THE RESURGENCE OF INDIGENOUS ONLINE IDENTITIES AND COMMUNITIES

A Dissertation Submitted in
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ABSTRACT

THE RESURGENCE OF INDIGENOUS ONLINE IDENTITIES AND COMMUNITIES

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Contemporary struggles with Indigenous identities in Canada are deeply rooted in the historical and ongoing impacts of colonization, which have left profound and lasting effects on different geographical regions across the country. These struggles are multifaceted, encompassing complex questions surrounding who qualifies as Indigenous and what criteria are used to authenticate claims of Indigenous heritage.

In the modern era, the digital landscape has become an integral part of our daily lives, revolutionizing how we interact with the world around us. Digital spaces, including the vast expanse of the Internet, various social media platforms, and mobile applications, have transformed how we communicate, conduct business, seek entertainment, and share information. These virtual environments offer unparalleled opportunities for connectivity, collaboration, and the exchange of resources and ideas.

Within this digital realm, social media platforms have emerged as powerful tools for self-expression and exploration of identity. Individuals increasingly use these platforms to delve into the complexities of their identities, including their intersectionality and connections to specific geographic locations. Research has shown that this exploration often leads to a reclamation and revitalization of Indigenous identities, serving as a form of political resistance against the ongoing legacies of colonization. Through social media, Indigenous individuals and communities are able to reclaim their voices, assert their autonomy, and challenge dominant narratives.

This research delves into how digital spaces, mainly the social media platform of TikTok, shape Indigenous identity formation, maintenance, and resurgence. By employing a mixed-methods approach, this study analyzes various dimensions of this phenomenon, including the role of storytelling, community building, and cultural expression in digital spaces. Moreover, the research explores how these digital platforms can empower Indigenous communities to reclaim, revitalize, and reconstruct their identities and notions of community. Ultimately, by examining the impact of digital spaces on Indigenous identity, this research provides valuable insights into contemporary practices of identity revitalization and proposes strategies to support Indigenous futures in a rapidly evolving digital landscape.

This research used the Medicine Wheel, adapted from the research of Dr. Kathleen E. Absolon, Anishinaabekwe from Flying Post First Nation, in her article *Indigenous Wholistic Theory: A Knowledge Set for Practice*, as a framework to explore the dynamic interplay between Indigenous identity and the digital age. It highlights how each quadrant—East (birth and rejuvenation), South (relationships and advocacy), West (challenges and resilience), and North (wisdom and healing)—provides unique insights into the cultural preservation, self-discovery, community engagement, and integration of traditional knowledge with modern technology. Indigenous communities leverage digital platforms to rejuvenate cultural practices, foster relationships, advocate for social justice, and empower their voices while navigating the complexities of online spaces and ensuring cultural authenticity.

The findings emphasize the transformative potential of social media in preserving and revitalizing Indigenous cultures, advocating for critical issues, and empowering different generations. Ethical engagement in digital spaces is crucial, as well as promoting

cultural respect and addressing historical injustices. The research underscores the importance of balancing traditional values with modern technology to foster resilience, empowerment, and holistic well-being within Indigenous communities.

Keywords: Indigenous Identities, Colonialism, Digital Spaces, Identity Resurgence, Self-Determination, Online Communities, Social Media.

DEDICATION

Long before the seeds of this academic journey were sown, I had the privilege of learning and growing from my beloved and cherished friend, Yontennonha, known to many as Heather Green. Heather was on the cusp of embarking on her PhD journey, brimming with promise and potential, before her sudden and heartbreaking passing on December 31, 2022.

In respect and remembrance, I dedicate this dissertation to Heather.

Though she is no longer physically present to witness the culmination of this scholarly endeavour, her resilient spirit permeates every facet of its creation, much like a sacred strand intricately woven within a braid of sweetgrass. Heather's absence is deeply felt, yet her enduring influence remains palpable, guiding me through the complexities of academia with unfaltering grace and grit. Her wisdom, kindness, and continuous support inspire me, serving as a beacon of light during moments of doubt and uncertainty.

In honouring Heather's memory, I strive to emulate her passion for Indigenous knowledge and her boundless generosity of spirit. May this dissertation stand as a testament to her enduring legacy, a tribute to a life lived with purpose, compassion, and dedication to the pursuit of truth.

Yontennonha, Niawen'kó:wa (Mohawk; Thank you very much), for being an integral part of my life's journey. Without reservation, I hold in my heart the deep impact you have had on my path. Your invaluable teachings will remain guiding stars, illuminating my way forward. Your bright smile, which brought warmth and joy to all who knew you, will continue to shine brilliantly in my heart, a constant reminder of your enduring presence.

AN OFFERING OF GRATITUDE: ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A pursuit such as this cannot be done alone, and I am so grateful to the community that surrounds me. As I reflect on this journey of exploration and discovery, I am acutely aware of the collective effort and support that have paved the way for my endeavours. With deep appreciation and humility, I acknowledge the invaluable contributions of those who have walked alongside me, offering guidance, encouragement, and unwavering belief in my potential.

I want first to acknowledge the **ancestors**. I am thankful for those who have come before me and watched over me, guiding me with their wisdom and strength throughout my academic journey. Their enduring presence has been a source of inspiration and resilience, empowering me to navigate and overcome the many challenges accompanying the pursuit of knowledge. In moments of doubt and adversity, I have felt their comforting embrace, reminding me of the rich legacy of perseverance and determination that flows through my veins. By remembering them, I have found the courage to push through obstacles, embrace failure as a stepping stone to growth, and celebrate each triumph as a testament to their support. Their legacy lives on in every milestone I achieve, and I carry their spirit with me as I continue to pursue excellence in academia and beyond.

I express my gratitude to the esteemed **academic community** members at Trent University, whose support and inspiration have propelled me to pursue Indigenous knowledge. Throughout this transformative journey, I have been fortunate to be surrounded by an exceptional community of faculty, staff, and fellow students, all of whom have played pivotal roles in shaping my academic and personal growth. It is with immense appreciation that I acknowledge their contributions.

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expertise, guidance, and willingness to engage with my endless inquiries have significantly enriched my educational experience, broadened my intellectual horizons, and enhanced the quality of my work. Their coherent answers to my many questions have inspired me, and I am deeply grateful for their mentorship.

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I am grateful to the **community members** involved in this research for their trust in me, and their unwavering support has been instrumental throughout this journey. Through our interactions, I have been continually reminded of the transformative power of storytelling. Each narrative shared has served as a beacon of wisdom, illuminating paths of understanding and empathy. Your stories have reinforced the belief that our narratives reflect our past and guide our future. They can shape our identities, provide solace in times of adversity, and foster healing in times of hardship.

To my dearest mother, **Alice**, with deepest reverence and love, I express my appreciation for all you have done and continue to do. Reflecting on the milestones of my academic journey, I am grateful for the foundation you laid, the sacrifices you made, and the unwavering love you bestowed upon me. Your support has been the bedrock upon which my successes have been built, and your presence remains a constant source of inspiration and strength.

I am deeply grateful for my twin sibling, **Shawn**, who embarked on their PhD journey while I was still pursuing mine. Despite our shared experiences and adventures, I am inspired by the unique path you have carved and your resilience, even in the face of adversity. Your journey fills me with immense pride, and I am endlessly thankful to have

you as my twin. The possibilities for your future accomplishments are boundless, and I feel privileged to accompany you on this part of my life's journey.

To my beloved **Arvin**, as I reflect on my PhD journey, I cannot help but think of how it all began when our paths crossed in the Fall of 2019. The events of that time unfolded in ways that forever changed my life trajectory, and I am grateful for that. Your inexorable support has been my anchor, guiding me through both the challenges and triumphs. As this chapter ends, I am overjoyed to celebrate the completion of my PhD and start the next chapter, finally calling you my husband. The love and encouragement you have given me during these years has been immeasurable, and I am filled with excitement for the adventures that lie ahead for us as a married couple. Thank you for standing by my side, believing in me when I doubted myself, and being my rock. I cherish you more than words can express and look forward to creating countless beautiful memories together in the journey ahead.

Lastly, for those yet to come, **the next generation,** keep the flame of curiosity burning bright and the spirit of inquiry alive. Embrace the diversity of perspectives, challenge the status quo, and dare to envision a future where equity and justice prevail. In your pursuit of knowledge, remain steadfast in your commitment to dismantling systemic barriers and uplifting marginalized voices. Let compassion be your compass, empathy your guiding light, and integrity your foundation. Remember that the learning journey is as much about humility and resilience as triumphs and discoveries. Forge meaningful connections, cultivate empathy, and strive to impact the world positively. As you embark on your life's journey, know that you carry the torch of progress forward, igniting hope and inspiration for future generations.

Wela'lin -- Chi-miigwech -- Niawen'kó:wa -- Merci -- Thank you
Msit No'kmaq (All My Relations)

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

The following is a list of terms used in this dissertation that can provide a preliminary idea of the topics discussed. The dissertation interprets and explains all the terms used at length.

Community Building: Community building signifies the intricate process of creating and nurturing connections within a community. It goes beyond mere social interaction and encompasses activities that strengthen cultural ties, such as traditional practices, language revitalization, and social gatherings. Community building fosters a sense of belonging, support, and interdependence among its members.

Colonialism: Colonialism occurs when one nation conquers and exploits the inhabitants of another nation and then proceeds to force its beliefs, culture, language, and overall way of life on those people. Settler colonialism happens when the native people of an area are permanently displaced by colonists, who then create a permanent settlement or society, erasing the culture and way of life of its native inhabitants.

Thematic Analysis: is a versatile and widely used method that involves identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data. Its primary aim is to distill broad areas of interest into concise, analyzable themes that reveal significant aspects of the data. The process typically involves six phases: familiarizing oneself with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report.

Cultural Appropriation: Cultural Appropriation is a complex sociocultural phenomenon that occurs when individuals or groups from a dominant culture borrow, imitate, or incorporate elements of a culture that belong to a marginalized or historically oppressed group, often without appropriate permission, understanding or respect. These borrowed elements include clothing, symbols, language, religious practices, art, and more.

Cultural Expression: Cultural Expression is the vibrant and creative manifestation of cultural values, traditions, and practices through various communication and artistic mediums. It encompasses multiple mediums, including visual arts, music, dance, storytelling, language, rituals, and ceremonies. Cultural Expression is a dynamic reflection of a culture's unique identity, history, and belief systems. It is not limited to historical traditions but includes contemporary reinterpretations and adaptations that allow cultural practices to evolve while preserving their essential cultural essence.

Cultural Sensitivity: Cultural sensitivity is an integral component of Indigenous research. It signifies the researcher's recognition and deep respect for the cultural context, traditions,

values, and historical experiences of the Indigenous community being studied. Being culturally sensitive is essential for conducting research in an ethical and non-intrusive manner.

Cultural Revitalization: A multifaceted and transformative process to rejuvenate and preserve the rich tapestry of traditional cultural practices and knowledge passed down through generations within Indigenous communities. It signifies a profound and often deliberate effort to restore and celebrate the diverse elements that constitute the cultural identity of Indigenous Peoples.

Decolonization: Decolonization is a multifaceted process aimed at reversing the effects of colonialism on Indigenous Peoples. It involves regaining autonomy, revitalizing cultural practices, and addressing the historical injustices colonial powers impose. Decolonization is central to empowering Indigenous communities and reclaiming their identities.

Digital Expression: Digital Expression is the utilization of various digital platforms and technologies to convey and communicate thoughts, ideas, and elements of culture. This includes creating and sharing digital content, such as text, images, videos, audio, and interactive media, to express individual or collective messages. In the modern digital age, individuals and communities have unprecedented opportunities to express themselves, share their perspectives, and showcase their cultural heritage to a global audience.

Digital Indigenous Communities: These are Indigenous communities that have embraced digital platforms, such as social media, to connect, share knowledge, and engage with their culture and identity. Digital spaces have become essential for maintaining cultural continuity, especially for Indigenous Peoples living in urban settings far from their traditional homelands.

Features (TikTok): TikTok features empower users with tools for dynamic content creation. This includes filters/effects, duets for collaborative videos, challenges to drive participation, a diverse sound library, live streaming for real-time engagement, and the For You Page (FYP) for personalized content discovery. These features enhance user creativity, interaction, and community engagement on the platform.

Identity Exploration: Identity exploration in the context of Indigenous research refers to the process through which individuals, particularly Indigenous Peoples, use various means, including digital spaces, to delve into the complexities of their identities. It involves questioning, understanding and ultimately embracing one's multifaceted identity, which often includes their Indigenous heritage.

Indigenous Identity: Indigenous identity is the complex, multifaceted, and dynamic sense of self individuals in Indigenous communities hold. It encompasses their connection to their Indigenous heritage, culture, language, and traditions. Indigenous identity is rooted in an individual's relationship with their community and ancestral lineage.

Indigenous Journey: The Indigenous journey, particularly in Anishinaabe teachings, is a holistic and culturally rooted understanding of life stages and personal growth. The Anishinaabe recognize seven stages individuals progress through, marking physical, spiritual, and cultural transitions.

Indigenous Peoples: Indigenous Peoples, also known as First Nations, Aboriginal Peoples, or Native Peoples, are the original inhabitants of a particular region or land. They have distinct cultural, historical, and often linguistic characteristics. Indigenous Peoples are diverse and can be found on every continent, each with unique cultural practices and traditions.

Indigenous Resurgence: Resurgence refers to the revitalization and revitalizing of Indigenous cultures, traditions, and identities. It responds to colonialism and cultural suppression, focusing on reclaiming cultural heritage and traditions.

Interrelationship: The concept of interrelationship underscores the interconnectedness of all aspects of Indigenous life. It emphasizes the relationships between individuals, communities, and the natural world, which is a foundational element of Indigenous worldviews.

Medicine Wheel: The Medicine Wheel is a sacred and symbolic Indigenous construct representing the interconnectedness of all living beings and life cycles. It consists of four quadrants, each associated with different aspects of existence, such as the physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual realms. The Medicine Wheel is used for spiritual guidance, healing, and understanding life balance.

Metrics (TikTok): TikTok metrics quantify content performance, including views, likes, comments, shares, follower growth, and engagement rate. These data points gauge audience interaction and reach, offering insights into content effectiveness and audience engagement.

Netnography: Netnography is a research method that involves the study of online communities, often in digital spaces like social media platforms. It is particularly relevant for understanding how Indigenous communities engage in the digital world, fostering connections and cultural continuity.

Offline Community: An offline community refers to individuals who come together in physical spaces, such as neighbourhoods, towns, schools, or workplaces, to interact, collaborate, and share experiences face-to-face. Unlike online communities, which primarily exist in virtual spaces facilitated by the internet, offline communities thrive through in-person interactions. These communities often develop strong social bonds, support networks, and shared identities based on common interests, values, or geographic proximity. Examples of offline communities include local clubs, religious congregations, sports teams, volunteer organizations, and cultural associations.

Online Community: An online community on social media is a group of individuals who connect and interact through platforms like Facebook, Twitter, or Reddit. They share common interests, discuss, offer support, and build relationships in a digital environment.

Online Identity: Online Identity refers to the representation of oneself in the digital sphere, encompassing personal information, online behaviours, and the persona one projects on digital platforms. It includes personal data, such as name, age, location, and other self-disclosed information, and how individuals engage with others and present themselves in online communities.

Oral History: Oral history preserves historical and cultural knowledge through spoken narratives and storytelling. Indigenous communities use oral history to pass down traditions, histories, and cultural teachings, ensuring the continuity of their heritage.

Reciprocity: Reciprocity is the principle of mutual exchange, where individuals or groups give and receive goods, services, or favours with the expectation of mutual benefit. It fosters cooperation, trust, and social bonds among participants in the exchange.

Rural Indigenous Identities: Rural Indigenous identities refer to the collective sense of self, cultural heritage, and belonging among Indigenous peoples who primarily reside in rural or remote areas. These identities are rooted in ancestral traditions, language, connection to land, and community relationships, shaping the unique cultural identity of rural Indigenous communities.

Self-Determination: Self-determination is the right of Indigenous Peoples to make decisions about their future. This includes choices regarding cultural practices, governance, and the preservation of their cultural identities.

Settler colonialism: a distinct form of colonialism that involves the replacement of indigenous populations with an invasive settler society that, over time, develops a distinctive identity and sovereignty. This process typically includes the systematic

displacement and elimination of indigenous peoples through various means, such as violence, policies of assimilation, and other forms of structural domination.

Urban Indigenous Identities: Urban Indigenous identities pertain to the complex and multifaceted identities of Indigenous Peoples living in urban settings. Both traditional cultural influences and contemporary urban experiences shape these identities.

EAST DIRECTION: WHOLENESS – FROM THE BEGINNING AND VISION

Chapter 1: Framing the Research Inquiry - An Exploration of Wholeness and Vision

The East Direction graciously invites the reader to embark upon this academic expedition, effectively setting the stage for the unfolding journey of exploration and revelation poised to transpire throughout the forthcoming chapters. In the context of this study, the "East Direction" conveys a symbolism associated with wholeness, an unwavering focus on origins, and the innate potency of vision. It serves as a conduit to apprehend the foundational elements of the research expedition, thereby facilitating the exploration of nascent beginnings and the crystalline clarity of purpose and vision. Furthermore, Chapter 1, nested within the symbolic realm of the East Direction, is a testament to the researcher's establishment and visionary impetus for the research endeavour. It underscores the integration of wholeness and purpose from the study's inception while acknowledging my journey and connection to the subject of inquiry. The East Direction graciously invites the reader to embark upon this academic expedition, effectively setting the stage for the unfolding journey of exploration and revelation poised to transpire throughout the forthcoming chapters.

1.1 Greetings and Welcome: An Overview of the Research

In the contemporary digital landscape, Indigenous Peoples worldwide are harnessing the transformative power of technology to assert their identities, preserve their cultures, and advocate for their rights. This dissertation explores the intricate dynamics of Indigenous communities in the digital age, aiming to unravel the multifaceted roles of digital platforms in empowering Indigenous voices to promote, preserve, and advance Indigenous rights and

representation. Through a multidimensional approach that integrates research studies, data analyses, qualitative insights, and community perspectives, this dissertation seeks to illuminate the impact of digital spaces on Indigenous identity, community building, and activism.

At the heart of this research lies a deep appreciation for the diverse ways Indigenous Peoples engage with digital platforms. From the vibrant expressions of Indigenous art and cultural practices showcased on platforms like TikTok under hashtags such as #IndigenousArt, to the poignant discussions and advocacy efforts surrounding Indigenous Peoples' Day under hashtags like #IndigenousPeoplesDay, digital spaces serve as dynamic arenas where Indigenous voices resonate, narratives are reshaped, and solidarity is fostered. By examining engagement metrics, comment threads, and qualitative feedback, this dissertation delves into the nuances of online community dynamics, exploring how Indigenous individuals navigate the complexities of identity, belonging, and activism in virtual environments.

Throughout this work, various themes emerge, reflecting the richness and complexity of Indigenous engagement with technology. Cultural preservation communities emerge as digital bastions of language revitalization, traditional knowledge transmission, and cultural continuity, where Indigenous languages thrive, and ancestral teachings are passed down to future generations. Advocacy and activism communities stand at the forefront of digital movements, leveraging social media platforms to raise awareness about issues such as land rights, environmental conservation, and representation in mainstream media. These communities catalyze change, mobilizing support and amplifying Indigenous voices on global platforms. However, alongside the promises of empowerment and cultural

revitalization, Indigenous Peoples also confront unique tensions and challenges in the digital realm. Ethical considerations surrounding data sovereignty, cultural appropriation, and representation in digital spaces pose complex dilemmas that require careful navigation. The dissertation critically examines these challenges, interrogating the power dynamics inherent in digital platforms and advocating for Indigenous-led approaches to technology development and governance. By centring Indigenous perspectives and prioritizing community-driven solutions, the research aims to create more inclusive and respectful digital landscapes.

Lastly, this dissertation underscores the transformative potential of digital platforms in empowering Indigenous identity, promoting cultural preservation, and advancing Indigenous rights and representation. By recognizing the complexities and nuances of Indigenous engagement with technology, we can work towards a future characterized by respect, empowerment, and healing within the digital landscape. Through collaborative research, community partnerships, and ethical practices, Indigenous Peoples continue to assert their voices, celebrate their cultures, and navigate the complexities of modernity while staying rooted in tradition.

1.2 Positioning the Researcher: A Journey of Self-Discovery

As a Mi'kmaw rooted in Newfoundland, my heritage bears the scars of colonial pressures aimed at assimilation and discrimination. Joseph Smallwood's denial of the Mi'kmaq existence upon Newfoundland's entry into Confederation in 1949 highlights Newfoundlanders' intricate web of identity complexities. Despite these formidable challenges, my journey was pivotal in the late 1990s when I became a founding member of

the Ktaqamkuk Mi’kmaq Alliance of Newfoundland. This organization later merged into the Federation of Newfoundland Indians (FNI), eventually evolving into the Qalipu First Nation. Even though I relocated to Toronto in 2006, my ties to the Mi'kmaq community remain steadfast.

Residing in Toronto has not negatively impacted my commitment to upholding and cherishing my cultural heritage. As a member of the Qalipu First Nation on Newfoundland's southwestern coast, I actively preserve my identity despite the geographical distance. In today's climate, articulating our ancestral ties is paramount, especially amidst rising scrutiny and accusations of Indigenous identity fraud. Moreover, I acknowledge the contentious history surrounding the formation of the Qalipu First Nation. However, it is crucial to recognize that this does not erase the legitimacy of the Mi'kmaq presence on the island of Newfoundland. Many individuals embrace traditional teachings, while others are fervently reconnecting with their heritage and healing from a history of tragedy and injustice.

My research of Indigenous identity springs from a deeply personal place and navigating questions within the context of colonial history and cultural heritage ignited my curiosity. My experiences grappling with questions of belonging and authenticity have fueled a commitment to amplifying marginalized voices and challenging dominant narratives. Through this research, I aim to illuminate how individuals and communities construct, negotiate, and express their identities in the digital environment of the 21st century. I aim to contribute to the ongoing pursuit of equity, inclusion, and social change by fostering greater understanding, empathy, and solidarity among diverse communities.

Beyond the personal, throughout my professional career, I have had the privilege of holding various leadership roles and engaging in impactful social work and community service endeavours. Over the years, I have advocated for populations experiencing marginalization and fostered inclusive environments.

My journey began with a significant five-year tenure as a Director on the Board of Directors with Native Men's Residence (Na-Me-Res). In this role, I played a pivotal part in shaping policies and initiatives to address the unique needs of Indigenous men facing housing challenges. My time at Na-Me-Res allowed me to hone my leadership skills and deepen my understanding of the cultural intricacies within Indigenous communities. Moreover, as president of the Indigenous Friends Association's Board of Directors, I further solidified my dedication to advancing Indigenous rights and building meaningful connections within the community. Through strategic vision and collaborative efforts, I drove initiatives that promoted cultural preservation and empowerment.

In parallel, I embarked on an academic venture as an Assistant Professor within the School of Social Work at Toronto Metropolitan University in the fall of 2019. Integrating my practical experiences with theoretical frameworks, I enriched the academic landscape with real-world insights and perspectives dedicated to cultivating the next generation of social workers. Subsequently, I took on the role of Academic Coordinator for the Indigenous Knowledges and Experiences Certificate at The G. Raymond Chang School of Continuing Education at Toronto Metropolitan University. Here, I leveraged my expertise to design and implement educational programs rooted in Indigenous perspectives, fostering cross-cultural understanding within academic spheres.

My professional practice has centred on educational and community-based settings, where I have consistently championed the rights of Indigenous communities and populations experiencing marginalization. My extensive background in building meaningful relationships with service groups and organizations underscores my ability to create tangible outcomes in areas such as Deaf culture, homelessness, mental health and addictions, child welfare, and Indigenous communities.

In essence, I embody the ethos of social work, demonstrating unwavering dedication, empathy, and a commitment to social justice. My multifaceted experiences and collaborative approach have left an indelible mark on the communities I have served, underscoring my enduring legacy as a catalyst for positive change.

1.3 Introduction and Rationale of Research

The findings of this research reaffirm the rationale that the contemporary landscape and digital realms, predominantly represented by social media platforms, present Indigenous Peoples with complex challenges and opportunities to preserve and evolve their cultural identities. These challenges and opportunities encompass a spectrum of facets, ranging from representation and visibility to privacy and access to traditional resources.

For Indigenous Peoples, navigating the digital sphere involves grappling with the intricate balance of representing and safeguarding their identities and cultures. Digital environments often perpetuate stereotypes and misconceptions, limiting Indigenous Peoples' agency over their narratives. Furthermore, issues of visibility and underrepresentation persist, potentially resulting in experiences of discrimination and harassment. Conversely, digital platforms offer avenues for connectivity, bridging

geographical divides and facilitating relationship-building. These spaces also hold the potential for language revitalization, advocacy for Indigenous rights, and self-representation, amplifying Indigenous voices and fostering community ties while preserving and promoting Indigenous cultures.

Acknowledging Indigenous Peoples' agency in navigating digital spaces while upholding their right to self-determination and autonomy is paramount. The utilization of digital technology should be guided by principles of consent, privacy, and security, recognizing that it cannot supplant face-to-face interactions, traditional practices, or physical connections to ancestral lands.

As a researcher conducting research with Indigenous Peoples, I felt compelled to situate this research differently than traditional Western research. In this research study, I aimed to focus on the nature of positive or optimistic components of online engagement rather than centring on the experiences of racism, discrimination, and trauma. This was an intentional choice grounded in the desire to shift the narrative often seen in research concerning Indigenous Peoples. Frequently, studies focus on the adversities faced by Indigenous communities, which, while important, can overshadow the resilience, strength, and innovation that these communities also demonstrate. By highlighting positive experiences of engagement, resistance, and activism among Indigenous Peoples in online spaces, this research aims to provide a more balanced and empowering representation.

This focus is significant as it helps to amplify stories of success and empowerment, which can serve as powerful tools for community building and advocacy. Positive representations can inspire other Indigenous individuals and communities, fostering a sense of pride and possibility. Moreover, they can contribute to a more nuanced understanding

among non-Indigenous audiences, challenging stereotypes and promoting a more significant appreciation for Indigenous cultures' diverse and dynamic nature.

Despite the strong emphasis on positive experiences, the research did not overlook the negative aspects. Issues like online safety and protecting sacred knowledge in digital spaces were also addressed. These concerns are crucial for understanding the full spectrum of Indigenous Peoples' interactions with social media, ensuring an examination of both the benefits and the challenges they face in digital environments. By addressing these negative aspects alongside the positive, the research provides a holistic view that acknowledges the complexities of online engagement for Indigenous communities.

Moreover, this research utilized mixed-method methodologies, including Indigenous research, Third Space Theory, Zoom interviews, online questionnaires, and digital research, conducted over six months. The aim was to attract participants who exhibit diverse modes of interaction with social media, probing into their experiences, perspectives, and the potential harms encountered within personal and communal contexts. By integrating qualitative and quantitative methods, this mixed-methods approach provided an understanding of the research questions.

