

F26.26 Indigenous Queer, Trans, and Two-Spirit Initiative

Overview

The Indigenous Queer, Trans, and Two-Spirit Initiative (IQT2SI) aims to be the first-ever dedicated space for research, advocacy, and the arts centering Indigenous Queer, Trans, and Two-Spirit (2S) communities. IQT2SI will amplify Indigenous 2S voices, address systemic inequities, and provide spaces for storytelling, healing, and policy change.

Indigenous 2S individuals, especially those in urban areas like Flagstaff, Phoenix, and Tucson, experience unique challenges due to displacement, federal relocation policies, and systemic erasure. Within this demographic, high rates of homelessness, mental health struggles, and violence are direct consequences of settler-colonial heteronormative systems. Research shows that 84.4% of 2S individuals have experienced bias-related victimization, and Navajo (Diné) LGBTQ+ youth are 3–4 times more likely to attempt suicide than their white, non-Navajo counterparts.

Despite these challenges, Indigenous 2S communities continue to demonstrate resilience, cultural richness, and leadership in activism and scholarship. This research will serve as a vital resource at Northern Arizona University, offering research opportunities, community-building initiatives, and

educational programs to support and celebrate Indigenous 2S lives. The student intern will play a key role in developing this groundbreaking initiative, contributing to research, outreach, and community engagement.

What the student will DO and LEARN

The student intern/s will play a vital role in developing the first-ever Indigenous Queer, Trans, and Two-Spirit (2S) Research Center, gaining hands-on experience in research, community engagement, and program development. They will assist with research on Indigenous 2S identities, urbanization, and systemic inequities, contributing to the creation of educational materials and community resources. The intern/s will support event planning, workshops, and outreach initiatives designed to engage and uplift Indigenous 2S communities. Additionally, they will help develop digital content, including social media and newsletters, to amplify Indigenous 2S voices and advocacy efforts. Through this experience, the student will learn key research skills in Indigenous Queer, Trans, and Two-Spirit Studies, as well as community-centered approaches to activism and policy advocacy. They will gain insight into the impact of settler-colonial systems on Indigenous 2S communities and explore pathways for resistance and healing. This internship provides a unique opportunity for students interested in Indigenous studies, gender and sexuality studies, activism, and community-building to apply their knowledge in a real-world setting while contributing to a transformative initiative that supports and celebrates Indigenous Queer, Trans, and Two-Spirit lives.

Additional benefits

This internship offers students a unique opportunity to engage in Indigenous-led research, gaining firsthand experience in decolonial methodologies and community-based scholarship. They will develop critical thinking and research skills while deepening their understanding of Indigenous Queer, Trans, and Two-Spirit (2S) histories, identities, and advocacy. The intern/s will also build professional connections with Indigenous scholars, activists, and community leaders, which can open pathways for future academic and career opportunities. Additionally, they will gain experience in event planning, digital storytelling, and policy advocacy—valuable skills applicable across multiple fields. Indigenous-led research is crucial in reclaiming narratives, challenging settler-colonial frameworks, and ensuring that Indigenous communities drive knowledge production about their own experiences. For non-Indigenous

students, this internship provides an opportunity to learn about the impacts of colonization and systemic erasure while applying these insights to their own fields, whether in academia, social justice work, or public policy. Understanding Indigenous perspectives fosters more ethical, inclusive, and community-centered approaches to research and advocacy. By participating in this project, all students—Indigenous and non-Indigenous alike—will gain tools to challenge dominant narratives, support Indigenous sovereignty, and contribute to a more just and equitable society

Additional qualifications

N/A

Time commitment

6 hrs/week for 30 weeks