



Appreciating the Power of a Platform - Indigenous Social Media Influencers

Lesson Plan

[NBE 3C Curriculum Expectations](#)

Media

E1. **Understanding Media Texts** demonstrate an understanding of a variety of media texts from First Nations, Métis, and Inuit cultures, and, as appropriate, relevant media texts from non-Indigenous sources;

E1.2 interpret media texts from First Nations, Métis, and Inuit cultures, and, as appropriate, relevant media texts from non-Indigenous sources, including increasingly complex texts, identifying and explaining the overt and implied messages they convey (**Interpreting**)

E1.4 explain why the same media text might prompt different responses from different audiences (**Audience Responses**)

E5. **First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Voices in Contemporary Media:** identify various contributions of individuals, organizations, and initiatives, including technological initiatives, to the development of contemporary First Nations, Métis, and Inuit media production, analysing the social and cultural influence of those contributions and the role of media literacy.

E5.3 explain the role of media literacy, media access, and technology in supporting contemporary First Nations, Métis, and Inuit media creation and consumption (**Media Literacy and Media Access**)



Appreciating the Power of a Platform - Indigenous Social Media Influencers

Learning Goals & Success Criteria

Learning Goals

We are learning to:

- Explain why social media platforms such as Twitter are powerful
- Understand how Indigenous artists, authors, and scholars are using social media platforms to amplify their voices about important issues
- Explore some functions of social media, specifically for Indigenous peoples.

Success Criteria

I can:

- Define some of the meanings and connotations of “social media influencer”
- Describe how a social media contributor might use their platform to inform or persuade
- Describe how audiences might respond to social media influencers
- Explain why social media is an important platform for Indigenous writers to reach specific audiences, whether Indigenous non-Indigenous.

Essential Questions

1. Why are social media powerful platforms for Indigenous writers, social media influencers, and their audiences?

Lesson Materials and Resources

- [Lesson Slides](#)
- Handout: [Indigenous Meme Creators Point Out Harsh Truths](#)
- Handout: [What is an Influencer?](#)
- Handout: [Meet Some of the Influencers of #NativeTwitter](#)
- [Rubric](#)



Appreciating the Power of a Platform - Indigenous Social Media Influencers

Lesson Plan:

Estimated Timeframe: 150-225 minutes

Minds On

1. Show a meme and have partners discuss using guiding questions (e.g., what might be a message of this meme)? [Slide 2]
2. Share Essential Questions, Learning Goal and Success Criteria of the lesson. For the Success Criteria, engage students in identifying key words in the criteria. Debrief by noting key words they identify and clarify any terms as needed. [Slides 3-5]
3. Students read [CBC article by Leonard Monkman on memes](#) ([handout](#)) to gain background about the memes they explored. In partners, students discuss *What might be the purposes of these memes? What do memes do for those who create them and for the audience who reads/views them? How might these memes influence people's thinking about these issues? How do memes rely on insiders' knowledge for humour?* Point out that memes are often used to persuade or influence people's thinking about a topic or issue. [Slides 6-8]
4. Explore the role that satire may play by looking at Indigenous satirical news site, [Walking Eagle News](#). [Slides 9-10]

Action

5. Introduce the idea that social media allows writers and creators to use various platforms such as Twitter to share their voices, to inform and to influence.
 - Ask students to think-pair-share about qualities of various platforms to ensure they become familiar with some of the concepts noted in [What is Twitter and why should you use it?](#) Some may be more familiar with platforms like TikTok, Instagram, Snapchat (popularity is fluid and dynamic). Invite students to compare and contrast.
 - Pose the question: *What do you think is a social media influencer?*
 - Using the ["What is an Influencer?"](#) handout, prompt students to brainstorm ideas in pairs, then ask them to consider a definition to add to their thinking. Gather students' ideas in a whole class discussion to arrive at a working definition for the term. [Slides 11-13]
6. Introduce students to a variety of First Nations, Métis and Inuit writers/social media influencers, e.g., Chelsea Vowel, Alicia Elliot, Jesse Wenthe using the [Handout: Meet Some of the Influencers of #NativeTwitter](#)