To emphasize Indigenous communities' perspectives and experiences while maintaining cultural grounding, I employed Indigenous Research Methodology. This approach included several key elements. Storytelling and relationality played a crucial role, as traditional storytelling was used for data collection, focusing on building and nurturing relationships between researchers and Indigenous communities. Additionally, the research aimed to decolonize practices by challenging the colonial dynamic of the researcher as an "outsider" and adhering to traditional Indigenous protocols, ceremonies, and practices. A

holistic perspective was maintained by considering the interconnectedness of spiritual, emotional, physical, and intellectual dimensions, offering a comprehensive understanding of Indigenous experiences. Reflective practice was also essential, involving continuous self-reflection and reflexivity to examine positionality, biases, and impacts on the research process.

Secondly, the Third Space Theory, developed by Homi K. Bhabha, was integral to this research. This theory explores the complexities of cultural identity and cultural hybridity, helping to understand the space where participants navigate in-person and online identities, thereby transcending binary cultural oppositions.

Finally, Netnography, a qualitative research method focused on examining online communities' behaviours and interactions, was employed, particularly concerning Indigenous Peoples. I immersed myself in these communities by following chosen hashtags and observing and understanding social interactions and behaviours in digital spaces. This aspect of the research included analyzing videos on TikTok, which will be further discussed in the Findings section.

1.3.1 Exploring Community Building for Indigenous Peoples in Digital Environments

Within the digital landscape, the notion of "community" takes on a multifaceted form for urban and rural Indigenous Peoples, with each facet playing a vital role in nurturing and sustaining connections. Platforms such as social media serve as crucial channels through which Indigenous Peoples, irrespective of their geographic location or urban/rural setting, can forge bonds, exchange cultural insights, and nurture relationships.

Virtual communities, whether on social media or dedicated online platforms, provide safe havens for Indigenous Peoples to partake in supportive networks. These networks offer valuable resources and opportunities for connection, fostering cultural preservation efforts. Dr. Shawn Wilson, an Indigenous scholar renowned for his work on Indigenous research methodologies, highlights the significance of Indigenous-led initiatives in digital spaces (Wilson, 2008).

Digital realms serve as powerful catalysts for revitalizing Indigenous languages and cultures. Online resources such as dictionaries, language learning applications, and cultural teachings are pivotal in preserving and propagating Indigenous languages. Scholars like Dr. Jeffrey Ansloos, an Indigenous scholar and author known for her work on Indigenous resurgence, emphasize the transformative potential of digital spaces in cultural revitalization efforts (Ansloos et al., 2022). Moreover, digital platforms provide platforms for Indigenous Peoples to advocate for their rights, disseminate cultural knowledge, and raise awareness on a global scale. Indigenous communities can document and preserve traditional practices, ceremonies, and narratives through these platforms, fostering inter-community dialogue and international outreach. Dr. Chelsea Vowel, an Indigenous scholar and educator focusing on Indigenous law and governance, underscores the importance of digital advocacy in advancing Indigenous rights (Vowel, 2016). Additionally, digital environments facilitate collaboration and partnerships among Indigenous Peoples, organizations, and individuals to address shared concerns and challenges. These collaborations are rooted in respect, mutual understanding, and collaboration, forming the foundation of initiatives to preserve, promote, and safeguard Indigenous cultures, identities, and rights.

In essence, acknowledging the diversity and complexities within Indigenous communities and empowering Indigenous Peoples to define community building, relationships, and recognition within digital spaces is paramount. Through respectful engagement, mutual understanding, and collaborative efforts, Indigenous communities can harness the potential of digital environments to foster cultural resilience and advance Indigenous rights.

1.3.2 Online Communities Vs Indigenous Online Communities: A Cultural Perspective

Introduction: Online communities have become integral to modern society, offering platforms for diverse groups to connect, share, and collaborate. However, Indigenous online communities have unique cultural, social, and historical significance within the broader landscape of online communities. This exploration delves into the distinctions between settler and Indigenous online communities, drawing insights from Indigenous scholars to illuminate the cultural nuances and implications.

Conceptualizing Online Communities: Mainstream online communities encompass various platforms, ranging from social media networks to forums and online gaming communities. These spaces transcend geographical boundaries, enabling individuals with shared interests, identities, or goals to converge virtually. Howard Rheingold, a pioneering scholar in virtual communities, highlights the significance of shared purpose and collective intelligence in these digital spaces (Rheingold, 1993).

Indigenous Online Communities: In contrast, Indigenous online communities emerge from the intersection of Indigenous cultures, technologies, and digital spaces. Dr. Jennifer Guiliano emphasizes recognizing Indigenous peoples' agency in shaping their

digital presence and reclaiming narratives in online environments (Guiliano, 2018). These communities serve as platforms for cultural revitalization, knowledge transmission, and community building, reflecting Indigenous values, languages, and worldviews.

Cultural Dynamics and Communication Patterns: Indigenous online communities exhibit distinct communication patterns rooted in oral traditions, storytelling, and kinship networks. Dr. Sarah Maddison underscores the significance of orality and relationality in Indigenous communication practices, shaping how knowledge is shared, and relationships are forged within digital spaces (Maddison, 2017). Moreover, Indigenous online communities prioritize collective well-being and consensus-building over individualistic pursuits, fostering a sense of communal responsibility and reciprocity.

Challenges and Opportunities: Despite their cultural richness and resilience, Indigenous online communities face various challenges, including digital inequities, cultural appropriation, and algorithmic biases. McMahon warns against these corporate social media sites as he quotes Morozov (2011), who identifies that: "third-party social media platforms are also used for state surveillance as well as activism" (Dean, 2009: Fuchs, 2011). For these reasons, McMahon focused on examples of social media platforms that Indigenous Peoples have shaped into community-based engagement platforms. The Idle No More movement indeed demonstrated the propensity of Indigenous communities for popular social media sites. Still, it also demonstrated the ability of state surveillance to co-opt and infiltrate opportunities for Indigenous social activism. Ownership applies not only to the broadband infrastructure that connects us but also to the ownership, design, creation, and maintenance of online Indigenous projects, whether digital bundles, language websites, education portals, or social hubs. Indigenous communities must take control to

own, operate and disseminate in ways that suit our own interests, needs and cultural principles. Moreover, collaborative efforts between Indigenous communities, scholars, and policymakers are essential to address these challenges and amplify Indigenous voices in online spaces.

Towards Cultural Equity and Empowerment: Efforts to bridge the gap between settler and Indigenous online communities require a nuanced understanding of cultural diversity, power dynamics, and ethical considerations. Dr. Tahu Kukutai advocates decolonizing methodologies and data sovereignty frameworks to center Indigenous knowledge systems and ensure respectful engagement in digital research (Kukutai, 2019). Online spaces can become inclusive and empowering environments for Indigenous peoples worldwide by fostering intercultural dialogue, reciprocity, and solidarity.

The juxtaposition of settler and Indigenous online communities underscores the importance of cultural context and Indigenous perspectives in shaping digital landscapes. By acknowledging Indigenous sovereignty, amplifying Indigenous voices, and promoting cultural equity, we can cultivate online spaces that honour diverse ways of knowing, being, and belonging in the digital age.

1.3.3 Digital Spaces' Impact on the "Real World" for Indigenous Peoples

The influence of digital spaces extends beyond the virtual realm, permeating various dimensions with tangible implications for Indigenous identities and community dynamics. Digital platforms allow Indigenous Peoples to share their narratives and perspectives, amplifying their voices in public discourse and contributing to greater visibility and recognition of Indigenous identities and cultures. Moreover, these spaces facilitate

connections among Indigenous Peoples irrespective of geographical constraints, fostering the establishment and sustenance of communities. Additionally, digital platforms can be a tool for documenting and preserving Indigenous cultures, languages, and traditions, supporting language and cultural revitalization efforts. They also serve as potent tools for raising awareness, advocating for Indigenous rights and issues, and mobilizing support for Indigenous causes.

Education represents another arena wherein digital spaces play a transformative role, offering Indigenous Peoples access to resources that contribute to preserving and propagating their cultures, languages, and traditions. Furthermore, digital environments can stimulate economic development and self-sufficiency for Indigenous Peoples through online marketplaces for Indigenous-made products. Recognizing the nuanced influence of digital spaces on the tangible world underscores the importance of ensuring that consent, privacy, and security principles govern digital technology. Moreover, the adaptability and resilience of Indigenous cultures remain formidable as Indigenous Peoples harness digital technology to enrich their heritage and assert their narratives.

1.4 Research Questions

This research aims to undertake a faceted exploration centred on understanding the intricate interplay between digital environments and the identities of Indigenous Peoples. This exploration encompasses two primary research questions, each delving into a distinct aspect of this complex relationship. This research is grounded using the following research questions:

1. What are the tensions, challenges, and promises of digital environments (e.g., social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok) for the individual and community production and maintenance of Indigenous Peoples' identities?
    - *This question was generally explored through interviews and the questionnaire.*
2. How is "community" developed and maintained in digital environments for Indigenous Peoples?
    - *This question was generally explored through digital research and netnography.*

The first research question fundamentally seeks to unravel the tensions and challenges arising from the pervasive presence of digital platforms, particularly popular social media channels like Instagram and TikTok, in the lives of Indigenous individuals and communities. This inquiry is driven by the recognition that the digital landscape introduces multifaceted dynamics, influencing the formation and maintenance of identities among Indigenous Peoples. It seeks to unveil the nature of these digital environments and their impact on Indigenous communities' identity formation and preservation process.

The second research question explores the mechanisms and dynamics involved in creating and sustaining digital communities, explicitly focusing on Indigenous Peoples. It aims to unearth the diverse strategies and approaches employed to establish and nurture these virtual networks. Doing so provides valuable insights into how Indigenous Peoples navigate the digital landscape to connect, support, and preserve their cultural identities.

These two research questions represent a holistic exploration of the intricate relationship between digital environments and Indigenous identities. They offer a deep understanding of the challenges and opportunities presented by the digital age for Indigenous Peoples, enriching our knowledge of how these communities adapt, evolve, and thrive in the ever-changing digital landscape.

1.5 Research Aims and Objectives

This research aims to achieve several overarching aims and objectives, each of which contributes significantly to our understanding of the intricate interplay between digital environments and the identities of Indigenous Peoples. This research aims to:

1. Analyze the complexities of Indigenous identity formation.
2. Explore how digital spaces influence the "real world" concerning identities and community building.
3. Explore the possibilities for identity resurgence, revitalization, and healing in digital environments.

The ***first*** aim of this research is to explore the process of forming Indigenous identities. This analysis seeks to unearth the myriad factors and influences that play a pivotal role in shaping Indigenous identities, considering the unique impact of digital environments on this multifaceted process. The ***second*** aim centers on exploring the dynamic influence of digital spaces on the tangible "real world," particularly in the context of identities and community building. This objective involves dissecting the interplay between digital environments and the broader community and individual identities of Indigenous Peoples. The research's ***third*** and final aim is to scrutinize the potential inherent in digital environments for identity resurgence and revitalization among Indigenous Peoples. This objective delves into digital spaces' opportunities for Indigenous individuals and communities to reinvigorate and preserve their unique identities, cultures, and traditions.

Through these aims and objectives, the research contributes to a deeper understanding of the complex relationship between Indigenous Peoples and the digital landscape. Its implications extend beyond the boundaries of the virtual realm, offering

insights that can impact the tangible world, inform policies, and support the empowerment of Indigenous communities.

1.6 Holistically Positioning the Research

In my research journey, I deliberately focused on the Anishinaabe perspectives of the medicine wheel rather than of the Mi'kmaq. This decision reflects my connection to the people and healing practices rooted in Toronto, where my *active* journey of understanding the fabric of my being and healing began in 2006. Despite my Mi'kmaq roots in Newfoundland, my growth and expansion have been nurtured within Toronto's urban landscape.

As an Indigenous researcher focusing on Indigenous communities, I must also locate myself and acknowledge the origins of my knowledge and teachings. My journey within Toronto's urban center has fostered a deep appreciation for relationships that transcend mere convenience, permeating every aspect of my research process. Throughout my academic and community endeavours, I have cultivated meaningful connections with Elders and Knowledge Holders such as Doug Williams, Shirley Ida Williams, and Edna Manitowabi, whose guidance has been invaluable. Additionally, individuals like Helena Newvo have generously shared their expertise in rawhide, beading, and quillwork, supporting me greatly during my Ph.D. journey.

Within Toronto's Indigenous family and community, including my involvement in language revitalization programs and serving on the board of directors, I have invested over 18 years in nurturing these relationships, recognizing that this work is continuous and ongoing. Collaboration with colleagues like Heather Green, a Mohawk educator, within the

academic sphere, has further enriched my understanding and practice, whether through co-teaching or team projects. Ultimately, my choice to embrace the Anishinaabe medicine wheel in my research is a testament to the depth of my connections and the ongoing journey of understanding and growth within my personal and academic spheres.

The medicine wheel in my research was adapted from my understanding of Dr. Kathleen Absolon's use of the medicine wheel in her work, "Indigenous Wholistic Theory: A Knowledge Set for Practice." This article highlights the need to articulate Indigenous wholistic theory and uses a holistic framework of the four-directional circle. The discussion begins in the East, focusing on Spirit and vision. Moving to the South, it addresses relationships, community, and heart. The West discusses the Spirit of the ancestors and the importance of Indigenous knowledge and its production. The North explores ideas surrounding healing and the movements and actions that guide practice. The article concludes by examining the Centre fire, where all elements interconnect and intersect. Ultimately, the article asserts the necessity of Indigenous wholistic theory as a vital knowledge set for practice. Beyond the literature, Absolon has been a mentor and community leader, positively impacting my academic work and personal journey as an Indigenous person. The chapters and data analysis are framed using the Medicine Wheel framework, symbolizing a deep integration of Indigenous perspectives, philosophies, and methodologies as part of the research journey.

Overview of Chapters Framing:

East Direction: Symbolizing wholeness and the potency of vision, the East Direction sets the foundational elements of the research expedition. Chapters 1 and 2, aligned with this direction, signify the establishment and visionary impetus for the research endeavour. It invites readers to embark on the academic expedition, laying the groundwork for exploration and revelation throughout the subsequent chapters.

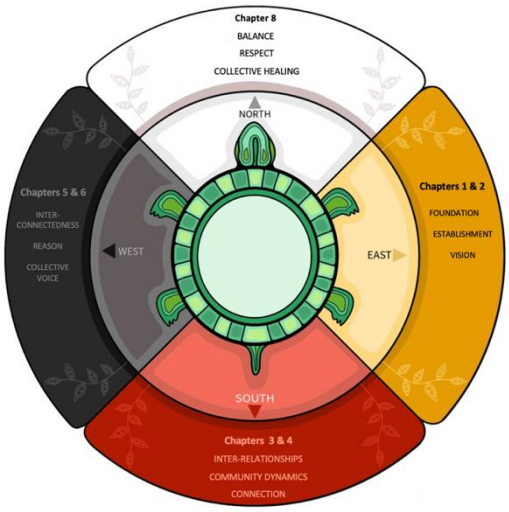


Figure 1: Chapters Framing in the Medicine Wheel

South Direction: Embodying inter-relationship and community dynamics, the South Direction represents a deeper examination of the connections that bind individuals and communities. Chapter 3 is dedicated to this direction and delves into the intricate web of inter-relationships, emphasizing the importance of comprehending and upholding these connections within Indigenous research contexts.

West Direction: Reflecting interconnectedness, reason, and collective voice within Indigenous communities, the West Direction emphasizes integrating Indigenous knowledge and community perspectives. Chapters 5 and 6 honour reason and the community's voice in this direction, demonstrating a commitment to amplifying community voices and using digital tools to analyze data.

North Direction: Symbolizing balance, respect, and collective healing, the North Direction focuses on addressing challenges and promoting healing within Indigenous communities. Chapter 8, within this direction, represents a culmination of the research process, calling for action, balance, and collective

healing. They emphasize the importance of respecting Indigenous voices and fostering empowerment within communities.

Data Analysis Framing:

For this research, the Medicine Wheel framework was used for data analysis as it allowed for exploring the four cardinal directions, each representing distinct aspects of life, culture, and identity within Indigenous communities.

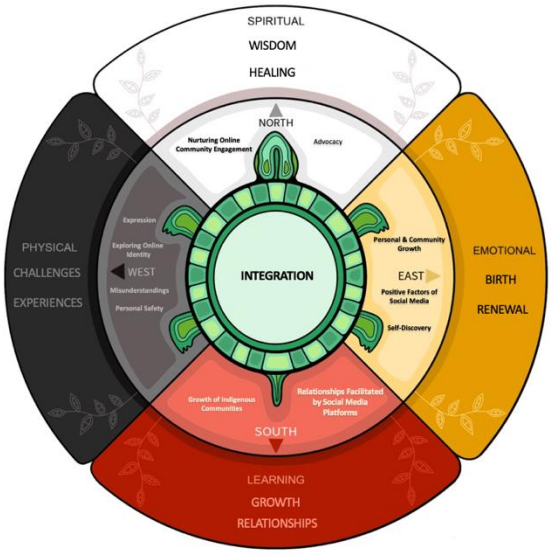


Figure 2: Chapters Framing in the Medicine Wheel

East Quadrant – Birth and Renewal: Beginning with the East quadrant, symbolizing birth and renewal, the analysis explored personal and community growth, aligning with Indigenous perspectives on interconnectedness and cyclical life. It examined the optimistic facets of social media for Indigenous Peoples, emphasizing the continuous quest for understanding and community engagement. Include personal and community groups, positive factors of social media, and self-discovery.

South Quadrant - Growth and Relationships: Progressing to the South quadrant, representing growth and relationships, the analysis explored the expansion of Indigenous communities facilitated by social media platforms. It delved into challenges and generational differences in online engagement, recognizing the interconnected nature of personal and community growth. Include relationships facilitated by social media platforms and groups of Indigenous communities.

West Quadrant - Challenges and Experiences of Life: Continuing to the West quadrant, symbolizing challenges and experiences, the analysis addressed obstacles and complexities faced by Indigenous Peoples in digital spaces. It

acknowledged issues related to online identity and personal safety while highlighting the uplifting aspects of education and empowerment through social media, including expression, exploring online identity, misunderstandings, and personal safety.

North Quadrant - Wisdom, Healing, and Culmination: Concluding with the North quadrant, representing wisdom and healing, the analysis emphasized the importance of wisdom-sharing and collective healing within Indigenous communities. It focused on nurturing online community engagement and advocacy while acclaiming the empowerment of Indigenous voices in the digital age. Include nurturing online community engagement and advocacy.

Overall, the Medicine Wheel's framing was a holistic and culturally sensitive approach to this research, integrating Indigenous perspectives and methodologies into the overarching chapters and the data analysis process.

Chapter 2: Approaches to Research: Mixed-Methods

This chapter explores diverse research methodologies, primarily focusing on the intricate realm of mixed-methods research and delves into various methods and conceptual frameworks underpinning the research process. It aligns with the symbolism of the East Direction, a representation of wholeness, origins, and vision in Indigenous perspectives. Within the context of the East Direction, this chapter signifies the researcher's journey into the realm of research approaches and methodologies. It accentuates the holistic and visionary nature of the research process, notably in the integration of community-centred methodologies, Indigenous research approaches, and innovative techniques such as ethnography. Embracing the essence of the East Direction, this chapter underscores the significance of incorporating diverse viewpoints, active community engagement, and envisioning a holistic research approach that authentically mirrors the intricate tapestry of the research subject matter.

2.1 Indigenous Research Methodology

In the context of the present study, Indigenous research methodology is not just a research approach but a commitment deeply rooted in the cultural and historical contexts of Indigenous Peoples. It prioritizes the understanding and appreciation of Indigenous communities' unique perspectives and experiences, acknowledging their rich heritage and aspirations. This methodology places utmost importance on respect and appropriateness by employing research methods that resonate with the cultural background and goals of the Indigenous Peoples being examined. I conducted a series of interviews with members of the Indigenous community via Zoom and provided online questionnaires to those who were willing to participate in my research; it was from the information that they offered, in

addition to TikTok video analysis and online research, that I was able to gather much of the material that I needed to proceed.

One of the critical ways Indigenous research methodologies align with the research focus is by including traditional knowledge, storytelling, and community-based participatory research methods. Incorporating these methodologies makes the research process relevant and deeply meaningful to the Indigenous communities under study. It ensures that the research conducted resonates with Indigenous cultural values and practices. Collaborative partnerships with Indigenous communities are formed, emphasizing respect, relevance, and shared benefits. This approach not only empowers Indigenous communities but also ensures that the research process is conducted in a manner that respects their unique knowledges.

Indigenous research methodology, intertwined with this study, serves as a bridge between academic research and the lived experiences of Indigenous Peoples. It recognizes the critical importance of conducting culturally grounded research and embodies the commitment to understanding Indigenous communities' distinct worldviews and aspirations. Doing so enriches the research process by establishing a harmonious connection between academic inquiry and the cultural essence of the Indigenous communities. The result is academically rigorous and culturally sensitive research that contributes to the body of knowledge and respects the dignity and heritage of the Indigenous communities involved.

Indigenous research methodology in this study goes beyond being a mere tool; it is a guiding philosophy that ensures that the research process is conducted with the utmost respect and cultural relevance and in a manner that empowers and benefits the Indigenous

communities being studied. It enriches the research by making it more holistic, inclusive, and impactful.

2.2 Third Space Theory: Navigating Multiple Identities and Cultures

Third Space Theory, pioneered by Homi Bhabha, offered a framework for understanding the intricacies of cultural identities, particularly in contexts characterized by diverse influences and historical complexities (Bhabha, 1994). In research, this theory was a guiding principle threaded through various stages, from conceptualization to analysis, providing a lens for exploring cultural dynamics.

At its core, Third Space Theory challenged binary oppositions and embraced the fluidity of cultural identities, emphasizing the convergence of diverse cultural threads within a "third space" (Bhabha, 1994). This conceptualization was instrumental in research as it fostered a holistic understanding of cultural identity formation and transformation. Researchers employing this theory recognized the mosaic of influences shaping identities, often stemming from colonial legacies or global interactions, and appreciated the dynamism inherent in cultural negotiations.

Incorporating Third Space Theory into research involved meticulous examination of how individuals and communities navigated and negotiated cultural influences within this space. Researchers delved into the mechanisms and strategies employed in this process, acknowledging power dynamics and contestations within cultural intersections (Bhabha, 1994). By doing so, they uncovered the complexities of identity formation and preservation, moving beyond simplistic categorizations to engage with the nuanced realities of cultural hybridity.

In the realm of Indigenous research, Third Space Theory assumed particular significance, aligning with the intricate experiences of Indigenous Peoples as they navigated multiple cultural influences while preserving their unique identities. This theory enriched Indigenous research by illuminating the resilience and adaptability inherent in Indigenous cultures, highlighting how Indigenous Peoples used the "third space" to resist dominant power structures and generate new cultural forms reflective of their experiences (Bhabha, 1994). Furthermore, Third Space Theory facilitated an exploration of how Indigenous Peoples sustained cultural resilience despite the enduring legacy of colonialism. It provided insights into how Indigenous communities preserved their cultural heritage and employed cultural practices as tools of resistance and continuity (Bhabha, 1994). By acknowledging the complexities of Indigenous cultural dynamics and honouring Indigenous perspectives, researchers upheld ethical considerations and ensured research outcomes aligned with Indigenous values and aspirations.

The Third Space Theory served as a dynamic and illuminating framework for research, enabling an understanding of cultural identities and their evolution. Whether examining broader cultural dynamics or delving into the intricacies of Indigenous experiences, this theory fostered a nuanced exploration that transcended simplistic narratives and embraced the richness of cultural hybridity.

2.3 Netnography in Social Media Research

Netnography is a qualitative research methodology used to study and analyze online communities and cultures. Coined by Robert Kozinets in 1995, netnography is derived from "net" (internet) and "ethnography" (the study of cultures). It involves observing, interpreting, and analyzing digital interactions within various online spaces such as social

media platforms, forums, blogs, and websites. Netnographers immerse themselves in these virtual environments to understand the behaviours, beliefs, and interactions of individuals and groups within online communities. Netnography aims to uncover emergent themes, patterns, and insights contributing to a deeper understanding of digital cultures and online phenomena.

In this research, netnography served as a robust methodological approach to delve into the intricacies of online communities, including those inhabited by Indigenous Peoples (Kozinets, 2010). By employing netnography, this research gained insights into how Indigenous communities utilize digital spaces for communication, cultural preservation, and community-building (Smith, 2018). This methodological approach involved analyzing data collected from various online sources, such as social media platforms, forums, and websites, to uncover emergent themes and patterns characterizing Indigenous online interactions (Kozinets, 2010).

One of the critical considerations in incorporating netnography into this research was the necessity for cultural sensitivity and respect (Smith, 2018). This research prioritized obtaining informed consent from Indigenous participants and acknowledged the unique cultural perspectives guiding their digital interactions. This ethical foundation ensured that the research process upheld mutual respect and trust, guarding against the potential for digital colonialism and the inadvertent perpetuation of harmful stereotypes (Kozinets, 2010).

In the context of social media platforms, which are integral to the contemporary digital landscape, the relevance of this research for Indigenous communities should not be overstated (Smith, 2018). Social media platforms provide a unique avenue for Indigenous Peoples to share their perspectives, experiences, and traditional knowledge in the digital

domain. Furthermore, social media facilitates increased participation from Indigenous communities by eliminating barriers such as geographical distance and financial constraints (Smith, 2018). This broader engagement enriched the research process with diverse perspectives and experiences while nurturing a sense of community among Indigenous Peoples in the digital space. Social media's real-time data collection capability was also invaluable for the research by focusing on current and emerging Indigenous issues (Kozinets, 2010). Collecting data in real-time ensured that my findings remained relevant and responsive to the evolving dynamics within Indigenous communities.

SOUTH DIRECTION: INTER-RELATIONSHIP – COMMUNITY, RELATIONSHIPS, PROTOCOLS AND TIME

Chapter 3: Relationality, Communities, and Potential Avenues for Advancement

The "South Direction" embodies a representation of inter-relationships, community dynamics, protocols, and the element of time. It signifies a deeper examination of the intricate connections that bind individuals and communities and the established protocols and relationships that mould their identities and interactions. The subtopics in this chapter dedicated to the South Direction underscore the importance of comprehending and upholding these interconnections within the context of Indigenous research. Furthermore, this chapter, guided by the South Direction, explores the intricate web of inter-relationships, the dynamics inherent in Indigenous communities, and the protocols and relationships that significantly influence the formation of Indigenous identities and communities. It symbolizes the interconnected interplay between individuals and communities while acknowledging and valuing the myriad perspectives and experiences enriching this interwoven tapestry.

This chapter, functioning as a review of the literature, is intricately intertwined with the South Direction's overarching themes. It delves into existing scholarly work to elucidate the multifaceted facets of relationality, community dynamics, protocols, and time dimension in Indigenous research. Through an extensive analysis of the literature, the chapter seeks to provide valuable insights into the intricate tapestry of inter-relationships, the dynamic evolution of Indigenous communities, and the protocols and relationships underpinning the construction of Indigenous identities and the essence of these communities. Therefore, this chapter is positioned to provide insight into the multifaceted

nature of Indigenous research, informed by the guiding principles of the South Direction, as illuminated through a thorough literature review. Within this context, the chapter navigates the intricate web of relationality, community dynamics, protocols, and the temporal dimension, all of which are pivotal in informing and enriching the field of Indigenous research.

