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# Anthony Johnson and James Makokis

Team Ahkameyimok! - The Amazing Race Season 7 Winners



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**Language Spoken**

English

**Travel's From**

Edmonton, Alberta

## Speaker Biography:

Dr. James Makokis is well grounded in all matters relating to Indigenous cultures, traditions, values, and customs. He is one of Canada's leading experts for Canadians and First Nation communities. Dr. Makokis currently heads one of Canada's leading LGBTQ2 and Transgender focused medical practices and commits himself to saving lives through his progressive empathetic approach to medicine. He also incorporates First Nation healing practices to connect the mind, body and spirit for his patients. Dr. Makokis is a leading role model within the medical and Indigenous community and regularly consults numerous organizations on mental health, health access, health and wellness, diversity, inclusion, housing, cultural sensitive medicine, patient focused medical practices, health, social programming, social services and social policies for any institute or organization that is working to create a better experience and equal treatment for all. Dr. Makokis provides information on his struggling years as a youth, and his resiliency to become who he is today. Dr. James Makokis and his partner Anthony Johnson also recently became the first Two Spirit team to compete on the Amazing Race Canada and are both getting national attention for their participation on the show, while bringing new awareness to gender, sexuality and First Nation issues.

Dr. Makokis will provide inspirational stories and practical insights on how his own experience in being excluded and segregated as a First Nation and Two Spirit person. He offers practical insights for teaching others about the importance of culture, spirituality, health, self-confidence, community access, support, and policies to help improve the quality of life for Indigenous and LGBTQ2 peoples. Dr. Makokis has faced off with many Government leaders and is at the forefront of shifting Government and individuals perspectives on Indigenous and Non Indigenous best practices. Dr. Makokis is a leader among Canadian First Nation community and is a primary resource for the Provincial and National Governments and many Alberta Health Service Agencies. Dr. Makokis is always the highlight of every event and often leaves audiences wanting to hear more. Most organizations book him for a keynote and breakout session on the same day.

Anthony Johnson graduated from Harvard University with a Bachelor of Arts in 2008. Johnson's life has been full of dedicating his career and his time to countless numbers of non-profit organizations, social movements, and councils. He also has a very dedicated career as an international businessman. He has recently taken time to slow down and reconnect with his Navajo Heritage. Ideally he would have found work on the reservation, but because the unemployment rate is around 48.5%, it was next to impossible. Thus, he earned money by providing whatever services he could to whoever they would help. Though this initially started as a means to an end, it turned into a meaningful life experience that has taught him the power of connecting with others. Johnson's story is one of hope, overcoming adversity, dealing with racism, activism, community engagement and success. His customized presentations can be presented alone or with his partner Dr. James Makokis, who has a very similar story to Johnson.

Johnson's education and work background is truly inspirational. Johnson delivers sessions that are tailored to the event theme, the desired learning outcomes of the presentation and each member of the audience. His story and his presentations always leave the audience with a stronger understanding of the challenges individuals from the LGBTQ2 and First Nation communities face. He also delivers practical solutions for individuals to better understand their role and responsibility to treat others inclusively and with respect with a strong focus on the importance of prioritizing equality at work and in society. Anthony's presentations focus on LGBTQ2, sexuality, gender, mental health, suicide prevention, addictions, resilience, health and wellness, self-confidence, teamwork, leadership and overcoming adversity.

Anthony Johnson and Dr. James Makokis also recently became the first Two-Spirit team to compete

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on the Amazing Race Canada and received national attention for their participation on the show, while bringing new awareness to gender, sexuality and First Nation issues. They fought hard challenge after challenge eventually to become the winners of Season 7! They are both now speaking across Canada sharing their stories of their experience on the Amazing Race Canada while continuing to raise awareness and advocate for First Nation and LGBTQ2 individuals.

