young people die this way, so I've committed myself to working with teenagers and young people in the dance group and that's my contribution to keeping our kids safe. I know it won't keep them all safe and it won't provide every single one of them with the tools they need but it's my small contribution. To ground them in who they are so that hopefully that will help them with resilience and moving forward. I think if more of our people could do that we'd have strong children."

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Roger Kuhn, Poarch Band of Creek Indians

I strongly believe in sexual sovereignty and decolonizing sexuality. Oftentimes we think of decolonization as only decolonizing land. It's also important to remember that when you're decolonizing land you're also working to help the colonized people that actually live on that land. And if we actually think about it and go back to centuries of research that has been conducted, not only by non-native scholars but also within tribal communities, you will see that these issues were a part of tribal identities long before Christianity ever took root in what is now called the United States or Canada.

Roger Kuhn, Poarch Band of Creek Indians, BAAITS Chair
Every time Grand Entry happens I just get so incredibly moved that there is a space for me. There is a place where I belong. And there is a way in which I've always felt very othered in my life of course being mixed race but also then two spirit and being gay. There's a way I've always felt so othered in the world but to come here I'm no longer othered I'm the norm and that's a beautiful feeling every now and then just to feel like you just get to blend in. You just get to be one of many that are

		<p>here and to be seen for who you are to be appreciated. Maybe most importantly to be loved. - Roger Kuhn, Bay Area Indian Two Spirits Chair</p>
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