3.1 Components of Indigenous Identities

Indigenous identities are complex, comprising various elements contributing to individuals' and communities' sense of self. Cultural practices, language, relationship to the land, history, political and legal status, intergenerational relationships, and a sense of belonging are central to understanding Indigenous identities (Smith, 2012; Hinton, 1994; Deloria Jr., 1972; UNDRIP, 2007; Mihesuah, 1998; Cajete, 2000). These dynamic and interconnected components shape Indigenous identity as a multifaceted and evolving concept.

Cultural practices are the foundation of Indigenous identities, encompassing traditions like language, religious beliefs, and ceremonial rituals (Smith, 2012). Language, mainly, is pivotal in preserving Indigenous knowledge and heritage, reflecting the resilience of Indigenous cultures (Hinton, 1994). The relationship to the land is profound, representing spiritual connection and cultural sustenance (Deloria Jr., 1972). Shared historical narratives and political affiliations also shape Indigenous identity alongside intergenerational relationships that transmit cultural knowledge over time (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014; UNDRIP, 2007; Mihesuah, 1998). Indigenous identity is deeply rooted in a collective sense of belonging, highlighting the significance of community bonds and mutual obligations (Cajete, 2000).

Indigenous identity is not monolithic but evolves and adapts to contemporary circumstances, encompassing citizenship, membership, and relationality to communities (Anaya, 2004). This collaborative nature highlights that Indigenous identity intertwines familial, cultural, and political connections (Alfred, 2009). Indigenous identity in Canada reflects a diverse tapestry, with over 630 First Nation communities representing more than 50 distinct Nations and Métis and Inuit cultures (Statistics Canada, 2017).

Traditional cultures of First Nations are grouped based on six primary geographical regions in Canada, each bearing unique cultural identities shaped by environmental conditions (Statistics Canada, 2017). The Iroquois, Plains, Plateau, Pacific Coast, and Mackenzie-Yukon River Basin First Nations exhibit distinct cultural practices tied to their respective environments (Statistics Canada, 2017). The Métis, characterized by blended Indigenous and European heritage, have distinct cultures, languages, and traditions (Statistics Canada, 2017). Inuit identity is deeply connected to the Arctic environment, reflecting adaptability and resilience in harsh conditions (Statistics Canada, 2017).

Indigenous identities are diverse and multifaceted, rooted in rich cultural traditions and histories while shaped by ongoing interactions with external systems of authority (Statistics Canada, 2017). Language, relationship to the land, history, political and legal status, intergenerational relationships, and a sense of belonging are integral to understanding Indigenous identities' complexity and depth.

3.1.1 Urban Indigenous Identities

The urban landscape, while offering opportunities, can also disconnect Indigenous Peoples from their ancestral lands and cultures, exposing them to discrimination and marginalization. Indigenous Peoples living in cities may have limited access to traditional

foods, medicines, and other essential cultural resources. They may need help maintaining their traditional languages and cultural practices, such as access to traditional teachers or cultural institutions. Indigenous Peoples in the city may also experience discrimination and racism and may not have access to the same economic, educational, and social opportunities as non-Indigenous Peoples. This can lead to isolation and disconnection from their communities and cultures. Despite these challenges, however, Indigenous Peoples in the city can still find ways to connect with their cultures and communities. They may participate in cultural events and gatherings or seek out Indigenous-led organizations and programs that provide support and resources. There are ample groups that have been emerging online that offer support and help to those wanting to learn more about their culture and heritage. Indigenous Peoples are resilient and strong, and despite the many odds that have not been in their favour, they have made a resurgence and are determined to grow.

It is important to note that Indigenous Peoples are not monolithic, and their experiences in the city can vary depending on factors such as their tribe, nation, language, and socio-economic status. It is also essential to recognize that Indigenous Peoples have lived in urban areas for centuries and that Indigenous cultures are adaptable and resilient.

Peters (1992) suggests there is a tendency to view urban communities as somehow "less authentic than their reserve counterparts" (p. 52). The 2016 census attributes 51.8% of Indigenous Peoples living in cities of 30,000 or more, and the urban population growth is 59.7% (Government of Canada, 2017). Maracle (2021) states that when discussing communities with healing and identity, it is essential to include urban communities because they have their perspectives, values, and experiences. There is a tendency to equate Indigenous communities with just reserve communities. Moreover, Maracle (2021) states that there is a longstanding perspective that reserve communities are the only proper type

of Indigenous community. This bias is seen as early as the 1970s by the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs (1970), when advocating for self-government:

> Our programs are based on the self-determination and involvement of Indians at a local level. They are self-help programs that require using all available government programs and the involvement of the economy's private sector. Our problems will be solved within the communities rather than relocating our people to urban areas [Emphasis Added] (p. 8).

Maracle (2021) states that urban Indigenous Peoples are often viewed as abandoning their communities. This is a perspective that is a consistent theme throughout the 20th and into the 21st century (Harding, 1992). Some Indigenous reserve communities did not look kindly on urban populations and would view them as either less than or as something that threatens reserve communities' political will, and "for some land-based [Indigenous] communities, the situation of urban [Indigenous Peoples] may be perceived as both anomalous and potentially threatening" (Groves, 1999, p. 9). Different components of urban communities make them unique, but that is not a basis for looking at urban communities as less than others.

In the scholarly discourse, David Newhouse (2003) underscores the indispensable role of Friendship Centres, dating back to the 1950s, constituting an 'invisible infrastructure' pivotal for developing urban Indigenous communities. This infrastructure operates as a support system within the intricate ecosystem wherein urban Indigenous communities not only exist but flourish. Unlike their counterparts in reserve communities, urban Indigenous communities retain a palpable sense of communal belonging and possess the means to sustain the intricate web of relationships within that community. Kevin FitzMaurice (2012) contends that Friendship Centres play a pivotal role in furnishing community infrastructure and networks, emphasizing their need due to their grounding in Indigenous perspectives and values.

Aligning with this perspective, Maracle (2021) posits that institutions founded on Indigenous values and perspectives play a crucial role in fostering connections among diverse peoples. In the urban milieu, institutions serve as dedicated spaces wherein urban Indigenous Peoples convene, interact, and establish connections (Maracle, 2021). It is imperative to recognize that both urban and reserve communities provide a foundation of support for Indigenous Peoples, albeit with inherent demographic disparities and varying exposure to 'mainstream' Canadian culture and institutions. Hence, caution must be exercised against construing urban Indigenous communities as mere replicas of the ostensibly 'authentic' Indigenous communities.

Susan Lobo (2011), in her examination of the urban Indigenous community in the San Francisco Bay Area, emphasizes that the Indigenous community transcends geographic clustering, constituting a dispersed and fluid network of relationships with locational nodes embedded in specific organizations and activity sites of significance. Considering these insights, Maracle (2021) underscores the distinctiveness of urban Indigenous communities while affirming their generative capacity to foster connections. Moreover, Maracle (2021) advocates for framing discussions on healing within the context of urban and reserve communities, emphasizing that healing is an active and individualized process. Consequently, diverse forms of community support are imperative, recognizing that what proves efficacious for one individual may not benefit another. The dynamic nature of Indigenous identities and the healing process necessitates proactive measures and communal support. The common thread, however, is the pivotal role that the community, irrespective of its location, assumes in supporting Indigenous Peoples in their journey of recovery from the enduring effects of colonization and trauma.

3.2 False Claims of Indigeneity: Impacts and Complexities

False claims of Indigeneity, an intricate issue characterized by individuals asserting Indigenous heritage without legitimate connections to Indigenous communities or cultures, unfold with implications. Beyond personal motives, these claims often arise for access to specific rights or benefits, reflecting a broader socio-political context (Adams, 2014; Johnson, 2018). Consider the case of individuals adopting Indigenous identities to gain financial advantages or exploit affirmative action policies, highlighting the societal consequences of such assertions (Smith, 2016).

Recognizing the determination of Indigenous identity as a prerogative of Indigenous Peoples is not merely a legal or philosophical stance but a principle deeply rooted in historical injustices. The legacy of colonization, marked by forced cultural assimilation and erasure, underscores the importance of respecting and acknowledging self-determined Indigenous identities (Brown, 2017). Moreover, understanding the complexity and diversity of Indigenous identities is imperative for external authorities and governments grappling with issues of false claims of Indigeneity. This involves recognizing diverse cultural practices and understanding the nuances of Indigenous kinship systems and community recognition (Williams, 2019).

False claims of Indigeneity are deeply intertwined with historical and contemporary colonial policies, revealing a continuous struggle for Indigenous survival. Deloria's (1999) assertion that colonization seeks to "become the Indian to kill the Indian" encapsulates the insidious nature of this ongoing project. This dynamic is evident in policies like the Indian Act in Canada, which historically imposed rigid definitions of Indigenous identity, contributing to the complexities surrounding self-identification (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018, as cited in Teillet, 2022).

False claims of Indigeneity represent a complex and multifaceted issue that intersects with historical and contemporary challenges Indigenous Peoples face. Individuals often make such claims with no verifiable Indigenous heritage or cultural affiliations, significantly affecting Indigenous communities and cultural heritage. These false claims manifest cultural appropriation, where elements of Indigenous culture are used for personal gain or commercial purposes by individuals who lack legitimate connections to Indigenous communities. Cultural appropriation diminishes the authenticity of Indigenous cultures, perpetuates stereotypes, and reduces Indigenous cultural practices to mere commodities. Moreover, false claims of Indigeneity divert attention from the critical issues that Indigenous Peoples continue to face. These issues include historical injustices like colonization, forced displacement, and systemic discrimination. When society focuses on debunking false claims, it can detract from efforts to address these pressing challenges and work toward reconciliation and justice for Indigenous Peoples.

Cultural appropriation, stemming from false claims of Indigeneity, manifests as a tangible consequence with deep-reaching effects. Instances of non-Indigenous individuals appropriating Indigenous symbols for profit or fashion, divorced from a cultural context, illustrate the commodification of Indigenous cultural practices (Johnson, 2018). This not only diminishes the authenticity of Indigenous cultures but also perpetuates harmful stereotypes.

It is essential to emphasize that Indigenous identity should be self-determined based on cultural affiliation and community recognition. Governments and external authorities often need more understanding and sensitivity to assess Indigenous identities accurately. Therefore, the responsibility for determining Indigenous identity should rest with Indigenous communities and relevant Indigenous authorities.

The prevalence of false claims of Indigeneity can be traced back to the historical and contemporary colonial policies that aimed to assimilate Indigenous Peoples into mainstream society. These policies have contributed to the erasure of Indigenous identity and have perpetuated a cycle of cultural disruption. For example, the Sixties Scoop saw many Indigenous adoptees placed in non-Indigenous households, leading to a disconnection from their cultural roots and a struggle to define their Indigenous identity (Sinclair, 2007). Such policies have perpetuated the ongoing colonization of Indigenous identities and communities.

Considering these complexities, a critical re-evaluation of the reliance on self-identification as an access criterion is warranted, especially within academic and institutional processes. The academy's role in perpetuating colonization should be acknowledged, and efforts should be made to respect and uphold the self-determination of Indigenous identities. This requires a reorientation of perspectives and a commitment to addressing the root causes of the false claims of the Indigeneity phenomenon.

3.2.1 Challenging 'Pretendianism': Upholding Indigenous Identities and Rights

The term "Pretendian" is a portmanteau of the words "pretend" and "Indian." It is often used to describe individuals who falsely claim to have Indigenous ancestry or heritage without any verifiable connection to a specific Indigenous community or tribe. In other words, a Pretendian is someone who pretends to be Indigenous without having legitimate ties to the culture, ancestry, or tribal affiliation. However, it is essential to note that "Pretendian" is considered derogatory and pejorative and should be avoided (Brown, 2020). Addressing Indigenous identities requires a respectful and sensitive approach that refrains from questioning or undermining the legitimacy of an individual's Indigenous identity.

Indigenous identities are intricate and diverse, and governments may not always be able to understand or acknowledge them fully. Therefore, the prerogative to define Indigenous identities, cultures, and ways of life rightfully belongs to Indigenous Peoples (Adams, 2018).

The implications of 'Pretendianism' are significant and far-reaching. Firstly, 'Pretendianism' perpetuates the erasure and appropriation of Indigenous identities and cultures. It sustains stereotypes and undermines the authentic experiences and challenges Indigenous Peoples face. Falsely claimed Indigenous identities may lead to the exploitation of Indigenous cultures, practices, and symbols without genuine understanding or respect for their significance (Jones, 2021).

Secondly, 'Pretendianism' often involves the theft and misrepresentation of Indigenous cultural practices, ceremonies, and symbols (Miller, 2018). Such appropriation disrespects the sacredness and integrity of Indigenous cultures, traditions, and intellectual property. It can perpetuate harmful stereotypes and distort the public's perception of Indigenous Peoples (Anderson, 2019).

Thirdly, false representation of Indigenous identity through 'Pretendianism' can overshadow and diminish the voices and representation of genuine Indigenous individuals (Thomas, 2020). This can result in non-Indigenous individuals speaking on behalf of Indigenous communities, exacerbating power imbalances, and marginalizing Indigenous voices (Peters, 2017). Moreover, 'Pretendianism' can potentially undermine Indigenous sovereignty by blurring the boundaries of Indigenous identity and weakening the rights and privileges specific to Indigenous Peoples (Clark, 2022). It can create confusion and challenges when determining who qualifies as Indigenous, impacting Indigenous self-governance and self-determination (Garcia, 2018).

The erosion of trust within Indigenous communities is another consequence of 'Pretendianism' (White, 2019). It may lead to skepticism and suspicion when non-Indigenous individuals claim Indigenous heritage, particularly in contexts where Indigenous rights, resources, or opportunities are at stake. This erodes the sense of community and solidarity among Indigenous Peoples (Robinson, 2021). Furthermore, 'Pretendianism' introduces complications to Indigenous identity formation and recognition (Martin, 2018). It may create doubt and uncertainty within Indigenous communities, posing challenges in defining and preserving authentic Indigenous identities. It complicates the ongoing struggles to recognize and validate Indigenous identities (Baker, 2019).

Recognizing and addressing 'Pretendianism' is vital in protecting and promoting Indigenous identities, cultures, and rights. Indigenous communities and organizations often play a significant role in managing and challenging 'Pretendianism' by asserting their narratives, promoting education and awareness, and establishing identity verification and protection mechanisms (Harris, 2020). Respecting and upholding Indigenous Peoples' rights, dignity, and self-determination is paramount in this endeavour.

3.2.2 Identity Politics, Lateral Violence, and Their Complex Implications

Identity politics, as a strategic mobilization tool, aims to empower individuals and groups who have historically faced systemic oppression based on attributes such as race, gender, sexuality, or class (Smith, 2000). It provides a platform for marginalized communities to assert their rights and advocate for equitable treatment and representation in the face of social and political structures perpetuating inequality (Crenshaw, 1989). However, the complex interplay of identity politics and lateral violence within these communities introduces challenges that demand nuanced understanding and thoughtful solutions.

Lateral violence, or horizontal violence, becomes particularly pronounced within Indigenous communities, already burdened by the enduring legacies of colonialism and ongoing struggles. This violence manifests within the community as individuals turn against each other instead of directing their grievances toward the external oppressive systems (Poudrier & Mac-Lean, 2009). The roots of lateral violence can be traced to internalized oppression, resulting in self-hatred, self-harm, and other self-destructive behaviours that further compound the challenges faced by these communities (Denham, 2008).

It is crucial to underscore that lateral violence is not an intrinsic trait of marginalized communities but rather a consequence of the oppressive systems they confront (Poudrier & Mac-Lean, 2009). Addressing this issue necessitates acknowledging and challenging these systems and fostering healing and reconciliation within the community. This acknowledgment emphasizes the importance of a collective approach to dismantling the sources of oppression and building resilience.

Intersectionality adds another layer of complexity to the understanding of lateral violence. Not all individuals within a marginalized group experience identical level of oppression, and recognizing intersecting identities is essential for a deeper understanding of the issue (Crenshaw, 1989). Intersectionality prompts a more nuanced examination of power dynamics and disparities within marginalized communities, paving the way for targeted interventions and support.

Identity politics (when a specific group of people from a specific ethnicity or area form political alliances) may serve as a means of empowerment. The politics of Indigenous identity has become a global phenomenon with numerous groups active at the international level, promoting their claims not just to recognition but to particular rights and interests

usually based on the prior occupation of territory, asserting a valued way of life associated with the land, and a need to safeguard Indigenous heritage for future generations. Particular manifestations of the politics of Indigenous identity, however, remain firmly anchored within the realm of individual sovereign states, territories, or nations, many of which owe their very existence to the large-scale territorial dispossession of Indigenous Peoples. Still, it is important to remember that it can also present pitfalls hindering progress within marginalized communities. One such challenge is the fragmentation and division that may arise from overemphasizing specific identity attributes. Creating "us versus them" dynamics can impede collective action and solidarity, posing a threat to community resilience and progress (Hancock, 2016). Balancing the empowerment provided by identity politics with a commitment to unity becomes essential for addressing this potential division.

Marginalization and exclusion are other implications of identity politics, where hierarchies and power imbalances within marginalized communities may perpetuate discrimination. Individuals or groups not aligning with predetermined criteria may face exclusion, silencing their diverse perspectives and experiences (Collins, 2000). This calls for a critical examination of the inclusivity of identity-based movements to ensure they genuinely represent the breadth of experiences within the community.

Essentialism and stereotyping further complicate identity politics, and reducing multifaceted identities to simplistic categories risks perpetuating damaging generalizations and biases (Alcoff, 2006). Indigenous communities, in particular, have historically grappled with stereotypes that contribute to misconceptions and discrimination. Acknowledging and actively challenging these essentialist viewpoints is essential for fostering a more nuanced and accurate understanding of diverse identities.

Polarization and conflict can intensify within the framework of identity politics as grievances based on identity take center stage in political and social discourse. This heightened animosity between different identity groups may hinder constructive dialogue, collaboration, and the pursuit of shared objectives (Mason, 2000). Recognizing the potential for polarization and actively working towards common ground become critical components of navigating identity politics effectively.

Lateral violence, encompassing harmful behaviours within a community, poses a significant threat to trust, cooperation, and the efficient allocation of resources. Bullying, gossip, and undermining within the community divert energy from addressing external challenges and systemic issues (Tuck & Yang, 2012). Recognizing the signs of lateral violence and implementing strategies for conflict resolution and community-building are essential steps toward mitigating its impact.

The emotional and psychological toll of identity politics and lateral violence cannot be overstated. Feelings of exclusion, insecurity, and self-doubt may arise, potentially leading to mental health challenges and internalized oppression. This is particularly pertinent within Indigenous communities grappling with historical trauma and ongoing challenges (Brave Heart, 2003). Prioritizing mental health support and community-based healing initiatives becomes integral to fostering collective well-being.

Promoting inclusivity, dialogue, and mutual respect emerges as a foundational approach to navigating the complex terrain of identity politics and addressing lateral violence. Building understanding, embracing intersectional perspectives, and actively fostering healing and reconciliation are pivotal steps toward transcending divisions and creating collaborative and empowering spaces within marginalized communities (Walia,

2013). These initiatives contribute to dismantling oppressive systems and creating a more equitable and just society for all.

3.2.3 Implications of Self-Identification for Indigenous Identities

Self-identification for Indigenous identities refers to the process by which individuals assert and affirm their Indigenous heritage, acknowledging and declaring their connection to a specific Indigenous community, culture, or heritage. In the context of Indigenous Peoples, self-identification involves individuals openly recognizing and claiming their Indigenous ancestry, often based on personal experiences, family history, and cultural connections. This process is significant in the broader discourse surrounding Indigenous identity, particularly in societies where Indigenous rights, recognition, and cultural preservation are complex and contested. It allows individuals to define their identity on their terms, emphasizing personal agency and autonomy in the face of historical and societal challenges that may have led to the marginalization or misrepresentation of Indigenous Peoples.

Self-identification goes beyond external categorizations and official documentation, allowing individuals to express the nuances of their identity, including cultural practices, languages spoken, and ancestral connections. It is a dynamic and personal journey that varies among individuals and communities, considering the diverse histories, traditions, and experiences of Indigenous Peoples globally.

This act of self-identification is not only a means of personal empowerment but also contributes to broader social and political movements. By asserting their identities, individuals may actively participate in challenging stereotypes, advocating for Indigenous rights, and promoting a more inclusive understanding of the diverse and complex nature of Indigenous cultures and communities.

With positive implications, self-identification is a powerful instrument for personal empowerment (Jones, 2020). This process is not merely a declaration of identity but a means for individuals to reclaim agency over their narrative. It allows them to authentically celebrate and express their identities, aligning their self-perception with the lived realities that shape their unique experiences and perspectives (Martinez, 2021). This transformative empowerment provides a crucial foundation for individuals to navigate a world where Indigenous identity may be subject to external definitions and interpretations. Moreover, self-identification contributes significantly to the broader landscape of recognition and visibility. In contexts where Indigenous identities have been historically marginalized or misrepresented, the power of self-identification lies in its ability to illuminate and challenge prevailing narratives (Brown, 2019). Individuals who self-identify actively challenge stereotypes by stepping into the spotlight and sharing their stories, fostering a deeper societal understanding of the rich tapestry of Indigenous diversity (Adams, 2018). This, in turn, promotes social change by amplifying previously unheard voices and experiences.

Self-identification also plays a pivotal role in fostering community building and solidarity (Williams, 2017). When individuals with similar identities or shared experiences come together under the umbrella of self-identification, it creates a sense of belonging. These communities become spaces of mutual support, validation, and collective action, providing a source of strength and empowerment beyond individual identity (Garcia, 2016). Self-identification catalyzes social and political mobilization, creating a united front against Indigenous communities' challenges.

The positive implications of self-identification extend to challenging norms and stereotypes. As individuals confidently declare their identities, they actively reshape societal perceptions and dismantle harmful stereotypes associated with Indigenous peoples

(Thomas, 2020). This process promotes a broader acceptance and inclusivity, fostering an environment where the complexity and diversity of human experiences are acknowledged and celebrated. Furthermore, self-identification respects and acknowledges the intricate web of identities through the lens of intersectionality (Rodriguez, 2018). It recognizes that individuals may embody multiple and overlapping identities, allowing them to express the nuanced and interconnected nature of their lived experiences. This approach values the multifaceted aspects of identity, encouraging a more holistic understanding that transcends simplistic categorizations.

Regarding inclusion and representation, self-identification catalyzes change across various social, cultural, and political domains (Miller, 2022). Challenging dominant narratives and structures ensures that diverse voices and perspectives are heard and actively shape the discourse. This dynamic involvement of individuals and communities in their representation contributes to a more equitable and inclusive societal landscape. Despite these positive implications, the act of self-identification also brings forth a set of challenges and negative consequences that warrant careful consideration (White, 2021). One notable concern is the potential for identity confusion and inconsistency, particularly among those with complex or evolving identities. Navigating societal expectations and pressures associated with different identities can create internal conflicts and uncertainty about one's sense of self (Johnson, 2019).

Misrepresentation is another critical issue, as self-identification may lead to intentional or unintentional misrepresentation of one's identity (Lee, 2019). Individuals may falsely claim identities or appropriate aspects of other cultures for personal gain or validation, eroding trust and perpetuating harmful stereotypes.

Gatekeeping and exclusion, emerging from self-identification, can lead to the imposition of strict criteria or judgments on who can authentically claim a particular identity (Smith, 2018). This exclusionary behaviour can reinforce community divisions, undermining the principles of inclusivity and collective support. Furthermore, individuals asserting self-identified identities may encounter backlash, discrimination, or skepticism from those who challenge or deny their identities (Brown, 2019). This opposition can result in social isolation, exclusion, or the invalidation of one's experiences and sense of self. The resistance can exacerbate existing power imbalances and discrimination, particularly for marginalized identities.

Intra-community conflict is another negative implication, as self-identification may spark disagreements within communities regarding who can define or represent a particular identity (Jones, 2020). This internal strife can hinder collective efforts and impede progress on shared goals, emphasizing the importance of fostering understanding and solidarity within Indigenous communities.

Co-optation and commodification represent a final set of negative implications associated with self-identification (Adams, 2018). External entities may exploit or appropriate self-identification for commercial or political purposes, perpetuating power imbalances and harm. Remaining vigilant and critical of instances where self-identification is manipulated is essential to preserving the authenticity and integrity of Indigenous identities.

The multifaceted nature of self-identification underscores its implications for individuals and communities within the context of Indigenous identities. Sensitivity, respect, and critical self-reflection are imperative when navigating the complexities of self-identification as part of the larger politics of identity (Garcia, 2016). Engaging in

meaningful dialogue, fostering inclusivity, and acknowledging the fluidity and complexity of identities can help mitigate negative implications and develop a more inclusive and understanding society.

3.3 Unveiling the Digital Persona: Exploring Cyber-Identities

Cyber-identity has undergone significant transformations as a result of technological advancements and the evolving dynamics of identity projection in the digital realm. This paradigm shift necessitates an exploration of the multifaceted nature of cyber-identities, focusing on understanding their complexities within the context of the contemporary digital age.

The evolution of online identities is symbolic of the impact of technology on human interactions. As Turkle (2011) argued, the advent of the Internet has shifted how individuals construct and present their identities. Digital spaces provide a unique platform for individuals to experiment with various facets of their identity, blurring the lines between the physical and virtual (Turkle, 2011). This transformation highlights the fluid nature of cyber-identities, which are not constrained by the limitations of traditional face-to-face interactions. Furthermore, it is crucial to differentiate cyber identities from social media identities, as the latter represents a subset of the former. While cyber-identities encompass a broader spectrum of online presence, social media identities specifically pertain to the persona of individuals curated within the confines of social networking platforms. Boyd (2014) underscores the performative aspect of social media identities, emphasizing the role of these platforms in shaping how individuals present themselves to a broader audience (Boyd, 2014). Thus, the nuanced distinction between cyber and social media identities is integral to understanding how individuals engage with their digital selves.

Social media platforms play a pivotal role in shaping and influencing cyber-identity construction. The curated nature of content on platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and X contributes to the formation of digital personas that may differ from individuals' offline identities (Marwick & Lewis, 2011). These platforms provide a curated space for self-presentation, allowing individuals to selectively showcase aspects of their lives and personalities. This selective self-presentation, as noted by Ellison et al. (2014), leads to the creation of what is commonly known as the "idealized self" on social media platforms (Ellison et al., 2014). Moreover, the interconnectedness and permeability of social media contribute to the convergence of cyber-identities, where individuals navigate multiple digital spaces simultaneously. The digital persona thus becomes a mosaic of various online expressions and interactions across diverse platforms. This interplay between different digital realms adds complexity to understanding cyber-identities as individuals negotiate their online presence across various social contexts.