Establish six groups. Each group selects one of the social media influencers to research their Twitter accounts. Remind students that they are gathering information based on the overall content of the Twitter account, not based on individual tweets. Also, point out that as they are analysing the patterns and trends based on their analysis of these Twitter accounts, they are practising important media literacy skills that can be applied to a variety of media. Note



Appreciating the Power of a Platform - Indigenous Social Media Influencers

that these are not the only important voices, just a selection; others can be found here: [Diversify Your Twitter Feed with these Indigenous Voices](#) [Slides 14-16]

Assessment opportunity: look and listen for students to be considering the patterns and trends evident from various information from the Twitter accounts including the biographical information the person includes, number of followers, number of Likes or Retweets of their own posts, topics and interests they tend to address. Why are some tweets “stickier” than others? Provide coaching and feedback based on observations and conversations.

7. Invite each group to share their findings. As each group shares, ask students to note similarities and differences among the influencers. [Slide 17]
8. Using [graffiti board strategy](#), post chart paper around the classroom, each with **one** of the following questions:
 - a. *How does Twitter (and other social media) differ from mainstream media?*
 - b. *What kinds of special skills does someone need to be an effective social media influencer?*
 - c. *What is the power of a hashtag? (e.g. #NativeTwitter and the community of support it creates)*
 - d. *Why is technology an important component of helping form new communities and awareness?*

Assign groups, one per chart paper (or shared document, if working online). Following the graffiti board strategy, groups discuss the question and jot down ideas on the chart paper. After a time, rotate groups so they explore each of the questions as well as comments from other groups who have visited the chart paper. Once groups have worked through the questions, have the final group synthesize key ideas from the comments and share out to the class. [Slide #17-19].

As a follow-up to the graffiti strategy, pose the question for a class discussion: *Why is Twitter a powerful platform for reaching specific audiences?* During the discussion, make connections to the content students generated on their graffiti brainstorms. As the discussion progresses, explore the idea of access to various media platforms, both mainstream and non-traditional forms (e.g., by posing questions such as *Who has access to audiences/to a public platform? Who traditionally didn't have access to mainstream media?*) [Slide 20]

Assessment Opportunity: During the small and whole class discussion, look and listen for students to explain their thinking (e.g., by providing details, reasons, hypotheses) related to these questions. Prompt students as needed if they need to support their thinking with details.



Appreciating the Power of a Platform - Indigenous Social Media Influencers

Consolidation

8. Have students self-assess their learning using the 'stop light strategy' based on the success criteria [Slide #21].

Assessment Opportunity: Gauge students' self-assessment and respond as needed for students who are indicating 'red' or 'yellow' for some of the success criteria. Students will draw on their understanding of these success criteria for the final Consolidation task.

9. In a class discussion, survey the school's Twitter account to assess who is followed (and thereby valued) by this institutional account? [Slide 22]
10. Based on the assessment of the school's Twitter account, have students make recommendations of Indigenous voices (e.g. of the ones they looked at in the lesson) to add as followers. (Option: Have students present their recommendations to the school administration.) [Slide 23]

Assessment Opportunity: Students' descriptions and explanations provide evidence of the success criteria for this lesson. With feedback and support, the student recommendation (presented orally or in writing) can be used as an assessment of learning opportunity and assessed using the [rubric](#) provided. Provide support and feedback as needed, including encouraging students to draw on their inquiries into the social media influencer for their description, and their collaborative graffiti board discussions for their explanations.

Extension Possibilities

1. Consider the power of a social media platform in this CBC article on [Angus Anderson's](#) Twitter project to teach the world how to speak Inuktitut. View this video to learn [colours and numbers](#) in Inuktitut SouthBaffin Dialect commonly spoken in the Ottawa Region.
2. What is currently trending on #NativeTwitter? Does this differ between platforms? (e.g. Twitter vs. Instagram, Snapchat, Tik Tok). Invite students to find evidence of Indigenous individuals and communities on TikTok, which has also become more popular. Compare and contrast the purpose, conventions, and audience of TikTok vs. Twitter.
3. [Indigenous Writes](#) by Chelsea Vowel should be considered essential reading for all teachers of NBE. Read and discuss Chelsea Vowel's essay "Allowably Indigenous: To Ptarmigan or Not to Ptarmigan" (pp. 67-79) from [Indigenous Writes](#). Have students compose tweets to Vowel with questions or reflections on her ideas.
4. Investigate the campaign in support of traditional seal hunting sparked by Iqaluit resident, Laakukuk Williamson Bathory in response to Ellen De Generes's