## Topic Presentations

### **The Anthony Johnson Story: Live Your Truth, Stand with Pride & Love Purely**

Anthony Johnson's life was never easy. Anthony grew up on Navajo First Nation has an unemployment rate of 48% which presented him with limited options to visualize a future for himself and discover who he was. Growing up on Navajo First Nation and identifying as Two-Spirit, Anthony faced numerous types of discrimination and disheartening challenges within himself, his family, and his peers. Two-Spirit is a contemporary English term to reflect gender diversity that Indigenous nations have always had. Although the history of the term Two Spirit is to be a celebratory term within Indigenous communities, the imposition of colonialism has caused individuals that identify as Two-Spirit within their community are often discriminated against and excluded from peer groups. Anthony felt pressure from his peers, his community and even some members of his family, to conform to gender roles which left him questioning his own identity and path as a youth.

Although Anthony struggled early on, his family played a large role to encourage and guide him through education. Anthony went on to leave Navajo First Nation to Harvard University to pursue a B.A. in Economics and Social Anthropology. It was during his experience at Harvard where he learned of the irony of his situation of being Indigenous at a prestigious school, built during the height of colonialism in North America, surrounded by peers from privileged backgrounds. Anthony found himself with more questions than answers and "woke up" to the realization he was living in two vastly different worlds. Because of his realizations, Anthony committed himself to his community to advocate and mentor younger community members to teach them the lessons he learned through his own trials, tribulations, and realizations.

It was in giving back that Anthony reconnected to "Diné" the Navajo way of life. In reconnecting to his roots, Anthony became both a student and teacher. He has taken an oath of adventurous transformation to make the best version of himself, to assist others to find their purpose which will then make the world a better place. Anthony shows his authentic self in recognizing that we all have and experience shortcomings but more importantly that we are all beautiful and unique. Anthony teaches us to admit our flaws, support one another, learn to be grateful, embrace change, continue to grow, live our truth, stand with pride, and love purely.

## **Two-Spirit Diversity - Race, Gender, Sexuality and Unconscious Bias**

Anthony Johnson has an incredible firsthand experience in growing up as Two-Spirit in a segregated and marginalized community. He has one of the most unique perspectives on the importance of acceptance and equal treatment regarding cultural, gender, sexuality, and racial differences. Two-Spirit is a contemporary English term to reflect gender diversity that Indigenous nations have always had. Although the history of the term Two Spirit is to a celebratory term within Indigenous communities. The imposition of colonialism has caused individuals that identify as Two-Spirit within their community often to be discriminated against and excluded from peer groups. Anthony felt pressure from his peers, his community and even some members of his family, to conform to gender roles while struggling with racial inequality, and racial discrimination in western society.

Canada is one of the most diverse countries in the world. Many individuals face personal challenges in achieving success. He combines his story; every day life experiences and areas of expertise to deliver practical insights on how to create accepting spaces and to implement strategies where EVERYONE can prosper by incorporating an accepting attitude to anyone that is outside of social norms. He will share insights on experiences LGBTQ2+ and First Nation individuals face in coping, confronting and internalizing forces of discrimination. Anthony Johnson teaches audiences how to identify and acknowledge our unconscious bias, which often creates and reinforces stereotypes and stigmas which then negatively impact our relationships. Johnson teaches how to become an ally to refocus our relationships to be accepting, safe and supportive. This presentation will provide key introspective learning for individuals and organizations that work and create new inclusive programs for diverse populations. By creating inclusive and accepting environments, we will be able to create new leaders, stronger teams and a humanistic and united synergy for equality and access. He will shed light on the type of support individuals and organizations can provide to create an equal, inclusive and accepting environment to eradicate the mistreatment of anyone labelled as being different.

## 500 Years of Colonialism: A Borderless History

Anthony Johnson takes us on a dive through the history of Colonialism in North America. Through a historical approach to identify the Truth and the effects settler colonialism in the Americas in the early through European policy, settler tactics and governing acts over the past 500 years. Through this history, Anthony shows the strategic tactics, from first contact to where we are today to overtake and repudiate the culture and history of Turtle Island and the Americas through the exploitation and assimilation of Indigenous tribes and their lands.