Exploring cyber-identities in the digital age necessitates a nuanced understanding of their evolution, differentiation from social media identities, and the significant role social media platforms play in shaping and influencing their construction. Scholars such as Turkle, Boyd, Marwick, Lewis, and Ellison provide valuable insights into the intricate dynamics of online identities, shedding light on the multifaceted nature of the digital persona in our contemporary digital landscape. As individuals continue to navigate the complexities of the digital realm, the study of cyber-identities remains an evolving and crucial field of inquiry.

3.3.1 Being Indigenous in Digital Spaces

The juxtaposition of tradition and innovation in the digital realm for Indigenous Peoples is a dynamic narrative deeply rooted in historical and contemporary experiences. The pre-colonial era is a testament to Indigenous Peoples' pragmatic approach to technology, where innovations were seamlessly integrated into their lives through intricate exchange networks and internal innovation (Smith, 2012). However, the advent of European colonization disrupted these harmonious dynamics, redefining technology as a tool that not only altered power relationships but also necessitated cultural adaptations within Indigenous societies (Deloria, 1998).

In examining the initial encounter with colonizers' technologies, such as weapons and transportation, Indigenous Peoples' willingness to adapt reflects their innate practicality (Smith, 2012). Nevertheless, the gradual and unequal distribution of technology over time wrought fundamental changes in political relationships, echoing the transformative impact of industrialization on European societies (Deloria, 1998). This shift sparked a nuanced response within Indigenous communities, with some lamenting the perceived erosion of cultural identity due to technological innovation. In contrast, others recognized the value of embracing new ways of thinking and adopting technology (Smith, 2012).

In the contemporary context, technology has become recognized as a strategic necessity for Indigenous Peoples navigating a globalized world (Walter & Suina, 2009). Access to modern technologies is now imperative for safeguarding against subordination and realizing aspirations despite persistent disparities in technological access between Indigenous and Western communities (Walter & Suina, 2009).

The current technological landscape, emphasizing knowledge, information, and communication technologies, presents a unique opportunity for Indigenous Peoples (Dyson

et al., 2007). These technologies empower Indigenous communities to gather and disseminate ideas, share cultural practices, and preserve heritage. This transformative potential mirrors historical shifts when weaponry gave way to representational media, marking a significant transition in how Indigenous cultures interact with and shape their narrative in the digital era (Turner, as cited in Stoking, 1993).

The Kayapo case study in the Amazon is a poignant illustration of the transformative potential of representational media in reshaping power dynamics (Turner, as cited in Stoking, 1993). By documenting their culture through video cameras and recording equipment, the Kayapo not only grasped the intrinsic value of their heritage but also leveraged this understanding to negotiate with external authorities. This case underscores Indigenous Peoples' agency when equipped with technological tools to narrate their stories and safeguard their cultural identities.

The imperative for Indigenous Peoples to have access to information and communication technologies (ICT) is evident in their potential to promote and preserve rights and cultures, enhance education, improve healthcare access, and facilitate environmental advocacy (Dyson et al., 2007). Moreover, Indigenous-directed economic development, crucial for self-determination, finds facilitation through strategic technology (Walter & Suina, 2009). However, the promising potential of digital spaces for Indigenous Peoples has its challenges. Discrimination, harassment, and cultural appropriation within these spaces pose significant threats to the very fabric of Indigenous cultures (Kukutai & Taylor, 2016). Indigenous Peoples encounter difficulties in exerting control over the representation of their identities, with heightened concerns about privacy and security (Kukutai & Taylor, 2016).

Despite these challenges, Indigenous Peoples possess the capacity to leverage digital platforms for cultural expression and preservation. Through these mediums, they connect with their communities and share their diverse cultures with a global audience (Walter & Suina, 2009). The documentation and preservation of languages and cultural practices using digital tools contribute to a broader narrative of adaptability and resilience within Indigenous cultures (Dyson et al., 2007).

The experience of being Indigenous in digital spaces encapsulates a narrative of adaptability, resilience, and agency. The historical tapestry, woven with technological transitions, intersects with contemporary challenges, underscoring the need for inclusive digital environments that respect the autonomy and self-determination of Indigenous Peoples (Kukutai & Taylor, 2016). In this dynamic landscape, heritage preservation seamlessly meets technological innovation, shaping a nuanced narrative of identity and empowerment for Indigenous Peoples in digital spaces.

Canadian Context

The dynamic interplay between tradition and innovation for Indigenous Peoples in digital spaces is a global phenomenon and resonates strongly in Canadian and Western contexts. Indigenous Peoples' historical experiences in Canada mirror the global narrative with a distinctive blend of resilience and adaptation.

During the pre-colonial era in Canada, Indigenous Peoples demonstrated a pragmatic approach to technology similar to their counterparts globally. Innovation was seamlessly woven into their lives through intricate exchange networks and internal advancements, reflecting a deep understanding of the practical benefits technology could offer (Smith, 2012). However, the arrival of European colonizers disrupted this

equilibrium, transforming technology into a tool that not only altered power relationships but also necessitated cultural adaptations within Indigenous societies (Deloria, 1998).

The initial reception of colonizers' technologies in Canada, such as firearms and transportation, showcased Indigenous Peoples' willingness to adapt, mirroring their practical nature (Smith, 2012). However, over time, the unequal distribution of technology fundamentally reshaped political relationships within Indigenous communities, echoing the transformative impact of industrialization on European societies (Deloria, 1998). This historical trajectory reflects a complex and nuanced response from Indigenous individuals, with some lamenting the perceived erosion of cultural identity due to technological innovation. In contrast, others recognized the practical utility and adopted new ways of thinking (Smith, 2012).

In the contemporary Canadian context, technology is increasingly recognized as a strategic necessity for Indigenous Peoples. Access to modern technologies is crucial for safeguarding against subordination, realizing aspirations, and addressing persistent disparities in technological access between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities (Walter & Suina, 2009). Digital spaces serve as platforms for Indigenous Canadians to assert their identities, connect with broader audiences, and share their cultures globally. Moreover, Indigenous Peoples navigate digital spaces within the broader Western context with opportunities and challenges. Discrimination, harassment, and cultural appropriation in these spaces pose significant threats to the cultural fabric, mirroring challenges faced by Indigenous communities globally (Kukutai & Taylor, 2016). However, Indigenous Peoples in Western contexts also demonstrate agency and resilience in utilizing digital platforms for cultural expression and preservation.

Drawing parallels with global experiences, Indigenous Peoples in Canada and the broader Western world face challenges in controlling the representation of their identities in digital spaces, with heightened concerns about privacy and security (Kukutai & Taylor, 2016). Despite these challenges, Indigenous Peoples leverage digital platforms to connect with their communities, share cultural practices, and contribute to the broader narrative of adaptability within Indigenous cultures (Dyson et al., 2007).

The narrative of being Indigenous in digital spaces extends to the Canadian and Western contexts, adding layers of complexity and nuance to the global story. The historical trajectory, marked by technological transitions and cultural adaptations, echoes the challenges and opportunities Indigenous Peoples face in these regions. As Indigenous Peoples in Canada and the Western world navigate the digital landscape, they contribute to a rich narrative of identity, empowerment, and resilience within the broader global context.

3.3.2 Evolution of Online Identities

The evolution of online identities is a captivating narrative that unfolds through distinct phases, each reflecting the dynamic interplay between technological advancements, platform policies, and user behaviour. In the internet's nascent days, anonymity was a hallmark defining the landscape. Operating behind pseudonyms and avatars, users revelled in the freedom to express themselves without the constraints imposed by offline social norms and societal expectations (Davison, 2018). However, this era of uninhibited self-expression brought challenges related to trust and accountability. The ease with which individuals could remain hidden behind their digital masks gave rise to concerns about the authenticity of online interactions (Joinson, 2001).

As the internet matured, so did the concept of cyber-identities. This evolution witnessed a shift from the extremes of complete anonymity toward a more nuanced approach. Users embarked on a journey to reconcile their online and offline identities, blurring the boundaries between the two realms (Marwick & Lewis, 2011). The catalyst for this transition was the introduction of "real name" policies on social media platforms. These policies mandated the linkage of online profiles to real-world identities, compelling users to present a version of themselves that was more aligned with their authentic selves within the confines of the digital environment (Boyd, 2010).

The implications of the "real name" policies extended beyond individual behaviours, influencing the dynamics of online communities and the development of trust within them (Ellison et al., 2014). The digital landscape became characterized by a newfound caution among users, who were now acutely aware that their online actions were inextricably linked to their offline identities. This shift departed from the era of uninhibited self-expression, as authenticity emerged as a prized commodity in the digital realm. Moreover, the curated nature of online identities began to reflect a delicate equilibrium between genuine self-expression and the societal expectations that continued to shape offline interactions. The online persona became a carefully crafted representation, a dynamic interplay between the desire for authenticity and the need to navigate the norms of the digital space (Marwick & Lewis, 2011).

The evolution of online identities is a multi-faceted journey that reflects the intricate dance between user agency, platform policies, and societal influences. From the initial allure of internet anonymity to the contemporary emphasis on authenticity and transparency, each phase has left an indelible mark on the construction and presentation of online identities. As the digital landscape continues to evolve, the fluidity of identity

dynamics will likely persist, shaped by the ongoing interplay of technological innovations and societal expectations. Understanding this evolution is crucial for navigating the complexities of the digital age and its impact on human interactions.

3.3.3 Exploring Cyber Identity, Social Media Identity, and Online/Digital Identity

Examining cyber identities requires a nuanced exploration of their diverse forms and the intricate interplay between the digital and offline realms. Cyber identity encompasses a spectrum of online practices, from the choice of anonymity or pseudonymity to the decision to openly identify oneself, thereby striking a unique balance between the autonomy of navigating the digital realm privately and the responsibility of public identification (Johnson, 2018). This spectrum provides individuals unprecedented freedom in constructing their online personas, allowing for a dynamic expression of self that is both liberating and subject to a new set of accountabilities.

Within the broader umbrella of cyber identity, social media identity emerges as a significant subset closely intertwined with an individual's offline existence. Platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and X encourage users to establish profiles under their real names, fostering a connection between identity's digital and physical aspects. However, these profiles are not mere mirrors of reality but represent curated and managed versions of the self, showcasing specific facets while deliberately concealing others (Smith, 2019). The dichotomy between authenticity and presentation on social media platforms underscores the complexity of identity construction in the digital age. Moreover, the concept of online/digital identity extends the discourse beyond social media, encapsulating the entirety of an individual's digital footprint. This encompasses social media profiles but delves into search history, e-commerce interactions, and engagements across various digital platforms.

The online/digital identity thus becomes a repository of an individual's online existence, reflecting not only intentional self-presentation but also implicit digital behaviours and interactions (Jones, 2020).

The shaping of identity in the digital age is significantly influenced by the role of social media platforms as potent arenas for self-expression. Individuals actively construct narratives about their lives through content sharing, interactions, and participation in digital conversations. However, a critical aspect of this construction lies in the selective self-presentation prevalent on these platforms. Users tend to emphasize achievements, milestones, and aspects of their lives that align with societal expectations or personal aspirations, contributing to cultivating an idealized digital self (Goffman, 1959).

The impact of social media on identity extends beyond self-presentation, delving into the core of one's self-esteem and self-concept. The constant visibility, potential for global connections, and the allure of feedback and validation contribute to the performative nature of online identity construction (Marwick & Lewis, 2017). While fostering a sense of belonging and acceptance within specific online communities, this performative aspect also introduces the potential for moulding an individual's sense of self in positive and negative ways. However, the curated nature of social media identities can lead to a sense of inauthenticity and disconnection between online and offline selves. Individuals may grapple with a perceived misalignment, giving rise to feelings of impostor syndrome or an identity crisis (Boyd, 2014). This tension between the curated digital self and the authentic offline self underscores the need for a critical examination of the implications of social media on identity construction.

In navigating this complex and evolving landscape, it becomes crucial to recognize social media's potential benefits and drawbacks in identity construction. Enhanced self-

expression, global connectivity, and community building stand out as positive outcomes, while the risk of inauthenticity and psychological strain remains a concern. Acknowledging this dynamic interplay between cyber identities and the digital world provides individuals with the tools to navigate the intricate terrain successfully (van Dijck, 2013). Thus, exploring cyber identity, social media identity, and online/digital identity not only unravels the complexities of the modern digital experience but also serves as a foundation for understanding the intricate dance between the virtual and the real in shaping individual identities.

How Does Social Media Shape Our Identity?

The impact of social media on identity is multifaceted and influential within modern communication and self-expression realms. These platforms serve as digital stages where individuals can construct, refine, and project aspects of themselves to a global audience, creating complex interactions between virtual and real-world identities.

One significant aspect of this influence lies in the process of self-presentation. Users meticulously curate their online personas by selectively sharing aspects of their lives, interests, achievements, and viewpoints. This curation often reflects an idealized version of the self, conforming to societal expectations or personal aspirations (Goffman, 1959). Digital identity construction becomes a performance, with users strategically showcasing elements that align with their desired image.

The performative nature of online identity construction is further heightened by the constant visibility provided by social media platforms. The potential for connecting with a global audience amplifies this aspect, encouraging individuals to present themselves in ways that attract attention and validation. Feedback mechanisms such as likes, comments, and shares shape the reinforcement or alteration of one's digital identity (Marwick & Lewis,

2017), contributing to developing a carefully crafted digital persona. Moreover, social media platforms facilitate a sense of belonging and community- an element that is integral to identity formation. Individuals often join online communities that resonate with their interests, values, or identities. Interactions within these digital communities influence self-perception and how others perceive individuals, contributing to a collective identity that shapes personal identity (Turkle, 2011).

Various examples highlight how social media platforms shape individuals' self-presentation and engagement with online communities:

- Instagram's Culture of Visual Perfection emphasizes curated visuals reflecting idealized versions of users' lives.
- X influences identity through public discourse, where users articulate viewpoints and discuss various topics.
- LinkedIn showcases professional achievements, skills, and aspirations, contributing to constructing a professional online persona.
- Facebook fosters social connections and community through shared life events and updates.
- Through video content showcasing skills, talents, and perspectives, YouTube enables individuals to construct personal brands.

These examples underscore the diverse ways social media platforms contribute to identity construction, highlighting the performative nature of online self-presentation and the interplay between personal expression and societal expectations. However, the impact of social media on identity is not without complexities and potential drawbacks. The curated nature of social media identities may lead to a sense of inauthenticity, causing individuals to grapple with aligning their digital personas with their authentic selves (Boyd, 2014).

Social media significantly shapes identity by providing a platform for self-presentation, amplifying the performative nature of identity construction, fostering

community, and influencing self-perception. As individuals navigate this digital landscape, it is crucial to critically examine the impact of social media on identity construction, acknowledging its positive aspects and potential drawbacks.

The Effect of Social Media on Identity Construction

The impact of social media on identity construction is a multifaceted process, encompassing the curated nature of online self-presentation, the performative dynamics inherent in digital interactions, and the influential role of digital communities (Marwick & Boyd, 2011). Examining specific examples from various social media platforms provides a more nuanced understanding of how these dynamics shape individuals' identities in the ever-evolving digital landscape. For instance, Instagram fosters a culture of visual perfection where users meticulously craft their profiles to present an aesthetically pleasing and idealized version of their lives (Tiggemann & Slater, 2014). The carefully curated photos, often enhanced with filters and editing tools, contribute to a culture of visual perfection (Higgins et al., 2016). Users may showcase picturesque landscapes, glamorous events, or fitness achievements, influencing their self-perception and how their followers perceive them. This constant exposure to curated imagery can impact body image and self-esteem as users internalize societal beauty standards presented through the platform (Perloff, 2014).

Similarly, YouTube serves as a platform for personal branding, allowing content creators to strategically curate content to highlight their talents, expertise, and unique perspectives (Abidin, 2018). Lifestyle vloggers, for example, construct narratives around their daily lives, presenting an aspirational version that resonates with their audience. This form of personal branding contributes to developing a distinct online persona and

emphasizes the performative nature of identity construction in the digital realm (Marwick, 2013).

X plays a significant role in political identity formation, offering a real-time and concise format for political discourse (Vitak et al., 2011). Users actively engage in discussions, expressing their political opinions, affiliations, and values. Through hashtags, retweets, and participation in trending conversations, individuals align themselves with specific ideologies, movements, or political figures, shaping their self-perception and perception within the digital political landscape (Conover et al., 2011).

Facebook's timeline feature encourages users to share significant life events, fostering a curated narrative of their experiences (Tandoc et al., 2015). However, this curated presentation may contribute to social comparison as individuals compare their lives with their peers (Chou & Edge, 2012). Seeing friends' posts about achievements, vacations, or life milestones may impact self-perception and contribute to the ongoing construction of identity within societal expectations. Moreover, LinkedIn shapes individuals' professional identities by providing a platform for showcasing career achievements, skills, and aspirations (Van Dijck, 2013). The platform's emphasis on presenting a polished image aligns with industry norms, influencing how individuals perceive their professional selves (Maurer & Lewis, 2018). Balancing authenticity with the need for professional conformity becomes a crucial aspect of identity construction on LinkedIn.

In exploring these examples, it becomes evident that social media platforms serve as arenas for self-expression and actively contribute to the ongoing construction of identities (Boyd, 2014). The curated visuals on Instagram, personal branding on YouTube, political discourse on X, social comparison on Facebook, and professional identity management on LinkedIn collectively illustrate the diverse ways in which individuals

navigate and shape their identities in the digital age. Understanding these dynamics is essential for users to engage thoughtfully with social media platforms and critically reflect on the impact of these platforms on their evolving sense of self.

3.3.4 Are You Real?: Interrogating the Notion of Authenticity on Social Media

The pervasive influence of social media in contemporary society has ushered in a paradigm shift in how individuals perceive and construct their identities. In this era of digitization, the fundamental questions of "What is real?" and "How do people know who you are?" resonate through the intricate tapestry of online interactions. Social media platforms, as prominent fixtures of the digital landscape, serve not only as mirrors reflecting our true selves but also as dynamic canvases where individuals meticulously craft and curate their online personas.

The act of self-presentation on social media has transcended the mere sharing of personal experiences; it has evolved into a nuanced form of self-expression and representation. Users navigate the digital landscape, carefully selecting and presenting facets of their lives, thoughts, and experiences. However, this process is inherently shaped by the constraints and opportunities of the digital environment, prompting an exploration of the authenticity associated with one's online identity.

A pivotal aspect of this exploration involves grappling with the multifaceted issues surrounding identity on social media, particularly within the context of digital identification. The role of digital identification in establishing trust becomes increasingly critical, especially in the absence of traditional physical barriers. Trulioo's examination of identity for social media sheds light on the intricate dynamics of trust creation in the virtual space, where face-to-face interactions are replaced by digital mechanisms (Trulioo, n.d.).

"Are You Real?" takes on new dimensions as digital identification processes become integral to the virtual world. Social media platforms emerge not only as repositories of personal narratives but also as platforms that offer unique insights into users' identities on both conscious and subconscious levels. Trulioo's article on why social media might provide significant insights into identity underscores the pivotal role these platforms play in unravelling the complexities of online identity (Trulioo, n.d.).

The digital realm blurs the traditional distinction between the authentic and the curated self, creating a dynamic and evolving space where users can explore the multifaceted dimensions of identity, belonging, and representation. In this process, the notion of trust assumes paramount importance. Digital identification mechanisms, as highlighted by Trulioo, become indispensable tools for users seeking to establish trust within the virtual environment (Trulioo, n.d.).

As users navigate the intricacies of identity construction in the digital age, the evolving discourse on online identity underscores the need for a deeper understanding of the multifaceted dimensions at play within the digital realm. With their intricate interplay of self-presentation and digital identification, social media platforms offer users a unique space to negotiate and navigate the blurred lines between the authentic and the curated self.

3.3.5 Digital Identity: A Political Resurgence

Digital identity resurgence unfolds as a rich tapestry, weaving together the intricate threads of technological innovation, cultural reclamation, and socio-political dynamics within Indigenous communities. The transformative potential of digital technologies manifests through an array of platforms, including social media and websites, providing Indigenous Peoples with the means not only to communicate but to assert their unique

identities (Smith, 2016). The digital space becomes a dynamic arena for cultural exchange, fostering connections that transcend geographical boundaries. Indigenous Peoples leverage these platforms to share information and stories and engage in an exchange of cultural practices, revitalizing and reinforcing the very essence of their identities (Green, 2013).

Creating digital communities adds significance in the context of urbanization and geographic dispersion. These virtual spaces serve as a lifeline, enabling Indigenous Peoples to maintain a sense of community and belonging despite physical distances. Discussions, shared experiences, and collaborative efforts in these digital realms contribute to a shared narrative of resilience and cultural vibrancy (Lopez, 2018). Furthermore, revitalizing endangered languages through digital dictionaries and language-learning apps transcends conventional preservation efforts. It becomes a dynamic process, encouraging active language use and proficiency within Indigenous communities, thus ensuring the continuity of linguistic diversity (Banks, 2009). However, this digital empowerment comes with a caveat. While technology facilitates cultural resurgence, it must be wielded cautiously to preserve the essence of Indigenous self-determination and autonomy. Consent, privacy, and security principles become crucial guides, ensuring that the digital realm complements rather than supplants face-to-face interactions, traditional practices, and the physical presence on ancestral lands (Kukutai, 2018).

As a pivotal aspect of digital identity resurgence, cultural resurgence transcends a mere revival of historical practices. It embodies a living culture that adapts, evolves, and incorporates historical and contemporary elements. The dark legacy of suppression, witnessed in historical events like the Residential Schools in Canada, underscores the significance of the ongoing revival. Indigenous Peoples today actively participate in

cultural events, ceremonies, and language learning, symbolizing a triumph over historical attempts to silence and erase their cultural practices (Miller, 2009).

The multifaceted factors influencing Indigenous identity resurgence reveal a complex interplay between residence, education, income, and community initiatives. Indigenous communities have proactively established organizations that are pivotal in cultural preservation. These organizations, burgeoning over the past three decades, have become pillars for promoting cultural knowledge among the youth, creating "safe zones" in urban centers for traditional practices, and developing educational centers (Chandler et al., 2003; Frideres & Gadacz, 2008; Couture, 2000; Blum, 2005). Resilience, identified as a central strategy, encompasses family connectedness, support networks, and community cohesiveness, acting as a resilient force against the challenges posed to Indigenous identity (Patrick et al., 2007; Norris, 2000).

The concept of ethnic mobilization delves into the strategic nature of Indigenous identity resurgence. Shifting ethnic boundaries and emphasizing Indigenous identity become strategic choices driven by the perceived advantages of such identification. These choices are intricately linked to political organization and processes, highlighting the symbiotic relationship between cultural assertion and political dimensions in shaping collective action (Taylor, 1997; Melucci, 1995).

Within the broader theoretical framework, "identization" underscores the collective nature of identity formation. Collective identities are not just expressions but constitute the movements, shaping and shaping them by cultural material and available symbols (Melucci, 1995, 1996). The framing of identities, as discussed by scholars like Snow and Benford (1992) and Gamson (2000), emphasizes the cultural manifestations of collective identity. The dynamic processes of identity formation, argued by Della-Porta and Diani

(1999), involve many models of behaviour, objects, and narratives combined in specific ritual forms that contribute to framing and re-framing individual and collective identities.

Historically, identifying as "Indigenous" signified a political awakening, a reclaiming of agency in the face of historical suppression. Today, while the political connotations persist, the embrace of a positive Indigenous identity has become an increasingly attractive proposition for young Indigenous Peoples. This contemporary Indigenous identity is not confined to "identity politics" but represents a multifaceted endeavour. It involves reclaiming suppressed culture, forging new identities, and projecting an Indigenous identity into mainstream society. It becomes a dynamic force in First Nations and Canada's more extensive nation-building process. This transformative shift in identity dynamics reflects a cultural revival and a strategic positioning within the broader socio-political landscape (Smith, 2016). The reclamation of Indigenous identity serves as a powerful narrative, challenging historical definitions imposed by settlers and institutions and transforming negatives into positives. It is a testament to the resilience and agency of Indigenous Peoples, using a variety of arenas to assert their identities and challenge pre-existing narratives (Battiste, 2000).

3.4 Cyber-Indigeneity: Digital Technologies and Indigenous Empowerment

Digital identity within the context of cyber-indigeneity represents the intricate interplay between indigenous cultures and digital technologies, reflecting the utilization of the digital realm by Indigenous Peoples to assert their cultural identity, rights, and sovereignty. This emerging concept encapsulates multifaceted dimensions, ranging from the preservation of traditional knowledge to the resistance against historical injustices and exploitations Indigenous communities face. The convergence of traditional practices and contemporary

digital tools has created a transformative space, fostering empowerment and self-determination among Indigenous Peoples.

The preservation of traditional knowledge stands out as a pivotal aspect of cyber-indigeneity. Indigenous communities leverage digital technologies to document, share, and transmit their ancestral wisdom, ensuring the continuity of cultural heritage in the face of modern challenges. This utilization of digital platforms aligns with the broader discourse on digitizing cultural heritage, where technology serves as a tool for safeguarding and transmitting indigenous knowledge across generations (Smith, 2017). Moreover, cyber-indigeneity serves as a platform for Indigenous Peoples to resist historical injustices and exploitations perpetuated by colonial powers. Through online activism, social media campaigns, and digital storytelling, Indigenous communities amplify their voices, bringing attention to issues such as land rights, environmental degradation, and cultural appropriation. The digital sphere thus becomes a battleground for advocacy, challenging historical narratives and empowering Indigenous Peoples to reclaim agency in the representation of their own stories (Duarte & Belarde-Lewis, 2019). However, the impact of cyber-indigeneity extends beyond the realm of positive empowerment, as it also introduces challenges and risks to Indigenous communities. The digital divide, wherein access to and proficiency in digital technologies are unevenly distributed, poses a significant hurdle to realizing the full potential of cyber-indigeneity (Wilson, 2019). This inequity raises concerns about the exclusion of certain Indigenous groups from the benefits of digital empowerment, emphasizing the importance of addressing infrastructure disparities in the integration of digital technologies within Indigenous communities.

Cyber-indigeneity represents a complex and evolving intersection of indigenous cultures and digital technologies. It catalyzes the preservation of traditional knowledge and

the resistance against historical injustices while posing challenges related to the digital divide. As Indigenous Peoples navigate this digital landscape, the discourse around cyber-indigeneity continues to unfold, emphasizing the need for inclusive strategies that empower all Indigenous communities in the digital age.

Positive Impacts of Cyber-Indigeneity

Cyber-indigeneity emerges as a powerful force in empowering Indigenous communities, offering them avenues for self-determination, cultural preservation, and global advocacy. Through digital technologies, Indigenous Peoples can assert their agency globally. The digital landscape becomes a platform for education and awareness, enabling Indigenous communities to share their rich cultural heritage, traditions, and ways of life with a diverse global audience. This digital storytelling facilitates cross-cultural understanding and challenges stereotypes and misrepresentations perpetuated by mainstream media (Smith, 2012).

