



2-SPIRITED PEOPLE OF THE 1ST NATIONS

Organizational History and 2S Shelter Project

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MISSION AND VISION

Vision

We see a strong, healthy, and self-determining 2-Spirit community in Ontario where 2-Spirit peoples live with pride in their Indigenous heritages, values and roles in our communities. We see 2-Spirit peoples as continuing to celebrate our strengths and supporting community members to live with physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual well-being.

Mission

We will continue to nurture and grow within our sacred roles and celebrate our strengths as 2-Spirit peoples to provide physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual advocacy. We support 2-Spirit peoples and First Nations, Métis, and Inuit community members who are at risk of or living with HIV, hepatitis C, and related co-infections; and we will continue to support community members who are facing the effects of historic and ongoing colonial violence so that we may thrive within our communities and nations.





HISTORY OF THE AGENCY

At our 1992 Annual General Meeting, we adopted the name “2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations” to honour our ancestral past and reclaim our Aboriginal identity. As our 2-

Spirited community is unique, so are our community issues and our organization. We are members of a group of people whose way of life has been drastically altered by historical circumstance.

Since European colonization, the existence of the Two Spirit community has been systematically denied and culturally alienated from the Indigenous identity. 2-Spirit members bear witness to this activity in the form of racism, sexism and homophobia in the courts, the streets, the education system, and the media and in other Queer based organizations within the dominant Canadian society.

Around 6 years ago, with just 3 full-time employees, and under new leadership we expanded our agency to provide wholistic health and wellness supports. We now offer a wide variety of supports and services to meet our communities diverse needs.





OUR WORK

CULTURAL PROGRAMMING

We have a wide variety of cultural programming available to community. We provide access to ceremonies, gatherings, Elders and Knowledge Keepers, Ninoshe/Zhishe (auntie and uncle) supports, access to cultural based recreational activities and teachings such as beading, drumming, dance lessons, art programming and much more. Our monthly programs supports community of all ages. Additionally, we host events such as Solstice, Round dances, various conferences and this last June we held our 3rd Annual Powwow which had over 5000 in attendance.

SUPPORT SERVICES

Our supports and services are based in Indigenous ways of doing and knowing. We aim to support all the aspects of an individuals' health and wellness, their physical, mental, emotional and spiritual selves. Our support services reflect the balance needed within these four quadrants. We have supports such as our Indigenous led mental health crisis response team (TCCS), access to primary care, access to mental health councillors, employment supports, food supports, harm reduction services and outreach, HIV health support services, red road to wellness programming, and much more. We have a new partnership with Vanier Centre for Women, to support the reintegration of our community members who have been incarcerated.

Additionally, we have a bursary program which provides a low barrier opportunities to our community, and an expanding research department.



2-SPIRIT SHELTER

The project and why we chose 996
Woodbine Ave.



SHELTER PROJECT

In December of 2022, representatives from CMHC reached out to 2-Spirits, they inquired if we would be interested in putting together a proposal to build the first Two-Spirit shelter for those fleeing violence in Toronto. We were immediately interested as we have long seen the lack of culturally appropriate shelter supports for Two-spirit/Indigenous individuals in this city.

In a 2020 report, 2-Spirits worked alongside the Toronto Shelter Network and other partners, we found that overwhelmingly, participants expressed the need for increased feelings of safety, privacy and higher quality homelessness facilities for Two-spirit, Trans, non-binary and gender diverse populations, particularly in terms of sleeping arrangements, bathrooms and showers. A dedicated 2SLGBTQ adult shelter was also recommended noting that at this time there are very few options considered to be safe (or safer) for Two-spirit, Trans, non-binary and gender diverse youth age out of the youth system.

We knew we wanted to work with an Indigenous architecture firm in this work, and decided to engage Two Row Architects.

WHY 996 WOODBINE?

With limited funding for property and building costs, we knew we would have difficulty procuring property without the support of the City of Toronto. Early on in the process, we reached out to a number of city departments to see how we could start this process and partnership building.

The city presented 5 potential site options, some of which met our needs and some of which did not. We did tours of three sites, and of those three we strongly felt 996 Woodbine best met the needs of the community, and funders.