Appreciating the Power of a Platform - Indigenous Social Media Influencers

anti-sealing campaign. Laakukuk initiated the [#sealfie](#) hashtag to take on ignorance and lead what she calls a “cultural celebration and positive self-esteem” for Inuit communities. For further investigation, view Alethea Arnaquq-Baril’s documentary, [The Angry Inuk](#), to hear the voices of Inuit hunters, crafts people, and families for whom the seal hunt is an integral way of life that must be protected from the interference of animal rights activists. (See also [Lesson: Understanding Documentary Film as a Form of Resistance](#))

5. [Diversify your Twitter feed with these Indigenous Voices](#) from this list generated by [Animiiki](#).

Disclaimer

The images and many of the text pieces included in these resources are available in the public domain.

Indigenous meme creators point out harsh truths with dark humour



Lenard Monkman · CBC News · Posted: Sep 19, 2018 5:00AM ET | Last Updated: September 19, 2018

'We're making our own jokes and I feel like it lessens the blow a bit,' says Taran Kootenhayoo



arnell.tf
9,720 followers

[View Profile](#)

[Follow](#)

Me, resisting assimilation



There are few things that can get a point across as quickly as an internet meme.

For their Indigenous creators, memes offer a chance to weigh in on Canadian society by using humour, education and the occasional jab at Canadian and Indigenous politicians.

Arnell Tailfeathers says memes represent a new art form and a chance for himself, as a visual artist, to express his views.

"I began thinking what I could do with [memes] in terms of decolonization and what's happening in Canada right now," said Tailfeathers.

"Some people are doing comforting stuff to make you feel good, but then other people are doing deep political things with it."

'It can be pretty dark at times'

Tailfeathers, who is Niitsitapi, grew up on the Kainai Blood reserve. He was the first person in his family to attend a public school that wasn't a residential school and he went on to get a bachelor's degree in fine arts in new media from the University of Lethbridge.

"I kind of have the Blackfoot humour," he said.

"It can be pretty dark at times but I think it's inherent to be like that, to deal with stuff like colonization and genocide."



arnell.tf
9,720 followers

[View Profile](#)

[Follow](#)

When ur the only one who looks good
in the group picture but you post it
anyway



Tailfeathers uses his memes to take aim at some of the historical truths of the relationship between Indigenous Peoples and Canada. But he doesn't hesitate to take contemporary jabs at Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, Assembly of First Nations National Chief Perry Bellegarde and the "failure of reconciliation."

"[Reconciliation] doesn't seem to be working," he said.

"I know some people would describe it as further colonization – it's weaponized against us for pipelines and other [natural] resources that Canada wants to get at."

Incorporating culture

Not only does Indigenous meme culture offer insights into Indigenous humour, it also gives people a look into Indigenous cultural perspectives.

"The first meme that I made wasn't political," said Jade Baxter.

"It was engaging with this teaching that I was brought up on, of not leaving your windows uncovered at night so that you're not inviting spirits inside."

She found out later that the teaching was also relevant in other Indigenous nations as well.

"It was taking a well-known cultural teaching and making it something that was consumable online in a fun and wholesome way," she said.

Baxter has been making memes for a year and is part of a collective comprised of women, non-binary



and trans people known as the @decolonial.meme.queens.

Their Instagram bio reads: "Dismantling the settler-colonial heteropatriarchy one meme at a time."

'We're making our own jokes'

The idea of fighting back against settler colonial culture through humour is something that Taran Kootenhayoo can relate to.

Kootenhayoo runs his own meme page on Instagram known as @dadfights.

His memes range from making jokes about meals that combine Kraft Dinner and wieners to the racism that Indigenous Peoples experience.

"I think we all internalize the things we have to carry from the past, things like white supremacy, residential schools — all of us our dealing with these different traumas," said Kootenhayoo.

Instagram has given them a platform to share their creations.

"We're making our own jokes and I feel like it lessens the blow a bit," he said.

"We're moving beyond being victims."