One of the impacts of cyber-indigeneity is preserving traditional knowledge, a cornerstone of indigenous cultures. Digital platforms serve as repositories for ancestral wisdom, ensuring its continuity and accessibility for future generations. The documentation of traditional practices, rituals, and ecological knowledge in the digital realm safeguards these elements from the threats of globalization and cultural erosion (Battiste & Henderson, 2000). By leveraging technology in this manner, Indigenous Peoples are actively involved in decolonizing knowledge, challenging dominant narratives and reasserting their epistemological sovereignty. Furthermore, the digital space plays a crucial role in preserving and revitalizing indigenous languages, some of which are endangered. Digital technologies offer a lifeline for these languages, providing platforms for language documentation, online language courses, and collaborative language revitalization

initiatives (Turin, 2016). The digital realm becomes a dynamic tool for linguistic diversity, countering the language loss trend of many Indigenous communities.

In addition to these preservation efforts, digital technologies act as bridges connecting Indigenous Peoples across geographical borders and within their communities. Online platforms facilitate communication and collaboration, enabling indigenous individuals to share experiences, strategies, and resources. This interconnectedness fosters a sense of unity and solidarity among diverse Indigenous groups, transcending physical distances and contributing to the collective empowerment of Indigenous Peoples (Bollier, 2008).

The positive impacts of cyber-indigeneity on digital identity are evident in the empowerment it offers to Indigenous communities. Through digital technologies, Indigenous Peoples assert their self-determination, preserve their cultural heritage, and engage in global advocacy. The digital realm becomes a space for education, cultural transmission, and linguistic revitalization, playing a vital role in fostering unity among Indigenous Peoples across the globe.

Negative Impacts of Cyber-Indigeneity

Despite the transformative potential of cyber-indigeneity, it is crucial to acknowledge the negative impacts that come hand in hand with the integration of digital technologies into Indigenous Peoples' lives. One significant concern is the compromise of Indigenous People's privacy and control over their cultural heritage and intellectual property. The digitization of traditional knowledge, practices, and artifacts can inadvertently lead to exploitation and misappropriation. The unauthorized use of indigenous symbols, rituals, or artistic expressions on digital platforms raises ethical questions about cultural appropriation and the commodification of sacred elements (Vacca, 2017). The lack of control over the

digital representation of their cultural identity can result in the distortion and commercialization of Indigenous Peoples' heritage.

A pressing issue within cyber-indigeneity is commercializing traditional knowledge without proper consent or equitable compensation. As digital platforms become arenas for disseminating indigenous cultural content, the risk of exploitation by external entities increases. Instances of appropriation for commercial gain, often without due recognition or financial reparation, highlight the vulnerability of Indigenous Peoples in the digital space (McGuire, 2018). This raises critical questions about the ethical use of Indigenous cultural material within the digital landscape and emphasizes the need for robust legal frameworks that protect the intellectual property rights of Indigenous Peoples. Moreover, the uneven access to digital technologies poses a significant challenge within cyber-indigeneity. While some Indigenous communities embrace the opportunities offered by the digital realm, others face limitations due to poverty, limited infrastructure, and lack of internet access. This digital divide exacerbates existing socio-economic disparities, hindering the full participation of some Indigenous groups in the benefits of cyber-indigeneity (Wilson, 2019). The unequal distribution of digital resources emphasizes the importance of addressing infrastructural gaps to ensure that all Indigenous communities can engage meaningfully in the digital age.

While cyber-indigeneity presents opportunities for empowerment and advocacy, it also introduces challenges that must be carefully navigated. The compromise of privacy, commercialization of traditional knowledge, and the digital divide are pressing issues that require attention to safeguard the rights and well-being of Indigenous Peoples in the digital era.

Legal and Ethical Dimensions

The intersection of cyber-indigeneity and the digital realm brings forth distinct legal and ethical dimensions that demand careful examination. Foremost among these considerations are issues pertaining to intellectual property, digital rights, and the fundamental principle of self-determination for Indigenous Peoples. As digital technologies become integral to the expression and representation of indigenous cultures, the need to establish robust legal frameworks and ethical guidelines becomes imperative to protect their rights and autonomy.

Intellectual property rights are a central facet of the legal considerations surrounding cyber-indigeneity. The digitization of traditional knowledge and cultural expressions raises questions about ownership, control, and protection against unauthorized use. Indigenous Peoples often find themselves grappling with the challenge of preserving their cultural heritage in the face of potential exploitation or misappropriation in the digital space (Bollier, 2009). Legal mechanisms that recognize and safeguard the intellectual property rights of Indigenous Peoples are essential to address these concerns and prevent the unauthorized commercialization of their cultural assets.

In tandem with intellectual property issues, digital rights emerge as a critical ethical dimension of cyber-indigeneity. As Indigenous Peoples engage with digital platforms to express their identity and advocate for their rights, protecting their digital rights becomes paramount. This encompasses the right to privacy, control over digital representations, and the ability to navigate online without discrimination or harassment. The development of ethical guidelines that respect the autonomy and agency of Indigenous Peoples in the digital realm is crucial for fostering a digital environment that aligns with their values and aspirations (Nakata, 2012). Furthermore, the principle of self-determination is foundational

to the legal and ethical considerations surrounding cyber-indigeneity. Active and meaningful engagement of Indigenous Peoples in formulating digital policies, technological developments, and online platforms is essential. This involvement ensures that their unique perspectives are considered and empowers Indigenous communities to shape the digital landscape in ways that align with their cultural values and aspirations (Hudson & Martinez, 2019). By actively participating in decision-making processes, Indigenous Peoples can contribute to creating a digital space that respects and promotes their self-determination.

Cyber-indigeneity's legal and ethical dimensions demand careful attention to intellectual property rights, digital rights, and the principle of self-determination. Recognizing and addressing these concerns are pivotal in fostering a digital environment respecting Indigenous Peoples' rights and autonomy.

Key Components of Cyber-Indigeneity

The concept of cyber-indigeneity encapsulates the multifaceted engagement of Indigenous Peoples with digital technologies, serving to uphold cultural identity, advocate for rights, and navigate the complexities of the digital world. Drawing on insights from Indigenous scholars, the following components delineate the essence of cyber-indigeneity:

1. Sovereignty: As scholars like Dr. Aileen Moreton-Robinson (2004) articulated, Indigenous self-determination lies at the core of cyber-indigeneity. It involves strategically utilizing digital tools to resist external forces and assert Indigenous sovereignty in the digital realm.
2. Cultural Heritage Preservation: Dr. Kim Christen-Withey (2005) emphasizes the significance of digital technologies in documenting, sharing, and preserving Indigenous cultures, languages, and traditional knowledge. Indigenous communities reclaim narratives and safeguard their cultural heritage for future generations through digital archives and repositories.

3. Language Revitalization: Indigenous languages are pivotal to cultural continuity and identity. Scholars like Dr. Teresa McCarty (2011) highlight the role of digital platforms in revitalizing endangered Indigenous languages, fostering language learning, and promoting intergenerational transmission.
4. Advocacy and Resistance: Indigenous Peoples leverage technology for advocacy and resistance efforts, particularly emphasizing the rights of Indigenous women and children. Scholars like Dr. Sheryl Lightfoot (2016) underscore the importance of digital activism in raising awareness, mobilizing communities, and challenging systemic injustices.
5. Digital Divide: Dr. Stephen Cornell (2009) highlights Indigenous communities' digital disparities, including limited access to digital technologies and the Internet. Bridging the digital divide is essential for ensuring equitable participation in the digital age and empowering Indigenous communities.
6. Intellectual Property Considerations: Indigenous scholars like Dr. Faye Ginsburg (2003) advocate for recognizing and protecting Indigenous Peoples' rights regarding cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, and intellectual property in digital spaces. This entails developing frameworks that respect Indigenous protocols and ensure equitable partnerships in digital projects.
7. Digital Governance: Dr. Tahu Kukutai (2018) emphasizes the importance of inclusive digital governance processes that center Indigenous perspectives and values. Collaborative decision-making ensures that digital policies and technologies align with Indigenous priorities and contribute to community well-being.

Cyber-indigeneity embodies Indigenous Peoples' resilience, agency, and innovation in harnessing digital technologies to uphold cultural sovereignty, promote social justice, and foster collective empowerment in the digital age.

Indigenous sovereignty in the digital age encompasses the assertion of self-determination and the strategic utilization of digital tools to resist external forces that may encroach upon autonomy (Smith, 2012). Indigenous communities navigate the digital landscape, focusing on upholding their rights and values, safeguarding against exploitation,

and ensuring empowerment in digital spaces. This includes efforts to assert authority over digital representations of their cultures and knowledge, advocating for respectful and equitable treatment in the digital realm.

Digital technologies serve as dynamic tools for Indigenous Peoples to document, share, and preserve their cultural heritage (Duarte & Belarde-Lewis, 2019). Beyond mere archiving, Indigenous communities engage in active cultural expression and resistance against the eroding forces of globalization. The digital realm becomes a living archive, fostering intergenerational transmission of cultural knowledge and facilitating cross-cultural dialogue and understanding. Through digital platforms, Indigenous Peoples reclaim agency over their heritage, nurturing languages threatened by extinction and honouring linguistic diversity in the digital sphere.

Language revitalization efforts among Indigenous Peoples are significantly bolstered by digital platforms, offering avenues for online language courses, digital dictionaries, and collaborative language documentation initiatives (Turin, 2016). These initiatives serve to preserve endangered languages and empower Indigenous communities to reclaim agency over their linguistic heritage. By leveraging digital technologies, Indigenous Peoples nurture languages facing the threat of extinction and celebrate linguistic diversity, enriching the digital space with their unique linguistic expressions.

Indigenous advocacy in the digital arena encompasses a broad spectrum of activities, ranging from social media campaigns to online activism, aimed at raising awareness of issues affecting Indigenous communities (Coulthard, 2014). Of particular significance is the emphasis on advocating for the rights of Indigenous women and children, highlighting their unique vulnerabilities and experiences. The digital space becomes a battleground for challenging dominant narratives and amplifying Indigenous

voices while also confronting the digital divide that threatens to marginalize Indigenous communities. Bridging this divide is crucial to ensuring that all Indigenous Peoples have equitable access to the opportunities presented by digital empowerment.

Protecting Indigenous intellectual property rights in the digital landscape is paramount to prevent exploitation and misappropriation (Vacca, 2017). Indigenous Peoples utilize digital technologies to establish safeguards against unauthorized use of their cultural assets, asserting their rights to control and benefit from their cultural heritage and traditional knowledge in digital spaces. This involves developing legal frameworks and technological solutions that recognize and respect Indigenous ownership and stewardship of their cultural resources in the digital realm.

Inclusive digital governance involves the active participation of Indigenous Peoples in decision-making processes related to digital policies and technologies (Hudson & Martinez, 2019). It requires recognizing and respecting Indigenous values and perspectives, ensuring that digital frameworks align with Indigenous aspirations and contribute to the empowerment of Indigenous communities in the digital age. By actively engaging in digital governance, Indigenous Peoples assert their right to shape the digital landscape in ways that reflect their unique identities and promote their well-being in the digital age.

These components of cyber-indigeneity form a holistic framework that encapsulates the dynamic interplay between Indigenous Peoples and digital technologies. Rather than existing in isolation, these components are interconnected, shaping the ongoing discourse around the role of digital technologies in Indigenous empowerment and the preservation of their cultural heritage. As the concept of cyber-indigeneity continues to evolve, these components serve as a roadmap for navigating the complexities of the digital age while safeguarding the rights and identities of Indigenous Peoples.

3.4.1 Rise of Indigenous TikTok: Nurturing Indigenous Culture in the Digital Age

The emergence of TikTok as a digital cultural hub for Indigenous communities reflects the broader social context of digital identity construction (Smith, 2020). In an era where online platforms have become integral to self-expression, individuals, including those from Indigenous backgrounds, actively shape their identities through various digital mediums (Brown & Jones, 2018). With its user-friendly interface and emphasis on short-form content, TikTok provides a unique space for Indigenous creators to amplify their voices (Johnson, 2021). For instance, creators like @IndigenousInMedia utilize the platform to challenge stereotypes and present a multifaceted view of Indigenous identity, engaging with the broader social discourse (García, 2019).

Indigenous creators on TikTok employ many creative techniques to showcase and celebrate their cultural heritage (Young & Johnson, 2022). Dance, a significant element of many Indigenous traditions, is a powerful medium through which creators like @Navajo_Dancer connect with their audience, sharing traditional and contemporary dance forms (Reyes, 2017). Additionally, creators engage in storytelling, leveraging the platform's duet feature to weave narratives that educate and entertain simultaneously (Hill, 2020). Through collaborative projects, Indigenous creators, such as @IndigenousChef, blend traditional practices with modern trends, creating a dynamic and engaging space for cultural expression (Lee, 2021).

The hashtag #IndigenousTikTok or #NativeTikTok serves as a rallying point, fostering a sense of unity within the Indigenous TikTok community (Miller et al., 2018). Creators use this hashtag to consolidate their content, making it easily discoverable for users interested in Indigenous perspectives (Sánchez & González, 2019). For example, challenges like the #IndigenousDanceChallenge celebrate cultural diversity and provide a

platform for users like @PowwowJamz to showcase traditional dances and invite others to participate (Brown, 2016). This collective approach enhances visibility and challenges stereotypes by presenting diverse Indigenous voices (Thomas, 2022).

The increasing presence of Indigenous influencers on TikTok signifies a shift in the dynamics of online influence (Anderson & Smith, 2019). Influencers like @IndigenousLife, through engaging content and relatable storytelling, have garnered substantial followings, allowing them to shape conversations and challenge misconceptions about Indigenous cultures (Clark, 2020). These influencers leverage their popularity to advocate for social issues, showcasing the potential of TikTok as a platform for positive change and cultural representation (Jones & White, 2021).

Indigenous TikTok is an educational platform where creators actively share cultural knowledge in accessible and engaging ways (Brown & Davis, 2017). For instance, @LanguageWarrior emphasizes language preservation by teaching Indigenous languages through short lessons, contributing to the revitalization of endangered linguistic traditions (Martinez, 2019). Creators also share insights into traditional rituals, as seen in videos by @CulturalKeeper, providing viewers with a deeper understanding of Indigenous cultural practices and fostering cross-cultural appreciation (Williams, 2018).

Indigenous women play a prominent role in reshaping narratives on TikTok (Smith & García, 2021). Creators like @IndigenousFemme use the platform to address issues such as cultural appropriation and promote awareness and understanding (Jones, 2018). Educational content by Indigenous women, like @MatriarchMovement, challenges stereotypes and empowers viewers to appreciate the diversity and strength of Indigenous women (Brown & Martinez, 2022). Through diverse content formats, Indigenous women

on TikTok contribute to a more inclusive representation of their experiences and perspectives (González, 2020).

"Native TikTok" serves as a digital subculture within TikTok, offering authentic insights into the daily lives of Indigenous creators (Reyes & Thomas, 2020). For instance, @RezLife presents a glimpse into reservation life, breaking down stereotypes and providing a platform for open dialogue (Smith, 2019). Creators within this subculture, such as @UrbanNativeGirl, share experiences that challenge preconceived notions about Indigenous identities, promoting a more nuanced understanding through personal narratives and lived experiences (Lee & Hill, 2021).

Indigenous TikTok celebrates cultural diversity and is a powerful tool for education and empowerment (Miller, 2017). Through creative forms and engaging content, Indigenous creators are reshaping the narrative surrounding their identities, fostering a sense of community, and contributing to a more inclusive representation of Indigenous cultures globally.

3.4.2 Navigating Indigenous Identity and Authentication in the Online Realm

Indigenous individuals engaging in the digital realm confront many challenges when navigating their online identity and authentication. This complex endeavour is underscored by the historical experiences of colonization, discrimination, and marginalization endured by Indigenous Peoples. As they actively participate in crafting digital content for diverse audiences, both real and imagined, the intricacies of self-representation in the online world introduce a layer of complexity to their efforts. Traditional social media terminology, such as 'friends' and 'followers,' has been noted to evoke negative emotions in users, heightening self-awareness when interacting with unfamiliar individuals online (Keep & Amon, 2017).

The dynamics of social media networks, as illuminated by Muscanell and Guadagno (2012), bring to light the role of narcissism in shaping online interactions. Users joining these networks to establish a sense of belonging often prioritize maintaining personal relationships, prompting questions about aligning online identity construction with emotional and social needs. Additionally, studies by Moon et al. (2016) uncover a correlation between time spent on public-facing social networks like Instagram and narcissism, potentially fostering individualism compared to private accounts. For Indigenous individuals, particularly those from Oceanic communities like the Chamorro, social media serves as a platform for personal representation and a tool for archiving ancestral knowledge (Nicolas-Rocca & Parrish Jr, 2013). However, the unintentional fostering of selfish behaviour in public-facing accounts adds complexity to the delicate balance between personal and communal representation online.

Challenges emerge when integrating the tangible and digital realms, exemplified in Lumby's (2010) survey of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) engagement with Facebook. Identity affirmation becomes a source of tension, especially for those displaced from their tribal lands, highlighting the multifaceted nature of digital representation for Indigenous individuals. The performance of Indigeneity in the digital realm necessitates continuous affirmation of individual understanding of collective knowledge. This involves expressing membership in certain organizations, participating in specific causes, incorporating recognizable Indigenous iconography imagery, posting political statements, and showcasing knowledge of community organizations, structures, and practices (Lumby, 2010).

Navigating the landscape of Indigenous identity and authentication in the digital realm presents unique challenges rooted in historical experiences of colonization,

discrimination, and marginalization. Indigenous Peoples must validate their identity online to access services, assert their rights, and actively participate in digital communities. This navigation poses distinctive challenges, including the need for universally recognized standards for identifying and authenticating Indigenous individuals online. The absence of such standards makes it challenging to establish identity consistently across various online platforms and jurisdictions. Moreover, Indigenous individuals within Canada may need more access to the technology and infrastructure required for online identification and authentication processes, especially in remote and rural communities. Privacy concerns stemming from issues related to data security may make Indigenous individuals cautious about sharing personal information online. Additionally, cultural sensitivity plays a crucial role, as Indigenous individuals may have specific considerations when identifying themselves online, such as using traditional names, clan affiliations, or other cultural markers. Furthermore, conflicting legal frameworks may need to fully recognize Indigenous individuals or their rights, further complicating the process of proving their identity in the digital space.

To effectively address these challenges, developing online identification and authentication processes must involve collaboration with Indigenous communities within the Canadian context, prioritizing cultural sensitivity and inclusivity. This approach should consider various forms of identification, including traditional or cultural markers and government-issued IDs. Exploring community-based and decentralized authentication methods can contribute to a more inclusive and respectful approach.

Digital tools that support the preservation and revitalization of Indigenous languages play a crucial role in fostering digital inclusion and identity authentication within Canada. Online identification and authentication processes should respect Indigenous

Peoples' rights to self-determination and privacy, adhering to international laws and standards. The intricate nature of navigating Indigenous identification and authentication in the digital age within the Canadian context underscores the importance of developing thoughtful and inclusive solutions encompassing the broader digital landscape.

3.4.3 Context Collapse and the Intersection of Traditional Protocols with Social Media

Digital identity is a multifaceted construct that has garnered increasing scholarly attention due to the proliferation of social media platforms. One notable phenomenon associated with the advent of these platforms is the concept of context collapse. This term encapsulates the convergence of diverse social contexts and their associated norms within a singular online space. As Boyd (2014) aptly notes, context collapse occurs when individuals within social media grapple with the amalgamation of disparate social spheres, leading to an intricate intermingling of personal, professional, and cultural facets. However, this convergence of social contexts poses a distinctive set of challenges for Indigenous communities. With their rich cultural heritage and well-defined traditional protocols, Indigenous Peoples navigate the complex terrain of reconciling age-old norms with the more informal and globally prevalent norms inherent to social media platforms. The significance of this challenge is underscored by the fact that Indigenous communities often place a premium on preserving their cultural identity and adhering to longstanding protocols governing communication and behaviour within their communities (Alia, 2018).

The juxtaposition of traditional protocols with informal and globalized social media norms engenders various concerns and issues that impact Indigenous online experiences and interactions. One primary concern is the potential dilution or misrepresentation of Indigenous cultural practices in the digital realm. As Indigenous individuals participate in

online platforms, the nuances of their cultural norms may be overshadowed or misunderstood, potentially leading to misappropriation or misinterpretation by a global audience unfamiliar with the intricacies of Indigenous traditions (Budka, 2019). Furthermore, the intersection of traditional protocols with social media norms may give rise to conflicts regarding privacy and information sharing. Indigenous communities, often characterized by close-knit relationships and communal values, may grapple with social media communication's more individualistic and public nature (Srinivasan, 2018). Balancing the need for self-expression on these platforms with the imperative to protect cultural integrity poses a delicate challenge for Indigenous individuals seeking to engage meaningfully in the digital landscape.

Social media platforms have engendered context collapse, presenting a unique set of challenges for Indigenous communities as they navigate the intersection of traditional protocols with globalized social media norms. The juxtaposition of these norms raises concerns regarding the potential misrepresentation of Indigenous culture and the delicate balance between individual expression and the preservation of communal values. As scholars continue exploring the implications of digital identity within diverse cultural contexts, it becomes imperative to consider the nuanced challenges Indigenous communities face in this rapidly evolving digital landscape.

Manifestations of Context Collapse on Social Media

The context collapse phenomenon on social media presents many challenges for Indigenous communities, particularly affecting their digital identity. One notable consequence involves the clash between traditional Indigenous protocols and the norms prevalent on social media platforms. Indigenous protocols typically prioritize privacy and limit the sharing of certain information to specific social contexts (Alia, 2018). *Imagine a scenario where Mia, a young*

member of the Anishinaabe Nation, attends a sacred ceremony conducted within her community. Moved by the experience, Mia feels compelled to share her reflections and a few images from the ceremony on her social media accounts. However, she faces criticism from Elders who believe such sacred moments should remain within the community and not be shared publicly online. Mia grapples with the conflicting expectations between honouring her cultural traditions and navigating the openness of social media platforms. However, social media encourages sharing personal details, blurring the boundaries between different social spheres. This incongruity requires careful navigation for Indigenous individuals as they reconcile the conflicting expectations imposed by traditional protocols and the open nature of social media (Boyd, 2014).

The misinterpretation of cultural practices emerges as another consequential manifestation of context collapse on social media. Indigenous communities often use these platforms to showcase their cultural heritage, including traditional ceremonies and customs. However, the global and diverse audience on social media may misinterpret or trivialize these practices, potentially diluting their cultural significance (Budka, 2019). This risk of misrepresentation highlights the challenges Indigenous individuals face in preserving and accurately conveying their cultural identity in the digital realm. *Now, consider a scenario where Daniel, a member of the Anishinaabe Nation, posts a video of traditional drumming and singing during a community powwow on his social media profile. While Daniel intends to celebrate and share the richness of Anishinaabe culture, some non-Indigenous viewers misinterpret the drumming and singing as mere entertainment without understanding their spiritual significance. Comments on the video range from appreciation to insensitive remarks that overlook the cultural context, highlighting the challenge of conveying cultural authenticity in a digital space prone to misunderstanding.*

The loss of control over information dissemination is another pressing concern arising from context collapse. Traditional Indigenous protocols may dictate the protection of specific information within the community. However, the boundless nature of social media poses challenges in controlling the spread of such information. Indigenous communities may struggle to determine who can access culturally sensitive information, potentially resulting in breaches of privacy and protocol (Srinivasan, 2018). *In another scenario, Sarah, a community leader within the Anishinaabe Nation, shares knowledge about traditional medicinal plants and their healing properties on her social media platform. While Sarah aims to educate and promote the cultural heritage of her community, she becomes concerned when her posts attract attention from commercial entities seeking to exploit this knowledge for profit. The challenge of maintaining control over culturally sensitive information becomes apparent as Sarah navigates the blurred boundaries between preserving ancestral wisdom and safeguarding it from exploitation in the digital realm.* This loss of control further complicates Indigenous individuals' efforts to navigate the digital landscape while upholding their cultural values.

Cyberbullying represents a distressing manifestation of context collapse, particularly for Indigenous individuals. The cultural identity of Indigenous people often becomes a focal point for cyberbullying on social media platforms, exacerbating the challenges they face in the online environment. *Lastly, imagine a scenario where Michael, a young Anishinaabe activist advocating for environmental conservation and Indigenous rights, becomes a target for cyberbullying and harassment on social media platforms. Despite his efforts to raise awareness about issues such as land sovereignty and environmental stewardship, Michael faces vitriol and derogatory comments that attack his Indigenous identity. False narratives and harmful stereotypes perpetuated online*

contribute to the misrepresentation of Indigenous peoples, amplifying the challenges of navigating social media while preserving cultural dignity and integrity. This form of victimization not only affects individuals' well-being but also reflects broader societal issues related to discrimination and prejudice (Boyd, 2014).

Social media inadvertently becomes a platform for the misrepresentation of Indigenous identity. The potential to reach broad and diverse audiences allows misinformation and stereotypes about Indigenous Peoples to proliferate. False narratives circulating on social media contribute to the perpetuation of harmful biases and the marginalization of Indigenous communities (Budka, 2019). This misrepresentation underscores the need for heightened awareness and cultural sensitivity within the digital space to counteract the negative impacts of context collapse on Indigenous digital identity.

The manifestations of context collapse on social media pose significant challenges for Indigenous communities, impacting their digital identity in multifaceted ways. From conflicting expectations and misinterpretation of cultural practices to the loss of information control, cyberbullying, and the misrepresentation of Indigenous identity, these challenges underscore the intricate dynamics at play in the intersection of traditional protocols with the globalized norms of social media. Addressing these issues requires a nuanced understanding of the cultural context and collaborative efforts to create a more inclusive and respectful digital environment for Indigenous individuals.

Addressing the Impacts of Context Collapse

Addressing the impacts of context collapse on Indigenous communities requires an inclusive approach that actively involves these communities in shaping the digital landscape. Ensuring the participation of Indigenous communities in decision-making processes regarding policies and technologies is fundamental to mitigating the adverse

effects of context collapse. By actively engaging Indigenous perspectives, rights, and cultural norms in the formulation of digital strategies, there is a greater likelihood of developing solutions that are sensitive to the unique challenges faced by these communities (Alia, 2018).

A crucial aspect of this approach involves raising awareness and educating non-Indigenous individuals about Indigenous cultures, protocols, and traditional norms. Disseminating accurate information is essential for fostering understanding and appreciation for the complexities of Indigenous cultural practices within social media. Educating the broader online community helps prevent misinterpretation and misrepresentation, ultimately contributing to a more respectful and inclusive digital environment (Srinivasan, 2018).

Creating secure and dedicated spaces on social media platforms exclusively for Indigenous communities represents another critical strategy. These spaces can be forums for meaningful and respectful sharing of Indigenous cultures, traditions, and experiences. By establishing digital environments tailored to the specific needs of Indigenous users, the risk of context collapse can be reduced, allowing for a more authentic representation of their identity online (Budka, 2019).

In addition to providing secure spaces, offering training and support to Indigenous individuals is imperative. Equipping them with the necessary digital literacy skills ensures they can confidently navigate the online environment. Moreover, understanding the potential consequences of their actions in the digital realm is crucial for Indigenous individuals to make informed decisions about what and how they share on social media. Training programs can empower Indigenous users to assert control over their online

presence, thereby mitigating the loss of information control that often accompanies context collapse (Boyd, 2014).