Anthony will first take us on a journey back before European settlers landed on the America's to show how civilization existed for Indigenous peoples. Across the America's were Indigenous empires, large cities, villages, vast systems of trade, complex systems of governance. He also shows the intertribal connections and shared cultural practices and values of different Indigenous tribes with a strong connection to nature, their elders, spirituality, and family. The intertribal connections that were in place before settlers arrived in the America's were strong, often heavily routed with the same values with little or no disputes between nations and their vast traditional territories they possessed.

When settlers first arrived at the America's, Indigenous tribes welcomed them and hosted them with open arms. Unfortunately, European settlers had different intentions for creating strong relationships with the Indigenous leaders. The settlers took the opportunity to study each tribe, their cultural practices and learn the lay of the land. From the direction of the Catholic Church and the Monarchy's from each country, In the name of "GOD, GOLD and GLORY", settlers were directed to seize the land for corporate gains and the claim the land ownership for their home European countries. Colonialist tactics came in many different forms, which eventually led to removal of all Indigenous structures, traditional lands and the destruction of cultural practices, families, languages, and people. Settler colonialism was enacted by vast means from ranging from violent depopulation of Indigenous peoples to legal means of policy and trickery.

Anthony highlights major events over the past 500 years that shapes our perspectives on how we have arrived at this conversation today. He identifies key European figures that played a major role in colonialism, and the Indigenous heroes that we as non-Indigenous peoples have never heard their stories. He shows how many of the policies created over the 500 years has led to stereotypes that still exist for Indigenous populations today, and the impact they have in our society. Anthony also shares the Indigenous perspective of the history, current situation and what we can all do to repair the relationship we have with Indigenous peoples around the world.

In learning of these major events, Anthony reshapes our understandings of our history and identifies the systems of oppression created through colonialism which to conform both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples to separate us from one another. He links the history to the challenges that Indigenous peoples are faced with in their everyday lives, which then sparks a new understanding of our approach for First Nation groups and Indigenous groups around the world. Allyship is key for us all to claim our history and to stop systematic oppression. We must all play a role to abolish historical practices and ways of thinking, to assist one another for a united approach to our HUMAN experience and to protect our sacred planet.

Anthony then shows how the impact of colonialism and systems of oppression have been maintained and created through corporate initiatives, controlling the historical narratives, the imposition of western values and government policy and programs. He then identifies the important Indigenous movements in North America and how different groups have been able to reclaim their rights, history, culture, traditional values, and identities to restore Indigenous identities across the world. He also teaches us about different movements that are going on today and reinforces the importance

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that we all become an ally to all social movements that fight against the exploitation of cultures and lands around the world.

The history is important. Anthony shows us the importance to recognize our history as Non-Indigenous Canadians so that we can understand the complexity and deeply routed systems in place that have left us Indigenous people behind for over the past 500 years. We need to be conscious of the history to understand where we are now, and where we need to go. Anthony shows us the Truth of the history and what we can all do now to make a difference and become an Ally to work together to take care of the earth and each other. He sparks our thinking to break down stereotypes and any bias through our relationship to our thoughts and by providing history of colonialism and the problematic systems of oppression that support a misinformed narrative for Indigenous culture.

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## **Reclaiming Culture and Reinstating Hope: Partnerships, Economic Growth, and Innovation**

Many people are working hard to change the outcomes for First Nation communities, through changing government policy, but more importantly, by giving First Nation communities strategy to reclaim their cultures, communities, and their governance. Anthony assesses strategic plans of action that each community can take to improve social and economic outcomes for Indigenous communities.

Anthony will learn the different challenges each community faces to empower each other through a resilient approach by first showing the cycles of oppression and focus on strategic action plans each community can take. Anthony's presentation will show working examples on the success that other First Nation communities have taken to overcome negative outcomes for First Nation communities to break the cycles passed on to them through systems of oppression. Anthony's presentation will reinstate the livelihood for each community by outlining the importance of traditional values, cultural practices, and teachings from elders. He then identifies changes for systematic, cultural, and economic development each community can work on with and without the assistance of government and non-Indigenous Canadians.