Although the three creators have been producing content for only a year, they feel meme creation is likely to grow in the Indigenous community.

"It's really coming about," said Tailfeathers.

"Unfortunately there's not enough Indigenous movies and TV shows to base the memes off of. So we're stuck using people from other ethnicities to represent us."

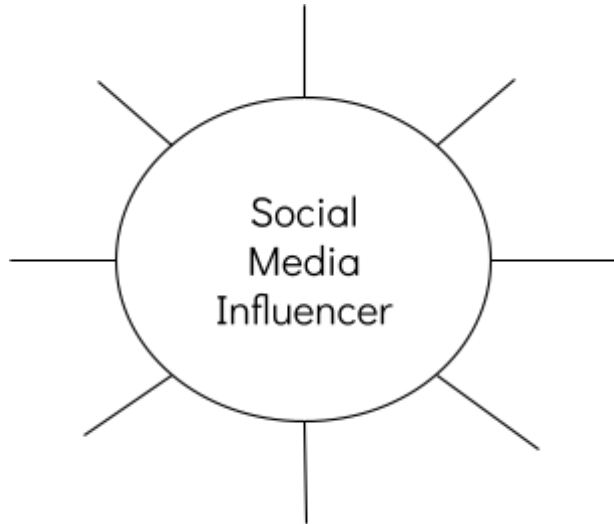
Monkman, Leonard. "We're Making Our Own Jokes': Indigenous Meme Creators Point out Harsh Truths with Dark Humour | CBC News." CBCnews, CBC/Radio Canada, 19 Sept. 2018, www.cbc.ca/news/indigenous/indigenous-meme-creators-instagram-1.4828555.



Appreciating the Power of a Platform - Indigenous Social Media Influencers

What is an Influencer?

1. List all the things that come to mind when you hear “Social Media Influencer.”



2. Review the definition provided by the Digital Marketing Institute. Highlight the most important terms.

“A social media influencer is a user who has established credibility in a specific industry, has access to a huge audience and can persuade others to act based on their recommendations. An influencer has the tools and authenticity to attract many viewers consistently and can motivate others to expand their social reach. An influencer may be anyone from a blogger to a celebrity to an online entrepreneur. They must simply capitalize on a niche to attain widespread credibility.”

3. Define “social media influencer” in your own words.

Meet Some of the Influencers of #NativeTwitter



Lenard Monkman · CBC News · Posted: Sep 16, 2018 7:00 AM ET | Last Updated: September 17, 2018

A community of Indigenous artists, writers and thinkers has grown around the social media platform



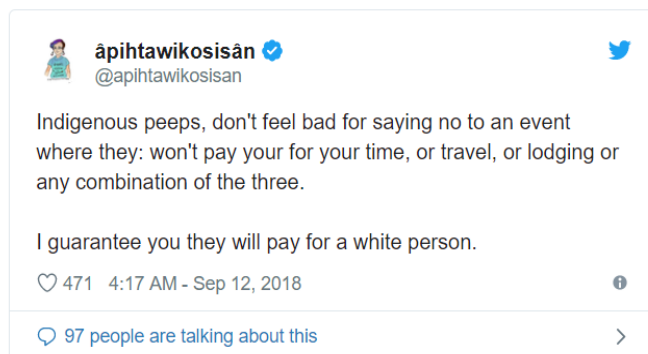
From left to right, Alicia Elliott, Robert Jago, Chelsea Vowel and Jesse Wentz. Four voices that are among thousands of people who comprise the #NativeTwitter community. (CBC)

The beauty of the internet and social media is that you can curate the content to want to see. People across the country are able to connect, bounce ideas off and occasionally argue with people they would never get to meet in person.

For many Indigenous people on Twitter, the social media app has fostered a community where people get to learn about each other's customs, experiences and opinions.

Meet a few of the influencers of #NativeTwitter.

Chelsea Vowel @apihtawikosisan Joined Twitter: January 2012



Métis academic Chelsea Vowel is from Lac Ste. Anne, Alta., and is the author of *Indigenous Writes: A Guide to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit issues in Canada.* (Merissa Daborn)

You can't talk about #NativeTwitter without mentioning Chelsea Vowel. She gives credit to the Idle No More movement for creating an online community of Indigenous thinkers, artists and academics.