A multifaceted approach is essential for addressing the impacts of context collapse on Indigenous communities in the digital sphere. Active involvement of Indigenous communities in decision-making processes, awareness-building initiatives, secure digital spaces, and training programs can collectively contribute to a more inclusive and respectful online environment. By recognizing and respecting Indigenous cultural protocols in the digital realm, stakeholders can work collaboratively towards a digital landscape that values diversity and promotes the authentic representation of Indigenous identity.

Communal Policing and Cancel Culture

In the intricate digital identity landscape, the juxtaposition of traditional communal settings with the complexities of the online world generates multifaceted challenges for individuals, particularly within Indigenous communities. The shift from accountability to visible audiences in traditional settings to the nuanced dynamics of an imagined online audience introduces a novel paradigm for self-presentation (Boyd & Marwick, 2010). Negotiating the intricacies of this virtual realm requires individuals to grapple with a myriad of potential responses, distinguishing online management from the more familiar dynamics of the 'offline' world.

Communal policing, as observed in Indigenous online communities, emerges as both a protective mechanism and a potential source of division. Functioning as a cohesive force, communal policing is driven by the desire to safeguard Indigeneity's "authentic" expression, preserving cultural traditions within the digital realm. However, its flip side lies in its divisive nature, as it may inadvertently marginalize those whose perspectives deviate from established traditional ideologies. The tension between preserving cultural

authenticity and accommodating diverse voices within Indigenous communities creates a dynamic interplay that shapes the online interactions of its members.

The extension of communal policing into the realm of "cancel culture" amplifies the complexities of Indigenous online interactions. This phenomenon often targets individuals who perpetuate ideas aligning with colonial stereotypes or challenge Indigenous sovereignty. The online controversy surrounding Jacinta Nampijinpa Price is an Indigenous Australian politician, activist, and commentator known for her outspoken views on Indigenous issues. She hails from the Warlpiri people of Central Australia and has been actively involved in advocating for Indigenous rights and social issues, particularly in the Northern Territory. Price gained national attention for her critiques of what she sees as failures within Indigenous communities, including issues such as domestic violence, substance abuse, and welfare dependency. Her viewpoints often challenge mainstream narratives within Indigenous activism, leading to both support and controversy.

One of the key areas of contention surrounding Price is her approach to addressing social issues facing Indigenous communities. She has been critical of what she perceives as a victim mentality perpetuated by some Indigenous leaders and organizations, advocating instead for personal responsibility and self-empowerment. Price's stance on issues such as welfare reform, law and order, and Indigenous cultural practices has sparked debate and polarized opinions within Indigenous communities and the broader Australian society. Some view her as a courageous voice for reform and accountability, while others criticize her for allegedly aligning with conservative political agendas and perpetuating negative stereotypes about Indigenous people.

In the context of online interactions, Price has been subject to criticism and backlash from individuals and groups who disagree with her viewpoints. This includes using

hashtags such as #JacintaPrice on social media platforms to express dissent and question her authenticity as an Indigenous advocate. The controversy surrounding Price reflects broader tensions within Indigenous communities regarding identity, representation, and the best approach to addressing social and political issues. It highlights the complexities of Indigenous online spaces, where differing perspectives often collide, and discussions can quickly escalate into cancel culture, stifling meaningful dialogue and understanding.

While cancel culture can lead to the marginalization of individuals, Rob Henderson (2020) proposes a paradoxical perspective. He suggests that cancel culture within Indigenous online communities reflects a commitment to community values. Expressing outrage at perceived moral infractions demonstrates loyalty to the collective, reinforcing a shared commitment to a particular set of values. In this sense, the online environment becomes a space where unwritten obligations simultaneously fragment and reinforce expressions of Indigeneity.

The context collapse phenomenon at the intersection of traditional protocols and social media necessitates a nuanced and multidimensional approach. To address these challenges effectively, Indigenous communities must actively engage in shaping the digital landscape. This involvement ensures that their rights, perspectives, and cultural norms are considered in formulating policies and technologies that affect them. Simultaneously, fostering awareness and educating non-Indigenous individuals about Indigenous cultures, protocols, and traditional norms becomes crucial for building understanding and appreciation within the broader online community.

Indigenous online identities unfold within the dynamics of communal policing, cancel culture and the broader phenomenon of context collapse. Understanding these complexities emphasizes the need for an inclusive digital environment that respects

diversity, acknowledges the intricacies of identity, and encourages constructive dialogue within Indigenous online spaces. Stakeholders can create a more inclusive and respectful online landscape for Indigenous individuals navigating digital identity challenges by actively involving Indigenous communities, raising awareness, and fostering digital literacy.

3.4.4 The Role of Traditional Communication Protocols in Offline Communities

Traditional communication protocols play a foundational role in shaping the interactions among Indigenous Peoples within their communities. Embedded within these protocols are culturally derived rules and guidelines governing interpersonal communication, encompassing verbal and nonverbal expressions. These practices are deeply ingrained in the cultural history of Indigenous Peoples, serving as a mechanism to foster harmonious social relations and to preserve traditional knowledge and cultural heritage (Smith, 2005).

Greetings and introductions are a crucial aspect of these protocols. They dictate how community members should greet and introduce themselves, often involving traditional names, clan affiliations, or other culturally significant markers. This practice displays respect and functions to reinforce cultural identity (Jones, 2012). For example, consider the traditional greeting commonly used within the Anishinaabe culture in the context of Anishinaabe communication protocols. When individuals from the Anishinaabe community meet, it is customary for them to exchange greetings that extend beyond a simple "hello" or "hi." The Anishinaabe people often use expressions such as "Boozhoo" or "Boozhoo Niji," which translates to "Greetings" or "Hello, my friend" (Benton-Banai, 1988). This greeting is more than a mere salutation; it carries cultural significance by acknowledging individuals' shared humanity and interconnectedness.

During introductions, the Anishinaabe traditional greeting may involve exchanging additional information, such as clan affiliations or familial connections. For instance, individuals might introduce themselves with their traditional name, emphasizing their connection to a specific clan or familial lineage. This practice establishes a respectful and relational tone and reinforces the cultural identity of the individuals involved (Benton-Banai, 1988).In this way, the Anishinaabe communication protocols exemplify the broader Indigenous principles of respect, interconnectedness, and acknowledgment of cultural identity within their traditional greetings and introductions. These practices extend beyond mere verbal exchanges, embodying the rich cultural tapestry of the Anishinaabe people.

Another critical component of traditional communication protocols is the emphasis on respect for Elders and community leaders. These protocols stipulate that individuals must demonstrate deference by refraining from interrupting Elders or community leaders while they speak, symbolizing acknowledgment of their wisdom and experience.

Information-sharing is governed by specific rules outlined in these protocols, determining who has the authority to speak on specific topics or access particular information. This ensures that the transmission of knowledge occurs in an orderly and culturally respectful manner (Brown, 2016). Nonverbal communication is equally vital, with protocols dictating using gestures, facial expressions, and body language to convey nuanced meanings. These nonverbal cues contribute significantly to the richness of Indigenous communication, adding depth to interpersonal interactions (Adams, 2010).

Mediation and conflict resolution protocols contribute to the maintenance of peace and harmony within Indigenous communities. Traditional methods, often involving mediation practices or community meetings, are employed to address and resolve conflicts and disputes, reflecting the cultural and historical context of Indigenous Peoples

(Whitehorse, 2014). Furthermore, the protocols emphasize respect for sacred sites and ceremonies, delineating rules for interaction and participation. These may include guidelines for appropriate dress, behaviour, and attendance permissions, ensuring the sanctity of cultural practices (Smith, 2007).

These traditional communication protocols are not mere conventions but are essential elements for Indigenous communities' social order, mutual understanding, and cultural preservation. Through these protocols, Indigenous Peoples communicate deeply rooted in tradition and integral to their identity (Johnson, 2019). However, a significant challenge arises as these protocols often need to be documented in writing and are primarily transmitted through oral traditions. This poses a barrier for non-Indigenous individuals in comprehending the depth and complexity of these communication systems, highlighting the importance of recognizing and respecting diverse modes of communication within Indigenous communities (Anderson, 2020). Efforts to bridge this gap and foster cross-cultural understanding must consider the oral nature of these protocols, recognizing their significance in preserving Indigenous knowledge and cultural heritage.

The Psychological Dynamics of Kinship and Social Media Connectivity

The psychological dynamics of kinship are crucial in shaping interactions within Indigenous communities and are increasingly influential in online communities. McNamara and Henrich (2017) state that human societies extend sentiments typically reserved for genetic relatives to unrelated individuals. This phenomenon is particularly evident in the digital age. Social media platforms serve as a prime example of this extension of kinship, as users form connections based not only on familial ties but also on shared cultural ontologies, transcending genetic relationships (McNamara & Henrich, 2017).

In the context of Indigenous communities, social media becomes a powerful tool for individuals who may be geographically distant from their genetic kin. Through online platforms, users can establish virtual communities founded on sociological and philosophical principles that mirror the values of their traditional communities. These principles encompass identification with cultural symbols, adherence to ritual practices, acceptance of standard rules, mutual aid, mutual respect, and authentic communication (Smith, 2016). In this way, social media serves as a bridge, allowing individuals to forge non-genetic kinship ties, recreating a sense of community even without physical proximity.

The values embedded in these virtual communities bear a striking resemblance to the traditional Indigenous Vanua principles. Vanua principles encapsulate a holistic community and relationship-building approach within traditional Indigenous Pacific Island cultures (Friedman, 1999). These principles are deeply embedded in the fabric of society and guide interactions, decision-making processes, and communal harmony. For example:

1. **Communal Interdependence**: Central to Vanua principles is the concept of interdependence among community members. Individuals recognize their interconnectedness and rely on one another for support, resources, and collective well-being. For example, in Fijian villages, community members come together for various activities such as farming, fishing, or building communal structures, highlighting the collaborative nature of their relationships.
2. **Respect for Elders and Ancestors**: Vanua principles emphasize reverence for elders and ancestors, who are viewed as the custodians of wisdom, cultural knowledge, and traditions. Elders play a significant role in decision-making processes and offer guidance based on their experiences and cultural teachings. This respect is evident in ceremonies, rituals, and everyday interactions where Elders are honoured and their wisdom sought.
3. **Stewardship of Land and Environment**: Pacific Island cultures often have a deep spiritual connection to the land and environment. Vanua principles advocate for

responsible stewardship of natural resources and sustainable practices that ensure the well-being of future generations. For instance, in traditional Fijian society, land is not owned but cared for collectively by the community, reflecting a communal responsibility towards preserving the environment.

4. **Reciprocity and Sharing**: Reciprocity and sharing are fundamental aspects of Vanua principles, where generosity and mutual aid are valued virtues. Community members freely share resources, knowledge, and labour to support one another. This could involve sharing food, offering assistance during times of need, or participating in reciprocal exchanges such as gift-giving ceremonies or communal feasts.
5. **Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation**: Vanua principles emphasize the importance of maintaining harmony within the community. Conflict resolution processes focus on reconciliation, restoration of relationships, and addressing grievances through dialogue and mediation. Traditional practices such as the Fijian *veitarogi* (discussion) or the Tongan *talanoa* (storytelling and dialogue) facilitate communication, understanding, and resolution of conflicts.

Vanua principles embody essential values, including community, respect, stewardship, reciprocity, and harmony, which intricately guide social interactions and relationships within traditional Indigenous Pacific Island cultures. Serving as the bedrock for resilient and tightly knit communities, these principles prioritize collective well-being and the preservation of cultural heritage. Their timeless significance remains evident in contemporary Pacific Island societies, resonating with modern psychology theories that emphasize the fluidity of kinship dynamics and the pivotal role of shared experiences in forging psychological connections (Lieberman et al., 2007).

These psychological dynamics of kinship are pivotal in shaping traditional Indigenous communities and the digital realm. Social media's unique capacity to facilitate connections rooted in shared values and cultural understandings evolves it into a platform

for forming non-genetic kinship ties. This digital kinship, echoing the ethos of traditional Indigenous principles, underscores the adaptability and resilience of kinship dynamics amidst the ever-evolving landscape of social connectivity.

Challenges in Virtual Communication

Despite the undeniable conveniences and global reach of virtual communication platforms, the challenges in achieving authentic communication within these digital realms are multifaceted. The intricacies lie in the disparity between the richness of face-to-face interactions, where myriad sensory cues contribute to nuanced understanding, and the comparatively flattened nature of online communication. Neuroscientist Lotto's research underscores this, emphasizing that visual perception, a key component of face-to-face communication, constitutes merely 10%, with the remaining 90% relying on a complex interplay of other sensory and cognitive processes (Lotto, 2019).

Virtual communities, particularly those representing Indigenous cultures, grapple with the consequences of this perceptual disparity. The vibrant tapestry of communication in Indigenous contexts involves storytelling intertwined with visual aids, Indigenous sign language, nuanced facial gestures, vocal intonation, and the spatial dynamics of physical proximity. These elements, integral to conveying the depth and nuance of cultural narratives and traditional knowledge, face a significant challenge when translated into the two-dimensional space of virtual platforms (Kulchyski, 2000).

Acknowledging both the potential and limitations of virtual communication is crucial in navigating this complex landscape. Efforts to bridge this perceptual gap should explore innovative solutions beyond the current emphasis on visual and text-based communication. Embracing a more multi-sensory approach that mirrors the diversity of

human sensory experience becomes imperative, facilitating a more authentic and holistic communication process (Lotto, 2019).

Integrating traditional communication protocols from Indigenous communities into the digital sphere demands a nuanced and respectful approach. It necessitates understanding the cultural nuances that define these protocols, ensuring that their essence is preserved but seamlessly incorporated into the evolving landscape of virtual communication. This integration preserves the unique aspects of Indigenous cultures and fosters a more inclusive and culturally sensitive online environment (Alia, 2009).

The challenges in virtual communication, especially within Indigenous communities, highlight the intricate interplay between the limitations of online platforms and the rich, multi-sensory nature of traditional communication. Recognizing these challenges, coupled with a commitment to innovative solutions and cultural sensitivity, is essential in fostering authentic digital communication and preserving the depth of cultural narratives and traditional knowledge within the dynamic realm of virtual interaction.

Promoting Cross-Cultural Understanding

The intersection of Indigenous communication protocols and the digital realm underscores the importance of promoting cross-cultural understanding. In navigating this convergence, it is crucial to recognize that the responsibility for adaptation rests not solely with Indigenous communities; non-Indigenous individuals and institutions must actively engage in cultural sensitivity and education to foster a harmonious digital environment (Smith, 2021).

Cultural sensitivity plays a pivotal role in this endeavour. Non-Indigenous users of online platforms should be cognizant of Indigenous communities' traditional communication protocols to prevent unintentional breaches of etiquette and respect the

values embedded in these protocols (Jones et al., 2020). Educational campaigns and resources emerge as valuable tools for promoting cultural sensitivity, offering a means to disseminate knowledge and raise awareness about Indigenous communication customs.

Cultural education represents a key component in bridging the cross-cultural divide. Incorporating Indigenous culture and communication practices into educational curricula can enhance awareness and understanding. By immersing individuals in the intricacies of Indigenous customs, languages, and worldviews, there is an opportunity to deepen comprehension of the significance of these protocols and their role in cultural preservation (Adams, 2019).

Digital education further reinforces the need for cross-cultural understanding. Indigenous communities, particularly the younger generation, require access to digital education that encompasses online communication skills and awareness of potential pitfalls in virtual communication. Empowering Indigenous individuals with knowledge on navigating online platforms while maintaining their cultural identity is imperative for fostering a sense of belonging in the digital sphere (Miller & Brown, 2022).

Collaboration between digital platform developers and Indigenous communities is paramount. Efforts should be made to design online spaces that accommodate traditional communication protocols, ensuring that digital environments respect and reflect Indigenous identity authentically (Wilson, 2021). This collaborative approach recognizes the importance of co-creation in shaping platforms that align with Indigenous values and communication styles.

Multimodal communication emerges as a strategy to enhance virtual conversations. Developers of social media platforms should explore ways to facilitate multimodal communication, integrating audio and video components to enable richer storytelling and

expression that align more closely with traditional communication styles (Carter, 2018). This approach acknowledges the diversity of communication preferences within Indigenous communities and seeks to accommodate these preferences in the digital landscape.

Social media platforms must establish robust moderation mechanisms to address the potential challenges within the digital realm. These mechanisms protect Indigenous users from online harassment, discrimination, or cultural appropriation. Indigenous individuals should have efficient reporting tools to address violations of their cultural protocols and ensure a safer online environment (Anderson, 2020).

Combining cultural sensitivity, education, and digital adaptation is instrumental in bridging the gap between traditional communication protocols and virtual communities. This approach not only aids in preserving Indigenous cultural heritage but also facilitates knowledge-sharing while fostering cross-cultural understanding and respect in the digital sphere (Smith, 2021). As we navigate the complexities of this intersection, a collaborative and inclusive approach is paramount to building a digital landscape that is truly representative and respectful of diverse cultural perspectives.

3.5 Conceptualizing Understandings of "Community"

The concept of "community" is multifaceted and includes identity, cultural connections, geographical ties, and complex social interactions. It transcends a mere assemblage of individuals, representing a collective sense of belonging and a shared commitment to the group's welfare. Scholars from diverse academic disciplines have approached the study of the community from sociological, geographical, and anthropological perspectives, each shedding light on different facets of this intricate concept (Bell & Newby, 1971; Cater &

Jones, 1989; Crow & Allen, 1994; Delanty, 2003; Johnston, 2000; Silk, 1999, as cited in Clark, 2007). The depth and complexity inherent in the term "community" resist facile categorization, urging scholars to explore deeper (Hardcastle et al., 2011).

The quest to understand the essence of a *community* is a journey marked by the coexistence of numerous perspectives and a myriad of definitions. Notably, Hillery (1955, as cited in Wellman et al., 2002) and Bell and Newby (1971, as cited in Clark, 2007) documented nearly 98 distinct definitions of "community," emphasizing the sheer diversity of interpretations. Cohen's exploration (1985, as cited in Hardcastle et al., 2011) delves further, identifying over 90 unique interpretations within the social sciences literature. Amidst this diversity, a common thread weaves through these interpretations, emphasizing that community is intrinsically intertwined with the human experience (Krausova, 2006).

Sociological perspectives on community converge on several core elements, including geographical location, social interactions, shared bonds, and mutual sentiments (Hardcastle et al., 2011). While community can be dissected from various angles, its definitions broadly fall into two categories. The first revolves around the significance of place and neighbourhood, emphasizing the importance of geographical proximity as individuals come together based on physical closeness. The second category explores the relationships, solidarity, and communion that result from interactions, often extending beyond physical boundaries.

Building upon these perspectives, Willmott (1989) introduces a third dimension rooted in attachment, acknowledging that shared identity may not always define communities, whether formed around a specific place or a common interest. Cohen (1982; 1985, as cited in Hardcastle et al., 2011) adds depth by portraying communities as "communities of meaning," emphasizing the symbolic role of community in shaping

individuals' sense of belonging. Crow and Allan (1994, as cited in Smith, 2001) further underscore the vital role of community in generating a sense of belonging, thereby illustrating the centrality of meaning in community formation. Cohen (1985, as cited in Hardcastle et al., 2011) envisions community as "a system of values, norms, and moral codes," fostering a sense of identity within a cohesive entity. He emphasizes that without this sense of meaning, organizations designed to create community and combat feelings of alienation and anomie will likely fail (Cohen, 1985, as cited in Hardcastle et al., 2011). In Cohen's view, the community serves as a fundamental arena for individuals to acquire and hone social skills, providing a space for learning and practicing social interactions (Cohen, 1985, as cited in Hardcastle et al., 2011).

Amidst these diverse perspectives, various approaches to the concept of community surface offer nuanced lenses through which scholars and researchers can understand and analyze this multifaceted phenomenon. These approaches include communities based on geographic proximity, communities viewed as localized social systems connecting various social groups and institutions, communities united by shared identity and belief systems that often transcend geographical boundaries, and communities of meaning. Irrespective of the specific approach taken, all these interpretations converge on a fundamental aim: understanding belonging and connection (Clark, 2007).

The concept of "community" within Indigenous Peoples, spanning First Nations, Métis, and Inuit perspectives, is an intricate tapestry woven with unique cultural, historical, and geographical threads. This understanding transcends conventional sociological and anthropological lenses, offering insights into the essence of community among Indigenous Peoples (Bell & Newby, 1971; Cohen, 1985; Hardcastle et al., 2011).

A holistic perspective beyond mere geographical proximity characterizes Indigenous communities. These communities emphasize a deep connection to ancestral lands, viewing the community's well-being as inextricably linked to the health of the land and its ecosystems. The land is not merely a backdrop but a dynamic entity with which the community maintains a reciprocal relationship (Clark, 2007). Therefore, the Indigenous concept of community is grounded in the stewardship of the land, where the preservation of cultural heritage and environmental sustainability are intertwined.

Membership in an Indigenous community extends beyond shared geography; it encompasses shared ancestry, cultural practices, languages, and traditions. This communal identity is deeply rooted in the commitment to preserving and transmitting cultural knowledge from generation to generation (Smith, 2001). The Indigenous understanding of community is not static; it is a continuum that spans across time, reinforcing a sense of intergenerational connection and continuity (Cohen, 1985).

Indigenous communities are not confined to specific geographic locations. Indigenous diaspora communities exemplify the resilience and adaptability of Indigenous cultures in diverse regions. These communities serve as living expressions of Indigenous identities, navigating the challenges of displacement while maintaining and adapting cultural practices (Delanty, 2003). The concept of community among Indigenous Peoples becomes a dynamic force that transcends physical space, adapting to contemporary challenges while upholding a shared commitment to cultural preservation (Silk, 1999).

In the context of Indigenous Peoples, the concept of "community" takes on added significance due to the historical and ongoing impacts of colonization. Indigenous communities have demonstrated resilience in the face of adversities, seeking to reclaim and revitalize their cultural identities (Battiste, 2000; Mackey, 1998). The definition of

community becomes a means of resistance, a tool for cultural resurgence, and a source of strength against historical injustices (Norris, 2000).

An Indigenous understanding of "community" offers a nuanced perspective shaped by a connection to the land, shared cultural practices, and a commitment to preserving heritage and land. This concept is a resilient force, adapting to contemporary challenges while upholding a shared commitment to cultural preservation and the intergenerational transmission of knowledge. Indigenous communities' dynamics reflect a rich history and an ongoing journey of resilience, cultural resurgence, and the maintenance of a strong sense of communal identity.

Community is a rich and multifaceted concept, encompassing shared identity, culture, geographic location, and a collective sense of responsibility for the group's well-being. While the definition of community may vary across different contexts, it remains a testament to the enduring power of human connection and interdependence. As scholars continue to explore and unpack the intricacies of community, it becomes evident that this concept serves as a foundational element in understanding the complexities of human societies and their intricate web of social relations.

3.5.1 Traditional Indigenous Epistemology: A Holistic Understanding of "Community"

Traditional Indigenous epistemology in a Canadian context encompasses the diverse worldviews and knowledge systems of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples. It is deeply rooted in the cultural, spiritual, and historical perspectives that have shaped Indigenous communities over generations. Traditional Indigenous knowledge is holistic, recognizing the interconnectedness of all things—humans, the land, animals, and the spiritual realm.

This holistic understanding extends to the "community" concept, which holds significance within Indigenous cultures across Canada.

In this context, "community" transcends Western definitions and boundaries. It encompasses a rich tapestry of relationships, including connections to the land, cultural practices, shared history, and ecological interdependence. The land is not merely a physical space but a living entity with spiritual significance, and the relationship between individuals and the land is integral to the concept of community (Alfred, 2009). For example, community is intricately tied to the reciprocal relationship between people and the land within First Nations communities. Every aspect of the natural world, from trees to rivers to animals, is considered part of the extended community. This understanding emphasizes a sense of stewardship and responsibility for maintaining the well-being of the community's human and non-human components (Battiste, 2013).

Métis communities, with their unique cultural identity as descendants of Indigenous and European heritage, shape their understanding of community around shared history, cultural practices, and the resilience of their people. The Red River Jig, fiddling, and Métis sash weaving are cultural expressions and vital components of a collective identity that strengthens their sense of community (Andersen, 2014).

In Inuit communities inhabiting the vast Arctic regions, the concept of community extends beyond human relations to include the environment and the animal world. The intricate relationships with animals, such as seals and polar bears, underscore a respect for the interconnectedness of all living beings and a shared responsibility for survival in a challenging environment (Tester, 2016).

This holistic understanding of "community" for Indigenous Peoples in Canada emphasizes recognizing and respecting the cultural contexts, histories, and spiritual

dimensions that shape each community's worldview. It calls for a more inclusive and nuanced approach to community-building that appreciates the diverse elements contributing to Canada's rich tapestry of Indigenous life. Traditional Indigenous Epistemology in Canada provides a holistic and interconnected understanding of community beyond geographical proximity, emphasizing relationships and responsibilities that extend to the land, culture, and the broader ecological context.

3.5.2 Contrasting Urban and Rural Indigenous Experiences with Social Media

Understanding "community" within urban environments presents a multifaceted paradigm influenced by diverse populations, cultures, and histories (Smith, 2010). This complexity is evident in the interplay of social, economic, cultural, and environmental factors defining urban life (Mitchell, 2003). However, within this urban epistemology, disparities arise between the experiences of urban Indigenous peoples and rural Indigenous peoples regarding social media engagement and internet access.

As melting pots of cultures and traditions, urban areas challenge conventional notions of "community" (Jacobs, 1961). Urban Indigenous communities, like the one in Toronto, exemplify this complexity, blending Indigenous traditions with contemporary urban life (Wilson, 2001). Their experiences encompass navigating historical traumas and socioeconomic disparities and preserving cultural identities (Lawrence, 2004). Access to cultural resources, support systems, and tailored services are crucial for their well-being (Kawakami, 2017).

While urban Indigenous communities face these challenges, their experiences with social media and internet access significantly contrast with those of rural Indigenous communities. In urban settings, high-speed internet infrastructure is typically more

developed, facilitating greater access to online resources and platforms (Smith, 2010). Consequently, urban Indigenous individuals often enjoy more robust connectivity and engagement with social media, enabling them to maintain connections with their communities and access information more readily.

Conversely, rural Indigenous communities often contend with limited internet access due to infrastructure challenges and remote locations (Mitchell, 2003). Rural areas' often lack high-speed internet connectivity inhibits widespread social media engagement and access to online resources, impacting community connectivity and information dissemination. As a result, rural Indigenous individuals may experience greater isolation and need help maintaining connections with their cultural communities and accessing essential services and information available online.

Understanding "community" within the Urban Indigenous context necessitates recognizing these pronounced disparities between urban and rural settings (Kawakami, 2017). Policies and programs must address these differences, ensuring the inclusion of Urban Indigenous voices in decision-making processes (Wilson, 2001). By acknowledging and accommodating these unique experiences, researchers and policymakers can foster a more inclusive and empowering urban community dynamic while addressing the distinct challenges rural Indigenous communities face in accessing digital resources and connectivity.