We wanted to ensure the location is transit accessible for our community members, has the capacity to contain a minimum of 5 units (funding requirement), an industrial prep kitchen, laundry capacity, space for gathering and ceremony, office space, and storage space. Community members identified needing the space to be accessible via the TTC subway lines, and if possible being around other Two-spirit and Indigenous support services/agencies. 996 Woodbine met and in some ways exceeded our original requests and needs, being that our Danforth office is just 200m away.

2-SPIRIT SHELTER

SHELTER DETAILS

Beds and Set up

The proposed shelter houses 11 beds total. There are a mix of single, couple, and family spaces. There are a total of 7 single beds, with 5 having their own sleeping space, and 2 beds sharing a sleeping space. There are 2 couple or family rooms. Lastly, one fully accessible transitional unit with two bedrooms. Each unit has their own washroom, kitchenette, and open areas for lounging, programming and supports.

OPERATIONALIZATION

Staffing and Resources

A minimum of 2 Staff will be on site 24/7 to support community members, intake, and provide programming. Our proposal included a prep kitchen, and Healthy Living Coordinator who will provide 3 meals a day (plus snacks) to all residence. There is a space on the second floor for office space to be used by staff, and additional space in the basement for storage, mechanical, a prep kitchen and laundry facilities. Programming includes day to day support services, and a variety of cultural supports. Our Danforth location is just around the corner, where we provide daily cultural activities and programming. Our Crisis Response Team, which has operated 24/7 without any service disruptions since July of 2022, will support transport and intake for new residence.

PARTNERS

Funding and Supports

CMHC is the funder for building renovations, real estate, and furnishings, while ISC (Indigenous Services Canada) will be funding the annual operational costs. 2-Spirits will also be applying to other grants to increase funding, and holding a gala in 2025 to fundraise for the proposed shelter.



2-SPIRIT SHELTER

Vision and Goals



QUALITY

While we know that an 11 bed shelter, is only a small dent towards the overwhelming shelter needs of community, we really wanted to focus on the quality of the supports and services, ensuring residence feel a sense of dignity and empowerment in their stay with us. We know that individuals would be coming to us in times of need, and high vulnerability and wanted to ensure that safety and care are centred in the supports we provide individuals/couples and families fleeing violence. We have years of experience in providing trauma informed and community based approaches to care, and our community has asked us to lead this work.

Through our existing, and consistently expanding partnerships, we will focus on getting individuals housed in longer-term housing solutions, in order to continue to provide the much needed short-term supports of the shelter.

PROGRAMMING

Our proposal included a wide range of programming such as, cultural programming, recreational programming, wellness programming, substance use support programming, family planning and parenting programs, Intimate partner violence support programs, educational programming, and includes access to all of our existing agency programming.

2-Spirits monthly programming varies on community needs, and interests and includes things like child and family programs, seniors programs, craft programs, talking circles, support groups, town halls, vaccine clinics, and many events. We have daily programming from Monday-Friday with additional evening and weekend harm reduction outreach throughout the city.

COMMUNITY CONSULTATION



In preparation for submitting the proposal to CMHC, we wanted to hear from our Indigenous community on whether they supported this project. We discussed the proposed shelter at our AGM and other community gatherings and we received overwhelmingly positive and interested feedback from community. However, we wanted to be able to capture this support from a more qualitative perspective. On February 5th, we posted a form on our 2-Spirit Facebook page for community members to fill out to respond if they would support the development of the first 2-Spirit shelter in Toronto. Within 24 hours, we had 246 responses, with 100% of respondents supporting the shelter. Of the 246 respondents, 179 identified themselves as residents of Toronto, 54 respondents identified as living outside of Toronto but within Ontario, and lastly 13 people identified as living outside of Ontario.

Our Indigenous and Two-spirit community within Toronto have and continue to share their support and need for this space to continue in its development. Through the Transforming Shelters report, we also heard that community members were overwhelmingly in support of a specific 2SLGBTQ+ shelter, with 91% of respondents considering it an absolute necessity. Additionally, all community members who were consulted, stated that more private and semi-private rooms would be beneficial, with 91% ranking it as an absolute necessity.

It is fundamental for 2-Spirits, not only in regards to the shelter program, but all of our supports and services, that we are guided by the voices of our community.



2-SPIRITED PEOPLE OF THE 1ST NATIONS



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