"It's a social space where we can focus on our issues and concerns... because those things are not represented in mainstream media," said Vowel.

One day she came across Australian Twitter account **@indigenousX**, where a different Indigenous person in the country hosts each week. She asked if she could do something similar in Canada, and created the **@indigenousxca** account. The account highlights the diversity of thought, and experiences of Indigenous Peoples across Canada.

Robert Jago: @rjjago Joined Twitter: August 2008



Robert Jago broke the story about Joseph Boyden's identity while hosting the @Indigenousxca account. He is a member of both Kwantlen First Nation and the Nooksack tribe. (Submitted)

In 2015, Macleans magazine called Robert Jago "The Most Dangerous Blogger in Canada" after he dug into three federal Conservative candidates' backgrounds and unearthed Internet and social media posts that caused them to withdraw from the federal election.

For Jago, Twitter is a place to talk about politics that are relevant to him. It's also a place for him to engage in critical conversations.

"My reserve in B.C. is not a democracy," he said. "It's one of 20 reserves where there's no elected council, there's no elected chief. So It's really hard to talk about politics for me on Facebook where those people could see it."

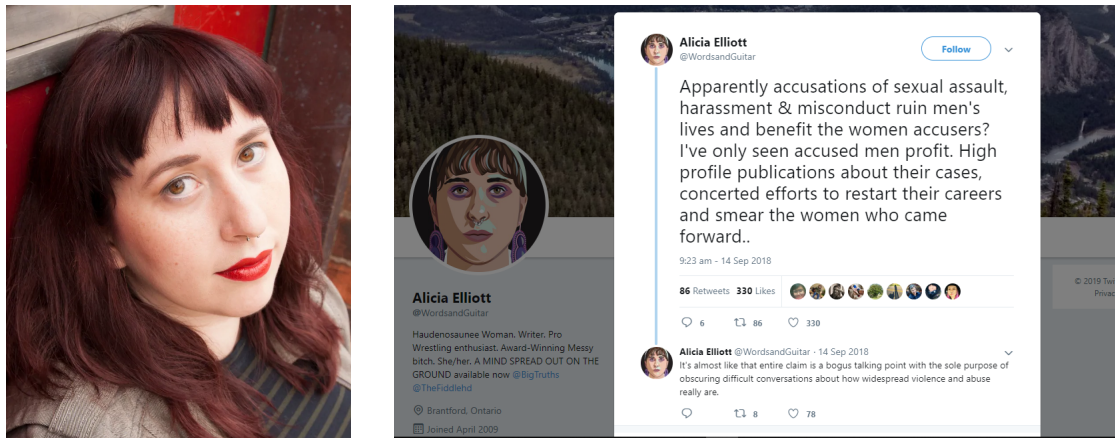
Jago will often use "Twitter essays" to break down complex matters and uses his account to give readers a different perspective on current affairs or political hot topics.

He said his most popular tweets are the ones where he addresses racism and anti-Indigenous views.

"The ones that get the most likes and retweets are those conversations where you come up with some new angle or new approach or tactics to reply to all of the anti-Native hate."

He lives in Montreal, and he gives credit to Twitter for helping him make "real world connections" with other Indigenous people that have helped him with his writing. You can find Jago's work in publications like The Globe and Mail, as well as The Walrus.

Alicia Elliott: @wordsandguitar Joined Twitter: March 2009



Alicia Elliott, Tuscarora, is from Six Nations of the Grand River. She is a writer/author who is grateful for the online community of #NativeTwitter. (Ayelet Tsbari)

#NativeTwitter has been a community of support for writer Alicia Elliott. From humour, to learning, to sharing grief after the Gerald Stanley and Raymond Cormier verdicts, #NativeTwitter has been a place where she can find comfort.

"The way that people support one another is really great," said Elliott.

"If something that comes up that affects our community, it's easy for people to get the word out for other people to support."

Elliott said she believes that #NativeTwitter is helping to shape conversations in Canada and it's something Canadian media takes notice of.

"At this point, the media has to react to this platform where they aren't gatekeeping anymore. They are trying to control the narratives but at the same time, how many more people are writing op-eds now as opposed to before #NativeTwitter?"