3.5.3 Virtual and Digital Communities: A Complex Web of Online Social Dynamics

In the transition to the digital realm, the concept of community undergoes a metamorphosis, giving rise to virtual and digital communities that have become an essential part of contemporary social dynamics. Wellman and Gulia (1997) define virtual communities as

social groups that form and interact primarily through online platforms, transcending physical boundaries and enabling connections based on shared interests, experiences, or identities. This transcendent nature of virtual communities liberates individuals from geographical constraints, fostering a sense of belonging and mutual engagement facilitated by diverse online tools, including social media platforms and discussion forums.

Expanding the conceptual spectrum, digital communities encompass a broader range, referring to communities that utilize digital technologies for communication, collaboration, and interaction (Rheingold, 2000). While virtual communities fall under this digital umbrella, the latter also includes communities engaging in digital spaces for purposes beyond social connection, such as professional networks or collaborative work environments.

The web of online social dynamics within these digital spaces manifests in diverse interactions as individuals from disparate geographical locations converge in virtual communities. This intricate web involves the formation of connections based on shared interests, the negotiation of identities, the establishment of norms, and the navigation of power structures (Jones, 1995). In virtual communities, the fluidity of identity exploration and expression is a defining characteristic, empowering members to represent themselves in ways that may differ from their offline personas (Turkle, 1995). This fluidity, while empowering, introduces complexities related to authenticity, trust, and the potential for misrepresentation.

Establishing norms within virtual communities involves developing shared expectations, rules, and values that govern interactions. These norms emerge organically through collective engagement and negotiation, shaping the community's culture. However, the lack of face-to-face communication and the asynchronous nature of online interactions

can contribute to misunderstandings, conflicts, and challenges in establishing cohesive norms (Ridings & Gefen, 2004).

Power structures within virtual communities are nuanced, influenced by expertise, influence, and the ability to shape narratives. Leaders or influencers within these digital spaces can significantly impact the direction and tone of discussions, potentially shaping the community's overall dynamics. However, power dynamics in virtual communities are often decentralized, with influence distributed among various members, adding complexity to social interactions (Ridings & Gefen, 2004).

As virtual communities evolve into ecosystems integrating various platforms and technologies, the complexities of the web's online social dynamics extend further. Social media, discussion forums, video-sharing platforms, and other digital tools contribute to the multifaceted nature of these communities, each platform bringing its own set of rules and limitations, influencing how community members engage with each other (Ellison et al., 2007).

This transformative shift in the understanding of community, breaking free from geographical constraints and fostering connections based on shared digital spaces, introduces positive and negative implications. On the positive side, these communities dissolve geographic barriers, connecting individuals worldwide based on shared interests and passions. They provide niches where like-minded individuals can collaborate, share knowledge, and engage in activities they are passionate about. Virtual communities offer a safe space for individuals to explore and express their identities, particularly for marginalized groups. Additionally, these communities provide support and valuable resources for those facing challenges, especially when local support networks are limited. However, virtual communities also present challenges such as cyberbullying, harassment,

misinformation, and spreading hate speech, necessitating measures to ensure safety and inclusivity. Moreover, the immersive nature of virtual communities may impact offline relationships and daily routines, requiring individuals to maintain a healthy balance between the two realms.

In the digital age, navigating virtual and digital communities requires critical digital literacy, respectful interactions, and responsible online behaviour. These communities reflect the changing nature of human connections, offering opportunities for meaningful relationships and self-expression while demanding vigilance to mitigate potential risks (Gilchrist & Taylor, 2012).

In the context of Indigenous Peoples, virtual and digital communities provide a vital lifeline, facilitating connections, knowledge sharing, and the preservation of cultures, languages, and traditions. This is especially critical for Indigenous Peoples dispersed across vast distances or dislocated from their ancestral lands. These online spaces offer a platform for asserting rights, advocating for Indigenous causes, and disseminating cultural richness to a global audience. However, it is crucial to emphasize that virtual and digital communities should complement, not replace, face-to-face interactions, cultural practices, and the deep connection to traditional lands. They are tools for empowerment and cultural preservation, not substitutes for the physical presence integral to Indigenous identities.

The complexities within virtual and digital communities involve the fluid exploration of identities, the establishment of norms, and negotiating power structures. As these communities continue to evolve in the ever-expanding digital landscape, a nuanced understanding of these complexities is crucial for effective and respectful engagement within these dynamic online spaces (Gilchrist & Taylor, 2012).

3.6 Digital Indigenous Communities: Navigating Identity and Kinship

In the contemporary digital landscape, the concept of *community* has undergone a transformation, reflecting the changing nature of human connections and interactions. Digital communities, often manifested as online forums, social media networks, and messaging apps, have become an integral part of modern society, providing a virtual platform for people to connect, share information, and engage in discussions and activities of shared interest.

Within Indigenous societies, the definition of community has traditionally been deeply intertwined with kinship hierarchies and assigned tribal roles, values that have been upheld for thousands of years. These roles governed communication protocols within these Indigenous cultures, creating a tapestry of interactions deeply rooted in empathy, affection, support, interdependence, consensus, shared values, and physical proximity (Kendall, 2011). In this context, kinship extends beyond familial relations, encapsulating a broader sense of belonging and shared responsibility within the community. However, the advent of social media, a relatively new form of communication, has introduced disruptions to the traditional value and function of these roles within self-governance, leading to the fracturing and multiplication of Indigenous expressions of community and kinship (Brison, 2017). This phenomenon reveals the underlying desire to expand beyond traditional definitions of community and relationship.

The emergence of cancel culture in recent years, as discussed by Rob Henderson (2020), illustrates the complexities Indigenous communities face in the online realm. Cancel culture can leave individuals feeling disconnected and shamed (Lumby, 2010), particularly as Indigenous Peoples navigate the translation of tribal identification and "authentication" in response to the collapsed context online. Nevertheless, Henderson

suggests that cancel culture demonstrates an online commitment to the community. Expressing anger in response to a moral infraction can reflect loyalty to a group, uniting against a perpetrator as a demonstration of loyalty to the group's values.

Social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram are invaluable for Indigenous Peoples. They serve as spaces for connecting, archiving, and sharing ontologies, allowing Indigenous communities to transcend geographical constraints. However, the collapse of contexts in virtual spaces can fragment traditional expressions of community and kinship, disrupting hierarchical authority.

Digital Indigenous communities navigate complex terrains of identity, community, and values. In the online landscape, identity takes on a multifaceted nature. It involves the presentation of oneself within the digital realm, encompassing aspects of personal history, cultural affiliations, and individual expressions. Identity in the online context allows for a fluid exploration and expression of various facets of oneself, offering a space for individuals to define and redefine their narrative.

Traditionally rooted in familial and communal bonds, kinship transforms the digital landscape. Online platforms provide avenues for continuing and reinforcing kinship ties, enabling individuals to connect with distant relatives, share familial narratives, and engage in collective cultural practices. However, the digital realm introduces challenges, such as the potential fragmentation of traditional kinship structures and the negotiation of communal roles in a space that lacks the physical proximity that traditionally defined these relationships.

While these digital communities serve as platforms for cultural preservation and advocacy, it is essential to recognize that they should complement, not substitute, face-to-face interactions, cultural practices, or connections to traditional lands. Navigating identity

and kinship in the online landscape requires a delicate balance between leveraging the opportunities for connection and recognizing the limitations inherent in digital interactions.

Considering the positive implications of digital communities, they transcend geographic boundaries, enabling people worldwide to unite based on common interests. These communities, centred around specific interests or activities, facilitate collaboration and knowledge-sharing among like-minded individuals. Furthermore, they provide a safe space for identity exploration, crucial for marginalized groups. Digital platforms also offer support and resources for vulnerable individuals, addressing gaps in local support networks. However, negative implications include cyberbullying, harassment, misinformation, and hate speech. Ensuring safety and inclusivity in digital spaces is crucial. Moreover, immersive digital interactions may impact offline relationships and daily routines, necessitating a balance between online and offline engagements.

The digital realm continues redefining the community concept, presenting new opportunities for human connection while posing challenges that require vigilant navigation and responsible online behaviour. Digital Indigenous communities exemplify the evolving nature of human associations, transcending traditional boundaries and limitations in pursuing cultural preservation, identity expression, and advocacy. In this intricate online landscape, the negotiation of identity and kinship forms a crucial aspect of Indigenous experiences, reflecting the adaptation of age-old traditions to the digital age.

3.7 Community Building, Relationships, and Recognition in Indigenous Life

Community building, relationships, and recognition are intricate elements deeply woven into the fabric of Indigenous life, collectively shaping the identity, resilience, and well-being of Indigenous Peoples. The dynamics of community building in Indigenous contexts

are characterized by a multifaceted process aimed at fostering a sense of unity and shared heritage among community members. This involves revitalizing cultural practices and reviving Indigenous languages that serve as repositories of traditional knowledge and values (Taylor & de La Sablonnière, 2014). Social gatherings and ceremonies play pivotal roles in this process, acting as communal spaces where cultural heritage is transmitted from one generation to the next.

Within Indigenous communities, relationships extend beyond the interpersonal connections among community members. Collaborations, alliances, and partnerships with neighbouring Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities are essential for addressing shared challenges, ranging from environmental concerns to cultural preservation. These relationships create a network that enables Indigenous Peoples to pool resources, share knowledge, and collectively advocate for their rights. The power of collaboration becomes evident in successful endeavours to protect sacred lands, preserve languages, and advance Indigenous rights (Taylor & de La Sablonnière, 2014). In this way, relationships become a dynamic force that empowers Indigenous communities to effect positive change and navigate the complexities of the modern world.

Recognition, a pivotal aspect of Indigenous life, encompasses formal acknowledgment by governments and respect from other communities (Taylor & de La Sablonnière, 2014). Formal recognition is not merely a symbolic gesture; it holds significant implications for Indigenous self-determination and sovereignty. Acknowledging Indigenous governments and institutions establishes a foundation for preserving Indigenous cultures, providing a framework for their continued existence. Moreover, recognition by other communities validates Indigenous languages, traditions, and ways of life, fostering intercultural dialogue, understanding, and cooperation. This

acknowledgment is vital to dismantling historical injustices and building inclusive societies that value and celebrate diversity.

Jeff Corntassel's work emphasizes the interconnectedness of language, history, and relationships in Indigenous life (Corntassel, 2003). For Indigenous Peoples, language is not just a means of communication but a repository of cultural knowledge, a tool for expressing spirituality, and a medium through which relationships are nurtured. Using Indigenous languages becomes a form of resistance and cultural revitalization, reinforcing connections to ancestral heritage. Scott Richard Lyons underscores the dynamic nature of Indigenous identity, viewing it as an ongoing process shaped by discourse, action, and history (Lyons, 2000). Indigenous identity, therefore, is not static but evolves through the cultivation of relationships and actions undertaken over a lifetime. The significance of historical consciousness and a continuous adaptation to changing circumstances contribute to the resilience of Indigenous identities in the face of external pressures.

Bill Lee's acknowledgment of the role of relations, languages, cultures, and institutions in shaping Indigenous communities highlights the multifaceted nature of Indigenous life (Lee, 2005). Governance structures, education systems, and media platforms within Indigenous communities serve as expressions of cultural identity and mechanisms for preserving and transmitting traditional values and practices. These institutions are vital components of the intricate web that sustains Indigenous cultures.

Community building, relationships, and recognition form a symbiotic relationship within Indigenous life, constituting the foundation upon which the resilience and vitality of Indigenous Peoples and their cultures rest. The interconnectedness of these elements creates a holistic framework that addresses the complexities of contemporary challenges while honouring the rich tapestry of Indigenous traditions and identities.

3.7.1 Community Inclusion and Acceptance

Community inclusion and acceptance within Indigenous contexts represent complex and multifaceted dimensions deeply ingrained in the Indigenous way of life. These concepts, fundamental to the identity and well-being of Indigenous Peoples, are shaped by historical legacies, contemporary realities, and the intricate interplay of cultural, social, and political aspects.

In Indigenous contexts, the significance of land is paramount to community inclusion and acceptance. The land is not merely a physical space but a repository of ancestral wisdom, cultural practices, and spiritual beliefs. Jeff Corntassel, a prominent Indigenous scholar, highlights the centrality of land in Indigenous life, emphasizing its connection to language, ceremonial cycles, and ancestral legacies (Corntassel, 2003). Disrupting these practices not only jeopardizes cultural continuity but also poses a threat to the very essence of Indigenous existence. The daily acts of speaking one's language, preserving traditions, and honouring ancestors are continual acts of renewal that maintain the intricate web of relationships and community bonds.

Beyond the physical realm, Indigenous communities view themselves as stewards of the land, responsible for preserving and protecting the environment for future generations. This environmental stewardship is an integral aspect of community inclusion, reflecting a shared commitment to the well-being of the land and all its inhabitants.

Individuals: At an individual level, community inclusion and acceptance within Indigenous communities are intricately linked to recognizing traditional roles, cultural competence, social integration, involvement in community decision-making, mentorship and knowledge sharing, and advocacy and leadership. The community's well-being is

intertwined with the active engagement of individuals in these aspects, reflecting a commitment to preserving Indigenous identity and cultural heritage.

Recognition of Traditional Roles: Indigenous communities maintain intricate kinship systems and traditions that assign specific roles to individuals within the community. Being recognized as fulfilling these traditional roles is pivotal for community inclusion. These roles encompass leadership, knowledge-holding, healing, and more. Recognition of one's place in the community's traditional structure is an acknowledgment and validation of one's commitment to preserving one's culture. This recognition extends beyond personal validation; it is a collective affirmation of the importance of each individual's contribution to the community's well-being.

Cultural Competence: Proficiency in cultural practices, language revitalization, and preserving traditional knowledge is highly valued within Indigenous communities. Individuals actively engaging in these areas contribute significantly to preserving their culture and identity. Cultural competence is not merely a personal achievement; it is a communal effort that enriches the fabric of the entire community. It involves a deep understanding and embodiment of cultural values, ensuring the transmission of traditions to future generations.

Social Integration: Actively participating in social events, gatherings, and ceremonies is essential for fostering a sense of belonging and acceptance within the community. These interactions allow individuals to build meaningful relationships and deepen their ties to their cultural roots. Social integration is a dynamic process that bridges generations and nurtures a collective sense of identity. Through shared experiences, individuals contribute to the communal narrative, reinforcing the bonds connecting them and the community.

Involvement in Community Decision-Making: Active participation in community decision-making processes is a significant factor in community inclusion. Attending meetings, contributing to discussions, and shaping the community's future are all vital contributions. These engagements reflect one's dedication to the well-being of the community. Involvement in decision-making is not only a right but a responsibility, highlighting the interdependence of individuals within the community and the collective nature of decision-making processes.

Mentorship and Knowledge Sharing: Recognizing individuals as mentors or teachers, particularly in cultural or traditional practices, is essential for community inclusion. It signifies an individual's commitment to passing knowledge and skills to younger generations, a necessary element of community continuity. Mentorship and knowledge sharing create intergenerational connections, ensuring cultural practices and wisdom are passed down through the ages. This process is a cornerstone of community resilience and vitality.

Advocacy and Leadership: Individuals who advocate for the rights and well-being of their community, often assuming leadership roles, gain respect and acceptance. Their efforts are seen as contributions to the collective good, reinforcing community inclusion. Advocacy and leadership go beyond personal recognition; they represent a commitment to the broader Indigenous community and its place within the larger societal framework. Through advocacy, individuals amplify the collective voice, addressing systemic challenges and contributing to the empowerment of the entire community.

These aspects collectively contribute to community inclusion and acceptance, reflecting active engagements with community life. They involve perpetuating Indigenous culture and traditions and acknowledging one's roles, contributions, and responsibilities as

intrinsic to Indigenous identity and well-being. Through these multifaceted dimensions, individuals contribute to the resilience and vibrancy of Indigenous communities, ensuring the continuity of their rich cultural heritage.

3.7.2 Who Claims You? The Dynamics of Indigenous Community Recognition

The concept of "Who Claims You?" is deeply ingrained in the social fabric of Indigenous communities, highlighting the intricate dynamics of kinship, belonging, and identity. As a foundational dimension of this concept, kinship and ancestry are pivotal in shaping Indigenous cultural practices and societal structures (Smith, 2008). Indigenous communities operate with intricate kinship systems that extend beyond the nuclear family, encompassing a complex network of relationships such as genealogical connections, clan affiliations, and ancestral ties. "Who Claims You?" transcends mere recognition in this context; it celebrates an individual's familial bonds, recognizing them within the immediate family and placing them within a broader genealogical tapestry. This nuanced recognition reaffirms that an individual belongs to a lineage that stretches back through generations, establishing a sense of continuity in family ties and cultural heritage within the community.

Another vital dimension of the "Who Claims You?" concept is cultural knowledge and practices, showcasing the richness and diversity of Indigenous cultures. Beyond blood ties, this dimension focuses on an individual's commitment to preserving and perpetuating Indigenous culture and traditions (Adams, 2012). Actively engaging in cultural practices, participating in language revitalization efforts, and contributing to transmitting traditional knowledge are pivotal ways individuals strengthen their connection to the community. This commitment signifies cultural continuity, underscoring its importance for individual identity and the community's well-being.

Contributions and responsibilities within the community represent a pivotal aspect of the "Who claims you?" phenomenon, emphasizing the active role individuals play in the collective life of their community (Johnson, 2017). Active involvement in social events, ceremonies, and decision-making processes plays a significant role in individuals being claimed by their community. Those who willingly take on responsibilities and actively contribute to the collective welfare are more likely to be recognized and claimed. This dimension underscores the importance of one's engagement in the community's affairs, symbolizing a commitment to the holistic betterment of the community.

Mentorship and leadership within the community constitute yet another facet of the "Who claims you?" concept, shedding light on the intergenerational transmission of essential skills and wisdom (Williams, 2019). Becoming a mentor or leader, particularly in the context of cultural practices and knowledge transmission, is how individuals are claimed by their community. This role acknowledges their significance as stewards of cultural identity, actively passing down invaluable knowledge to the next generation. Individuals in leadership roles become anchors for the community's cultural identity, contributing significantly to perpetuating and strengthening community bonds.

Advocacy and stewardship for the rights and well-being of the community emerge as highly valued within the "Who claims you?" concept (Brown, 2014). Individuals who assume leadership roles and advocate for social, political, and cultural causes demonstrate their commitment to the community's welfare and contribute to the overall resilience and empowerment of the Indigenous community. This dedication reinforces their claim within the community and signifies a broader commitment to preserving Indigenous values and rights.

The multifaceted "Who claims you?" dimensions are integral to Indigenous identity and community well-being. Kinship and ancestry, cultural knowledge and practices, contributions and responsibilities, mentorship and leadership, advocacy and stewardship collectively shape the ongoing and dynamic relationship between individuals and their Indigenous communities. This concept serves as a guiding force, affirming individuals' places within the larger tapestry of community life and ensuring the continuity of Indigenous traditions and the strength of community bonds. The dynamic interplay of these dimensions underscores the resilience and vitality of Indigenous cultures in the face of evolving challenges and reinforces the interconnectedness of individuals within their communities.

3.8 Indigenous Journey

The concept of an "Indigenous journey," deeply rooted in Anishinaabe teachings, represents a holistic and culturally ingrained understanding of life stages and personal development within the Anishinaabe (or Ojibwe) Indigenous culture (Smith, 2005). This unique perspective encompasses chronological progression and spiritual and cultural dimensions. The Anishinaabe journey consists of seven distinct stages, each marked by specific characteristics and cultural significance (Wagamese, 2015).

Infancy (Nimishoomis): The initial stage symbolizes birth and infancy, a time of vulnerability and dependency. Families and communities play a crucial role in nurturing and shielding individuals during this stage (Benton-Banai, 1988).

Early Childhood (Zhaawanoong): Early childhood is characterized by learning and discovery. During this crucial stage, children embark on identity development, during

which they acquire essential cultural and life skills from their families and communities (Wagamese, 2015).

Middle Childhood (Noondinens): In this stage, children continue growing and learning, gaining more independence while receiving guidance and teachings from elders and the community. They start to assume increased responsibilities (Wagamese, 2015).

Youth (Mitigwaak): Youth marks a phase of transition and self-discovery. Young individuals are encouraged to explore their identities and passions, learning about their cultural heritage and community responsibilities (Benton-Banai, 1988).

Adulthood (Odenaakwaad): Adulthood signifies the transition into full responsibility within the community. Individuals are expected to contribute to their families and tribes, take on leadership roles, and participate in cultural practices (Smith, 2005).

Elderhood (Gichi-aya'aa): Elders, esteemed in Anishinaabe culture, embody wisdom and experience. This stage is pivotal in guiding the community, passing down knowledge, and preserving cultural traditions (Wagamese, 2015).

Spirit World (Mnidoo-aki): The final stage represents transitioning from this life to the spirit world. Individuals are believed to continue their spiritual journey beyond this world, with their wisdom and teachings influencing the living (Benton-Banai, 1988).

The Anishinaabe journey goes beyond physical progression, emphasizing spiritual and cultural dimensions. It underscores the interconnectedness of individuals with their families, communities, and the natural world, deeply anchored in cultural teachings, values, and worldviews (Smith, 2005).

To enrich this understanding, it is crucial to incorporate indigenous academic resources that delve into the intricacies of Anishinaabe teachings and their applications in contemporary contexts. Indigenous scholars, such as those from Anishinaabe communities,

can provide valuable insights into each life stage's cultural nuances and lived experiences (Benton-Banai, 1988). Additionally, including perspectives from Indigenous researchers specializing in digital spaces and identity exploration can further enhance the discussion.

Exploring Indigenous identities in digital spaces is a pivotal research area that intersects with the rich cultural tapestry described in Anishinaabe teachings. This research aligns with foundational concepts in Indigenous academia, leveraging the perspectives of scholars such as Smith (2005), Wagamese (2015), and Benton-Banai (1988) to provide a nuanced understanding of the complexities involved.

Identity Exploration: Identity exploration takes on multifaceted dimensions in digital platforms, particularly for Indigenous Peoples. Investigating how individuals navigate these online spaces offers a contemporary lens to understand the parallels with Anishinaabe teachings on life stages (Smith, 2005). Indigenous academic insights delve into the intricate connections between online identity exploration and the organic progression through different stages of life as outlined in Anishinaabe cultural narratives.

Resurgence of Indigenous Identity: Digital spaces play a transformative role in the resurgence of Indigenous identities, akin to the principles of decolonization. Analyzing this resurgence through the lens of Anishinaabe teachings allows us to draw meaningful parallels with the stages of growth and self-realization within Indigenous communities (Wagamese, 2015). Indigenous scholars provide nuanced perspectives on how online platforms become vehicles for cultural reclamation and self-empowerment, echoing the ethos of Anishinaabe cultural teachings.

Community and Connection: Exploring digital spaces extends to understanding their role in facilitating connections and community-building among Indigenous individuals and communities. Indigenous academic resources, grounded in the wisdom of

Anishinaabe teachings, shed light on how these online platforms manifest as contemporary spaces for support and guidance during various life stages (Benton-Banai, 1988). The interconnectedness emphasized in Anishinaabe culture finds a modern expression in these virtual communities.

Identity Formation and Maintenance: Digital spaces influence the ongoing formation and maintenance of Indigenous identities. Indigenous scholars contribute valuable insights by aligning these dynamics with the Anishinaabe understanding that identity is a fluid and evolving concept through various life stages (Smith, 2005). The digital realm becomes a canvas for identity expression and preservation, echoing the cultural wisdom of Anishinaabe teachings.

Self-Determination: Examining the notion that utilizing digital spaces for Indigenous identity expression signifies a form of self-determination aligns with the Anishinaabe emphasis on personal and community agency in shaping identity and future (Wagamese, 2015). Indigenous academic perspectives provide a nuanced understanding of how online platforms empower individuals to assert control over their narratives, echoing the principles of self-determination inherent in Anishinaabe teachings.

The incorporation of Indigenous in-text citations from scholars such as Benton-Banai (1988), Smith (2005), and Wagamese (2015) enriches the depth and authenticity of discussions on the Anishinaabe journey and its resonance with contemporary understandings of Indigenous identities in digital spaces. This inclusive approach ensures a well-rounded exploration of the cultural, spiritual, and academic dimensions associated with the Indigenous journey, highlighting the dynamic interplay between tradition and modernity in the ongoing narrative of Indigenous communities.

Chapter 4: Protocols, Time, and Ethical Research in Indigenous Contexts

This research explored inter-relationships, community, relationships, protocols, and the temporal dimension within the South Direction. The chapter strongly emphasizes the critical significance of protocols and the nuanced understanding of time within Indigenous research processes. It is vital to grasp that Indigenous research is not merely a technical procedure but a cultural and ethical journey.

This chapter explores interrelationships, community dynamics, protocols, and the temporal dimension within Indigenous research processes. It underscores the critical significance of protocols and the nuanced understanding of time within the South Direction (Smith, 1999; Wilson, 2008). Unlike conventional research procedures, Indigenous research is portrayed not merely as a technical process but as a cultural and ethical journey, emphasizing the need for a holistic and respectful approach (Smith, 2012).

The themes of inter-relationship, community, relationships, protocols, and time are continually explored in the South Direction, contributing to an ongoing dialogue on these essential aspects (Wilson, 2008). A central focus of the chapter is the imperative nature of respecting protocols within Indigenous communities, as detailed by scholars like Smith (1999). Well-established protocols guide how these communities engage with the outside world, especially in research contexts, ensuring that the research respects the community's cultural integrity and produces meaningful, mutually beneficial results (Wilson, 2008). As a guest within the community, the researcher is reminded of the necessity to navigate these protocols with respect and humility, acknowledging the importance of cultural sensitivity (Smith, 2012). Moreover, the chapter emphasizes the significance of employing appropriate research methodologies, recognizing the distinctiveness of Indigenous research methods that reflect the values and priorities of the

community (Wilson, 2008). It stresses the importance of flexibility and openness to different methodologies, advocating for an approach that adapts to the community's preferences rather than imposing predetermined research frameworks (Smith, 1999).

The consideration of time emerges as a significant theme woven throughout the chapter in both a cultural and temporal sense. Indigenous knowledge and traditions often connect with time, encompassing seasonal practices, intergenerational wisdom, and historical context (Smith, 1999). The researcher is reminded of the need to be attuned to these temporal aspects, recognizing that meaningful research requires understanding the past, present, and future within the Indigenous context (Wilson, 2008).

This chapter serves as an indispensable guide for researchers embarking on the path of Indigenous research, drawing insights from seminal works by Smith (1999), Wilson (2008), and Smith (2012). It provides insights into the theoretical framework of Indigenous research. It offers practical wisdom on conducting respectful and genuinely transformative research by weaving ethical considerations, cultural sensitivities, and temporal awareness into the research journey.