## But What Can I Do to Help? Being an Ally for Social Justice

Most Canadians do not know that most Indigenous peoples' lives are governed by federal laws under the Indian Act of 1876. The Act is still in place today. Treaties were signed years ago to protect First Nation groups and their rights to land. The Government of Canada continues to treat treaties as though they are non-existent, with the United Nations pointing their finger at the Canadian Government to change their racial discrimination of Indigenous populations.

Prior to the arrival and settlement of European immigrants, Indigenous people had complex and successful knowledge systems and practices about land systems, sciences, mathematics, clans, politics, physical and mental health, and food security that provided healthy and abundant livelihood for millions of peoples for tens of thousands of years. The effects of colonialism and the Indian Act play a major role in First Nation access to education, health care, clean drinking water, housing, and many other things that non-Indigenous Canadians often take for granted. Canada's horrific and not so distant past of the residential school system utilized education as a form of oppression between 1880's to 1960's.

There are still over 40 First Nation communities that still do not have schools in their communities.

K-12 completion rate for First Nation students is 49%. There are anywhere between 52 and 70 languages indigenous to what is now called Canada (depending on how you count them). Only three are expected to survive this century. The sad fact that First Nation students are more likely to end up in jail than to graduate high school is in large part because of colonialism. Suicide rates among First Nations youth are up to seven times higher than among non-Indigenous youth.

Close to 20% of First Nations communities are under a drinking water advisory, a statistic that has remained remarkably consistent for the past 25 years. As corporations rarely being held accountable, the global threat of climate change, the lack of economic and social equality in all nations, the rise of fake news, the never-ending corporate fight of world domination and control, humanity and our earth have never faced so many global and social threats. Anthony shares insights on the importance of pivoting from our current path and that human's can band together to create a united mindset of peace, compassion, and forgiveness. He offers solutions on how to overcome systematic oppression and divide and conquer strategies no matter who we are, where we come from and what we think. We all have a responsibility to our planet, each other, and ourselves. In creating a united perspective on social change and an equality approach to the human experience we can work together to create reconstruct our reality to be aligned with our purpose.

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## **Dinê: A Way of Life or Blending Indigenous Values with Western Culture**

### **Building on Indigenous Values to Generate Success**

The world is changing faster than every before, and some may argue for the worse than the better. A worldwide pandemic, climate change, and the Black/Indigenous Lives Matter Movement have caused a shift in our approach to our work, relationships and how we think. The industrialization and corporatocracy of the world economy have caused mass inequality between rich and poor, exploitation and mistreatment of minorities populations and the destruction of our planet and its ecosystems.

So many of us are striving to make sense of the world we live in to make our lives, the people we love and the world better in every and any way. Many are unaware of the roots of Indigenous culture, values and spirituality through traditional practices that are intertwined and encompass so many solutions for these challenges. Anthony Johnson shows how his roots to and traditions helped him become who he is today with a strong focus on improvement for himself, his relationships, the world and to advocate for any oppressed communities. He shares how Indigenous culture has enabled him to focus on his relationship with himself, the creator, the earth and all living things. Rooted back to hundreds of years of life before and during colonialism, he shows how the solutions to many of the world's problems mirror Indigenous values and cultural practices.

Dr. Makokis has had the rare opportunity to reconnect with his elders, learn different Indigenous cultural practices from different First Nation communities and share insights and learn from some of Canada and the world's top leaders regarding the establishment and importance of Indigenous values for all Indigenous and Non-Indigenous peoples. We have much to learn from incorporating a world view through the Indigenous approach to living and being. Learn about how Indigenous culture helped Dr. Makokis to achieve extraordinary success and practical insights we can all use in our everyday lives.



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