Jesse Went: @jessewente Joined Twitter: March 2009



Jesse Went is Anishinaabe and the director of Canada's Indigenous Screen Office.

Jesse Went has been talking about Indigenous representation in the media for a long time. When arguments over cultural appropriation boiled over in 2017, Went was called upon to weigh in.

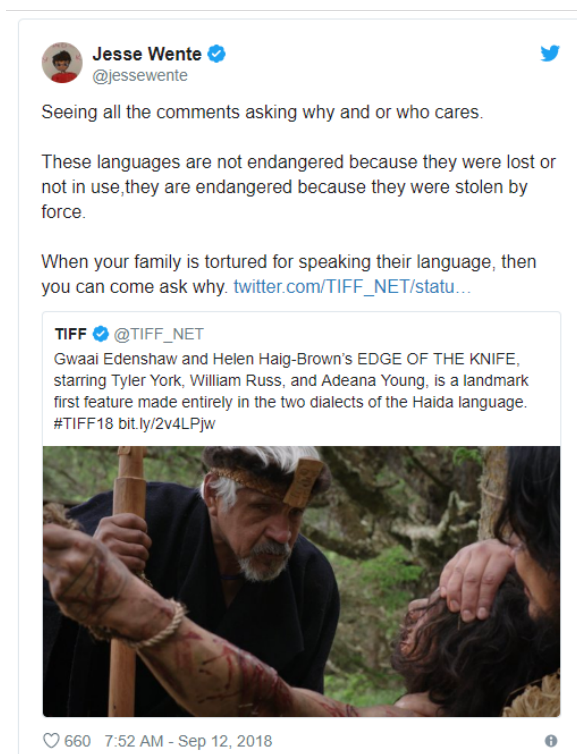
"Many of the people in the mainstream media pay very close attention to what goes on on #NativeTwitter because that's where they are

going to generate story ideas both in affirming the conversations that are happening, as well as pushing back against those conversations," he said.

One of his favourite things about #NativeTwitter is being able to learn about the perspectives of Indigenous women. However, he notices a disparity between the abuse that Indigenous men and women face for their views.

He thinks that it is a result of patriarchy, but said the platform is also a reflection of the broader society.

"The colonial project has always targeted women first. because they're the life givers," he said.



"That's how you destroy a society and a culture is by taking away their women. I think Indigenous women are the most oppressed group in all of Canada. I don't think it's surprising that those things are recreated on a platform."

Monkman, Leonard. "Meet some of the Influencers of #NativeTwitter" | CBC News." CBCnews, CBC/Radio Canada, 16 Sept. 2018. 14 Aug. 2019. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/indigenous/indigenous-nativetwitter-influencers-1.4824534>

Questions for Analysis

1. What do you learn about this individual from their Twitter profile? (e.g., biographical information, major interests and concerns).
2. Based on your scan of their Twitter account, and using the working definition of 'social media influencer,' why might this person be considered an influencer?
3. How might #NativeTwitter provide a community of support and act as a form of collective resistance?



Appreciating the Power of a Platform - Indigenous Social Media Influencers

Rubric

	Level 4 (80-100%)	Level 3 (70-79%)	Level 2 (60-69%)	Level 1 (50-59%)
Knowledge and Understanding Demonstrate understanding of social media influencer	Describes the interests and concerns of a social media influencer with a high degree of specificity	Describes the interests and concerns of a social media influencer with considerable specificity	Describes the interests and concerns of a social media influencer with some specificity	Describes the interests and concerns of a social media influencer with limited specificity
Thinking Support recommendations with reasoning	Provides reasons/rationale in the recommendation with a high degree of insight	Provides reasons/rationale in the recommendation with considerable insight	Provides reasons/rationale in the recommendation with some insight	Provides reasons/rationale in the recommendation with limited insight
Communication Communicate information and ideas	Presents information and ideas with a high degree of clarity	Presents information and ideas with considerable clarity	Presents information and ideas with some clarity	Presents information and ideas with limited clarity
Application Propose actions based on inquiry	Proposes action (in the form of a recommendation) with a high degree of appropriateness	Proposes action (in the form of a recommendation) with considerable appropriateness	Proposes action (in the form of a recommendation) with some appropriateness	Proposes action (in the form of a recommendation) with limited appropriateness