4.1 Foundational Understandings of Qualitative Research

Qualitative research within the context of Indigenous Peoples represents a specialized and culturally attuned approach, with foundational principles deeply embedded in the ethos of Indigenous communities. Smith (1999) underscores that this methodology centers on the multifaceted aspects of Indigenous life, emphasizing distinct perspectives, experiences, and knowledge integral to these communities. A pivotal element of this approach lies in the fundamental principles of respect, reciprocity, and partnership, which are crucial for building trust and fostering collaboration with Indigenous Peoples (Battiste, 2013). This

methodology is characterized by a sensitivity to the intricate web of cultural contexts and historical narratives that shape Indigenous communities' lives, as Wilson (2008) emphasized.

Qualitative research, as applied within Indigenous contexts, utilizes diverse research methods to gain an understanding of the Indigenous perspective. Ethnography, a method extensively championed by Chilisa (2012), involves immersive engagement within the community, allowing researchers to glean a deep and nuanced understanding of cultural practices, traditions, and daily life. Oral history, another indispensable component, ensures the preservation of the voices of elders and community members, enabling the transmission of their stories and wisdom to subsequent generations (Smith, 1999). Additionally, as Kovach (2010) advocates, participatory action research empowers Indigenous communities by actively involving them in the research process, granting agency to define research questions, methods, and outcomes.

A guiding principle that permeates qualitative research within Indigenous contexts is the concept of decolonization, as Smith (2012) articulated. This principle underscores the imperative to undo the legacies of colonialism and address its detrimental effects on Indigenous communities. Researchers, as highlighted by Tuhiwai Smith (2012), approach their work with an awareness of the historical injustices inflicted on Indigenous Peoples, seeking to contribute to the restoration of their rights, culture, and self-determination. Moreover, the principle of self-determination is a cornerstone of qualitative research on Indigenous Peoples (Battiste, 2013). This principle acknowledges the importance of Indigenous communities taking control of their research agendas and methodologies and disseminating research findings (Chilisa, 2012). It reflects a commitment to valuing

Indigenous communities' autonomy and decision-making capabilities, ensuring that the research process aligns with their goals and aspirations (Wilson, 2008).

Qualitative research within Indigenous contexts serves a broader purpose beyond being a methodological approach. It aims to empower these communities and advocate for social justice (Chilisa, 2012). By amplifying the voices of Indigenous Peoples and shedding light on their unique perspectives, experiences, and challenges, this research plays a vital role in addressing social inequalities and fostering a more inclusive society (Battiste, 2013). It functions as a platform for Indigenous communities to assert their presence, rights, and contributions, simultaneously promoting cultural preservation and understanding among the broader population (Smith, 1999).

Incorporating Indigenous knowledge systems and traditional practices into research methodologies further enriches the depth of qualitative research (Kovach, 2010). This approach acknowledges the value of Indigenous knowledge and encourages its transmission to future generations, contributing to the continuity of cultural heritage (Wilson, 2008). Ultimately, qualitative research with Indigenous Peoples transcends conventional research boundaries, offering a platform for mutual learning, understanding, and collaborative action toward a more equitable and just society (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012).

4.2 Data Collection

Data collection is a pivotal phase in any research, and its significance becomes particularly pronounced when studying Indigenous Peoples and their unique experiences (Smith, 1999). The methods and approaches utilized during data collection shape research outcomes and determine the study's ethical and cultural integrity. In Indigenous research, data collection

is a nuanced and intricate process that demands respect, reciprocity, and partnership with the communities under study (Battiste, 2013).

This section delves into the multifaceted dimensions of data collection for Indigenous Peoples research, emphasizing the importance of adopting culturally sensitive methods and protocols (Chilisa, 2012). It recognizes the pivotal role of community involvement in shaping the research process, acknowledging the community as active partners rather than passive subjects (Smith, 1999). Moreover, the section underscores the temporal aspects of Indigenous knowledge and traditions, highlighting the critical time factor in data collection within Indigenous contexts (Wilson, 2008).

This section explores various data collection methods, each serving as a tool to effectively capture the nuances of Indigenous perspectives and experiences. Oral history and storytelling, participatory action research, and ethnography emerge as essential methods, each offering a unique lens to illuminate the multifaceted aspects of Indigenous lives (Kovach, 2010).

Aligned with the principles of decolonization and self-determination, data collection is positioned not merely as an analytical phase but as a process of empowerment and justice (Battiste, 2013). It becomes a means for Indigenous communities to reclaim their voices, share their knowledge, and actively engage in shaping the research agenda (Chilisa, 2012). The data collected through this collaborative and participatory process contribute to a more authentic understanding of Indigenous lives, aspirations, and challenges, fostering a research environment that aligns with the principles of justice and equity in Indigenous research methodologies (Smith, 1999; Kovach, 2010).

4.2.1 Semi-Structured Zoom Interviews

The incorporation of semi-structured interviews holds pivotal significance in Indigenous research, facilitating an exploration of individuals' lived experiences and perspectives. This qualitative approach enhances the depth of understanding, complementing quantitative data obtained through questionnaires. Interviews allow participants to express their narratives authentically, aligning with Indigenous research methodologies emphasizing the importance of storytelling and oral traditions (Battiste, 2013). Academic discourse underscores the value of privileging Indigenous voices and knowledge systems in research, advocating for a decolonizing approach that acknowledges the interconnectedness of Indigenous knowledge, language, and culture (Smith, 2012; Battiste, 2013). Moreover, interviews provide a platform for participants to articulate their thoughts on the impact of social media on Indigenous identity, language, cultural practices, and community connections. This qualitative method is instrumental in revealing nuanced insights not captured through quantitative measures alone (Smith, 2012). The dialogical nature of interviews aligns with Indigenous research principles, emphasizing reciprocity and relationship-building between the researcher and participant (Kovach, 2009).

The involvement of participants in shaping the research ensures its community-centred and culturally responsive nature. Indigenous research frameworks stress community involvement and collaboration, recognizing the need for respectful knowledge generation (Chilisa, 2012). By actively seeking and incorporating Indigenous perspectives through interviews, the research becomes a collaborative process that respects Indigenous ways of knowing and contributes to a more inclusive study. Academically, scholars such as Linda Tuhiwai Smith and Marie Battiste provide a theoretical foundation for understanding the significance of interviews in Indigenous research. Their work

underscores the importance of Indigenous research methodologies and the value of oral traditions in capturing Indigenous perspectives (Smith, 2012; Battiste, 2013).

Sixteen participants were interviewed as part of the research for this study. The interview questions, as conveyed in *Appendix A*, aimed to gather a nuanced understanding of individuals' experiences and perspectives regarding their Indigenous identity within digital spaces. The questions are designed to explore the respondents' relationship with social media platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook, seeking instances where digital spaces contribute to expressing personal Indigenous identity and community representation.

The interview questions further investigated the influence of social media on how Indigenous communities engage with broader society, exploring practical ways digital spaces can support the promotion and preservation of Indigenous languages and traditions. It delves into the impact of social media on the visibility and representation of Indigenous Peoples and its role in the sharing and continuity of cultural practices.

The role of platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook in contributing to the resurgence of Indigenous identities is scrutinized, exploring the complexities of navigating intersectionality within digital spaces. The interview questions examined how digital environments create opportunities or challenges for embracing the complexities of Indigenous identity, particularly in political action for decolonization and self-determination. Additionally, the interview questions sought insights into how the resurgence of Indigenous identities through digital spaces contributes to broader goals of voice reclamation and representation. It explores how these platforms can effectively support Indigenous identity revitalization initiatives and preserve and promote Indigenous

cultures. Ethical considerations in engaging with Indigenous identity-related content in digital spaces are addressed, alongside challenges of misuse or misrepresentation.

The interview questions concluded by investigating the alignment or potential conflicts between digital spaces and Indigenous traditional values and ways of life. Emphasis is placed on how understanding Indigenous identity production in digital spaces can create more supportive futures for Indigenous communities. The interview questions also sought advice for individuals new to social media, aiming to build meaningful connections. It explores the differentiation or similarity between in-person and online Indigenous identity, including how individuals define and perceive their online identities.

4.2.2 Online Questionnaires

Questionnaires are invaluable for data collection, particularly within Indigenous research. As the questionnaire questions outlined in Appendix B demonstrate, this research method is designed to elicit information on participants' identification as Indigenous People of Turtle Island, their age category, gender identity, and specific Indigenous affiliations. These inquiries aim to understand the diverse backgrounds of the Indigenous community. Academic sources, such as Smith et al. (2018), emphasize the significance of demographic details in tailoring analyses and interpretations to accommodate the unique perspectives of various Indigenous groups, thus facilitating a more nuanced and inclusive approach to research. A qualitative layer is introduced to the questionnaire by delving into participants' motivations for engaging with social media. This aspect of the questionnaire aims to glean insights into the role of digital platforms in the lives of Indigenous individuals. The rationale behind social media usage, for connecting with other Indigenous Peoples, learning about culture and issues, or other purposes, offers valuable context for researchers. This

approach aligns with scholarly work such as Johnson and Begay (2020) that underscores the importance of understanding the nuanced dynamics of Indigenous engagement with digital spaces.

The inclusion of questions related to the importance of social media in shaping understanding of Indigenous issues, experiences of online harassment or discrimination, and the impact of social media on Indigenous identity contributes significantly to the broader discourse on Indigenous research. This facet of the questionnaire illuminates the role of technology in shaping cultural narratives and brings attention to the challenges and opportunities Indigenous individuals may encounter in digital spaces. Scholarly sources like Anderson (2019) highlight the importance of such information in informing policies, interventions, and support mechanisms tailored to address the unique needs of Indigenous communities online. Furthermore, the identity-focused questions within the questionnaire underscore the nuanced relationship between social media and Indigenous identity. By probing whether social media influences and accurately represents Indigenous identity, the questionnaire delves into the complex interplay between digital platforms and the preservation or evolution of cultural identity. This inquiry aligns with academic perspectives, as LaRocque (2017) discussed, emphasizing the invaluable insights gained by examining the dynamic nature of identity within Indigenous communities and its intersection with the digital realm.

The questionnaire also encompasses community-focused questions, exploring participation in digital ceremonies, the usefulness of social media in sharing Indigenous history, and its impact on cultural practices and traditions. These inquiries provide a rich tapestry of information, highlighting the evolving nature of Indigenous communities in the digital age. Scholarly works such as Greenfield et al. (2021) stress the importance of digital

spaces in preserving and transmitting cultural knowledge, emphasizing the questionnaire's contribution to understanding the intricate relationship between Indigenous communities and the digital realm. The thoughtful integration of questionnaire questions covering demographics, social media engagement, identity, and community participation significantly contributes to Indigenous research. The data collected through these questions enriches our understanding of the Indigenous experience in digital spaces, aligning with academic discourse and laying the groundwork for informed and culturally sensitive interventions in technology and social media.

4.3 Overview of Participants

The research study utilized purposeful sampling to select its 60 participants carefully, ensuring a deliberate and strategic approach to demographic representation. Central to the study's demographic composition were adults aged 31 to 54, constituting approximately 75% (45 individuals) of the total sample. This specific age range was intentionally targeted to offer a mature perspective on the subject matter under investigation. Participants 18 years or younger were not included in the findings despite having valuable options and insight due to their inability to provide informed consent.

Within this adult cohort, 80% identified as female and 20% as male, reflecting an unbalanced representation within the study. Moreover, most adult participants, comprising 86.7%, identified with First Nations communities, encompassing a purposeful mix of individuals with status and non-status distinctions. This deliberate inclusion highlighted the nuanced socio-political landscape within Indigenous populations.

The research study further embraced the diversity of Indigenous identities beyond the First Nations demographic. Approximately 6.7% of participants were purposefully

identified as Inuk, representing the Inuit population, while 3.3% were intentionally identified as Native American, demonstrating the study's transnational approach to Indigenous research. Additionally, 3.3% of participants were deliberately identified as Indigenous Persons of Mexico, emphasizing the intentional inclusivity of Indigenous communities beyond North America. Moreover, the study intentionally acknowledged and integrated gender diversity among participants, with 6.7% purposefully identifying as Two-Spirit. This deliberate approach underscored the intersectionality of gender and Indigenous identities, highlighting the importance of inclusive research methodologies.

In addition to the deliberate selection of adult participants, the study purposefully engaged youth aged 18 to 30, comprising approximately 25% (15 individuals) of the total sample. Within this age group, a deliberate effort was made to include a majority of 66.7% female participants and 33.3% male participants. Similarly, a deliberate range of Indigenous identities was represented among youth participants, including First Nations, Métis, Inuk (Inuit), and Indigenous Persons of Mexico. This intentional intergenerational perspective enriched the study by capturing younger Indigenous individuals' unique experiences and perspectives. Furthermore, while seniors aged 55 years and above represented a smaller proportion of the sample, comprising approximately 1.7% (1 participant), their purposeful inclusion underscored the importance of honouring the wisdom and insights of elders within Indigenous communities.

The deliberate use of purposeful sampling in acquiring research participants ensured that the study's demographic profile was carefully crafted to capture the diversity and complexity of Indigenous identities, ages, genders, and cultural backgrounds. By purposefully embracing inclusivity and intersectionality, the study aimed to understand the subject matter while amplifying Indigenous voices and perspectives.

Figure 3: Overview of Research Participant Demographics

Gender Demographics

The research study emphasized capturing the diversity of gender identities within Indigenous communities. Through purposeful sampling, the study ensured representation from various gender groups, including female, male, and Two-Spirit individuals. The deliberate inclusion of Two-Spirit participants highlighted the study's commitment to acknowledging and respecting the traditional roles and contributions of gender-diverse individuals within Indigenous cultures. This approach fostered a research environment that honoured the complexities of gender identity and provided a platform for all voices to be heard and valued equally.

Age Group Demographics

A key focus of the research study was to include participants from a wide range of age groups, recognizing the importance of intergenerational perspectives within Indigenous communities. The study deliberately engaged adults aged 31 to 54, representing most of the participant pool, to provide mature insights shaped by life experiences and responsibilities. Additionally, the intentional inclusion of youth aged 18 to 30 years ensured representation from the next generation of Indigenous leaders, capturing their unique perspectives and aspirations for the future. Furthermore, the study acknowledged the wisdom and insights of seniors aged 55 and above, underscoring their continued relevance in contemporary discourse and decision-making processes within Indigenous communities.

Self-Reported Identity Demographics

The research study sought to reflect the diverse cultural heritages and identities present within Indigenous communities through purposeful sampling of participants. In addition to individuals identifying as First Nations, the study intentionally included representation from other Indigenous identities, such as Inuk, Native American, and Indigenous Persons of Mexico. This deliberate approach transcended geographic and political boundaries, highlighting the rich tapestry of Indigenous cultures and traditions. Furthermore, including self-reported identity demographics emphasized the importance of self-determination and self-identification within Indigenous research frameworks, allowing participants to define their cultural affiliations and identities.

4.4 Overview of Hashtags and Meaning

In online spaces' dynamic and ever-shifting landscape, hashtags have evolved into a sophisticated means of digital expression. These symbolic markers encapsulate the essence

of diverse narratives, acting as powerful conduits that amplify the voices of various communities. In this exploration, we delve deeper into the intricacies of selected hashtags within each quadrant, unravelling their nuanced significance and impact on the digital realm of Indigenous expression.

As Indigenous voices reverberate across the vast expanse of the internet, hashtags emerge as more than fleeting trends; they become poignant markers that transcend the ephemeral nature of digital discourse. Carefully chosen for their resonance within specific quadrants, each hashtag assumes the role of a thread, intricately weaving together the complex tapestry of Indigenous identity. This journey takes us into the rationale behind selecting these specific hashtags, shedding light on the depth of meaning they carry within the unique context of each quadrant.

The resounding hashtag, #IndigenousPride, stands in the East Quadrant's heart. Far from a mere digital trend, it serves as a beacon of assertion, symbolizing the journey of Indigenous identity. Aligned with the quadrant's principles of birth and renewal, this hashtag acts as a transformative digital bridge, connecting individuals to their cultural roots, fostering unity, and honouring the inherent pride embedded in Indigenous heritage.

Within the vibrant tapestry of the *South Quadrant*, the hashtag *#IndigenousArt* emerges as a dynamic expression of cultural preservation. Going beyond its role as a mere identifier, this hashtag transforms the digital canvas into a sacred space for self-expression and connection to cultural heritage. It celebrates the transformative power of artistic expression, contributing to the rich cultural landscape of the South Quadrant and serving as a testament to the resilience of Indigenous artistic traditions.

Prominently featured in the *West Quadrant*, the hashtag *#Decolonize* transcends the digital realm to echo Indigenous Peoples' historical challenges in the digital age. It is more

than a tag; it is a powerful call to action, urging collective efforts to dismantle colonial legacies. #Decolonize becomes a rallying cry for resilience and adaptability as Indigenous communities navigate the complexities of the digital frontier, symbolizing a commitment to reclaiming narrative sovereignty and challenging prevailing power structures.

In the *North Quadrant, #IndigenousPeoplesDay* becomes a digital marker honouring the diverse expressions of Indigenous cultures. Beyond being a simple hashtag, it fosters a sense of solidarity and community engagement. This digital space transforms into a virtual realm for advocating rights and recognition, contributing to the broader tapestry of online Indigenous activism and representation.

As this exploration concludes, the selected hashtags within each quadrant emerge as integral components of the digital landscape of Indigenous expression. They transcend the digital realm, embodying pride, resilience, and cultural celebration. Collectively, these hashtags contribute to the ongoing narrative of Indigenous voices in the online world, fostering unity and empowering communities to navigate the ever-evolving landscape of the digital age with strength and purpose.

WEST DIRECTION: INTERCONNECTEDNESS – REASON AND VOICE OF COMMUNITIES

Chapter 5: Making Meaning and Figuring It Out

The "West Direction" represents Indigenous communities' interconnectedness, reason, and collective voice. It delves deeply into these communities' shared wisdom, knowledge, and perspectives. The West Direction emphasizes recognizing and respecting the dynamic relationship between reason and the voices of the community in Indigenous research. In this chapter, the researcher demonstrates a commitment to honouring reason and the community's voice throughout the research process. The West Direction symbolizes integrating Indigenous knowledge and community perspectives and using digital tools to give meaning, analyze data, and amplify community voices. Overall, the West Direction encourages an appreciation for the interplay between reason and the community's collective wisdom in Indigenous research.

5.1 Medicine Wheel Theory: Holistic Understandings

In exploring the intricate interplay between digital media and Indigenous experiences, adopting a perspective that assesses the multifaceted impacts on various dimensions of Indigenous individuals' lives is imperative. The Medicine Wheel, a sacred construct rich in spiritual and cultural significance for numerous Indigenous communities, including the Anishinaabe, is central to this approach.

The Medicine Wheel, divided into four quadrants, symbolizes different facets of existence, spirituality, and the natural world. Indigenous scholars, notably Vine Deloria Jr., emphasize contextualizing the Medicine Wheel within its cultural milieu, as outlined in

Deloria's seminal work "God is Red" (1973). Deloria's insights provide invaluable guidance for researchers seeking a culturally sensitive and respectful approach to Indigenous studies.

To embark on this holistic journey, it is crucial to delve into the origins and rationale behind each quadrant, particularly from the Anishinaabe perspective. This understanding facilitates a deeper grasp of Indigenous worldviews and informs a culturally responsive research methodology, echoing the sentiments expressed by Linda Tuhiwai Smith in "Decolonizing Methodologies." Rooted in Indigenous oral traditions, the Medicine Wheel serves as a conduit for comprehending the interconnectedness of all elements in the universe. While variations exist in origin stories across Indigenous cultures, the central concept remains consistent—a sacred circle symbolizing life cycles, seasons, and the profound interdependence of all beings.

In this research, I used the Medicine Wheel (also referred to as the Medicine Circle) to frame my data analysis and present my research findings. The Medicine Wheel, as articulated by Dr. Kathleen Absolon, an Anishinaabekwe from Flying Post First Nation, in her piece "Indigenous Wholistic Theory: A Knowledge Set for Practice," provided a holistic and comprehensive framework. This approach allowed me to meaningfully understand and navigate various aspects of life and knowledge, especially as they relate to Indigenous identities, communities, and digital environments. By integrating the four cardinal directions, the Medicine Circle emphasizes interconnectedness and the importance of balance and harmony.

Why Start in the East and Move Clockwise

According to Absolon (2019), "Grandfather Sun rises in the east." Thus, we begin in the eastern door and move clockwise through South, West, and North. This direction aligns with the sun's natural rhythms, reflecting growth, life cycles, and balance. It symbolizes

harmony with nature, as the sun's path and seasonal cycles follow this direction, reinforcing the interconnectedness of life. An overview of the Medicine Wheel's Four Quadrants, according to Absolon (2019):

East Quadrant

The East quadrant embodies the air element, symbolizing the dawn and the potential for new beginnings. This quadrant emphasizes the cyclical nature of life, the perpetual quest for knowledge, and the communal well-being inherent in Indigenous communities.

South Quadrant

The South quadrant represents the element of fire, signifying growth, vitality, and transformation. It mirrors the warmth and vitality of Indigenous communities, highlighting the importance of connections with land, culture, and community.

West Quadrant

The West quadrant, associated with water, reflects healing, emotional depth, and introspection themes. It represents the wisdom accrued through adversity and the collective memory of overcoming historical injustices, echoing the enduring spirit of Indigenous identity.

North Quadrant

The North quadrant symbolizes wisdom, healing, and culmination, embodying the culmination of life's journey. It draws from the collective wisdom of elders and the interconnectedness of all living beings, offering a space for reflection, reconciliation, and honouring Indigenous cultural heritage.

In conclusion, the Medicine Wheel serves as more than a framework for data analysis; it profoundly reflects Indigenous identity and worldview. Each quadrant resonates with Indigenous cultures' rich tapestry and history, offering insights into their complexities

and resilience. By centring Indigenous perspectives in our exploration, we honour the profound interconnectedness of Indigenous identity with the natural world and the enduring legacy of Indigenous knowledge systems.

5.1.1 Exploring the Medicine Wheel for Data Analysis in Research

Centering Indigenous identity in exploring the Medicine Wheel for data analysis in research entails recognizing its foundational role in Indigenous cultures. The Medicine Wheel, deeply rooted in Indigenous traditions, serves as a framework intertwining spirituality, interconnectedness, and cyclical existence (Duran & Duran, 1995; Cajete, 1999). As we navigate its cardinal directions – East, South, West, and North – we delve into the essence of Indigenous identity and its relationship with each quadrant.

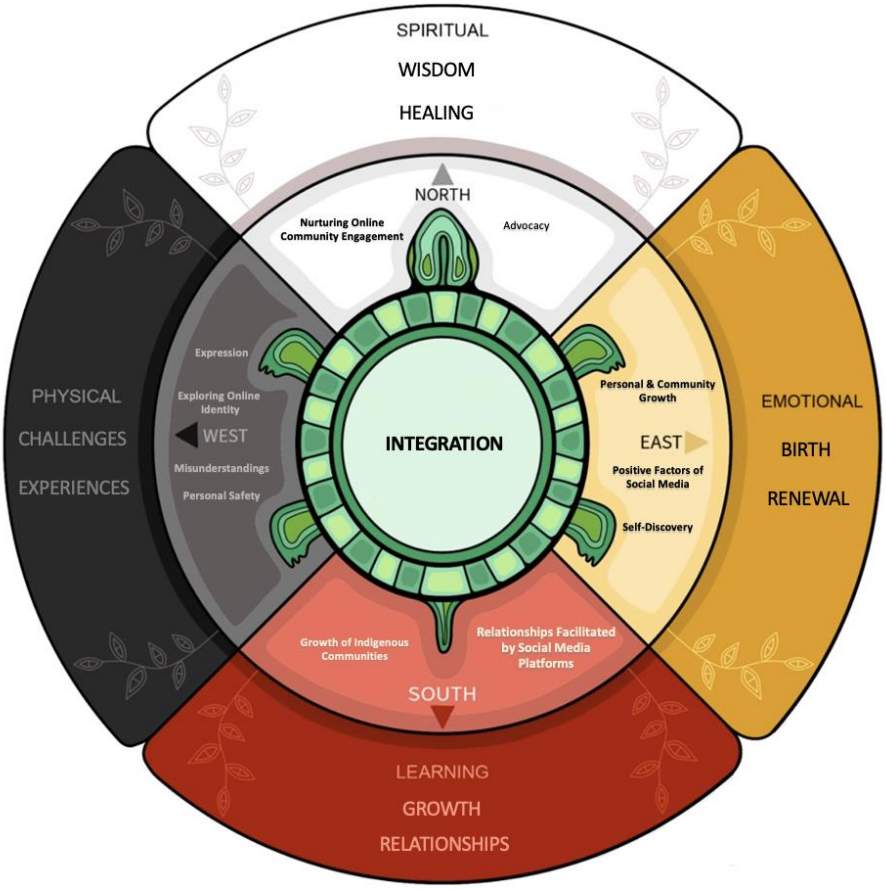
The East Quadrant embodies the dawn of existence, symbolizing birth and renewal in Indigenous cosmology (Duran & Duran, 1995). Here, the cyclical nature of life intersects with Indigenous perspectives, emphasizing the quest for knowledge and the communal well-being inherent in Indigenous communities (Wilson, 2008). This quadrant resonates deeply with Indigenous identity, reflecting the resilience and optimism ingrained in Indigenous worldviews.

Moving to the South Quadrant, we encounter themes of growth and relationships, mirroring the warmth and vitality of Indigenous communities (Battiste, 2013). Indigenous identity flourishes in this quadrant, where connections with land, culture, and community are nurtured. It is a reminder of the vibrant tapestry of Indigenous cultures and the importance of intergenerational relationships in shaping Indigenous identities (Kovach, 2009).

Transitioning to the West Quadrant, challenges and life experiences take center stage, reflecting the wisdom accrued through adversity (Duran & Duran, 1995). Indigenous identity is forged here through resilience, adaptation, and the collective memory of overcoming historical injustices (Smith, 2012). It is a testament to the strength and perseverance inherent in Indigenous communities, echoing the enduring spirit of Indigenous identity.

Finally, the North Quadrant symbolizes wisdom, healing, and culmination, embodying the culmination of life's journey (Battiste, 2013). Indigenous identity finds solace and guidance in this quadrant, drawing from the collective wisdom of elders and the interconnectedness of all living beings (Kovach, 2009). It is a space for reflection, reconciliation, and honouring Indigenous cultural heritage in the digital age (Atalay, 2012; Smith, 2012).

The Medicine Wheel serves as more than a framework for data analysis; it reflects Indigenous identity and worldview. Each quadrant resonates with the rich history of Indigenous cultures, offering insights into their complexities and resilience. By centring Indigenous perspectives in our exploration, we honour the interconnectedness of Indigenous identity with the natural world and the enduring legacy of Indigenous knowledge systems.



5.2 Unlocking the Digital World for Data Analysis

The section delves into the chapter's specific focus: exploring data analysis approaches within the digital space. It sets the stage for a journey to uncover hidden insights, challenges, and opportunities within this realm. By emphasizing the valuable information in the digital world, the introduction highlights the methodology's role in equipping researchers with the necessary tools and frameworks to unearth these treasures. Through a deep dive into methods, technologies, and principles, the subsection aims to navigate the constantly evolving landscape of data analysis within the digital sphere.

5.2.1 Utilizing CrowdTangle Data Collection

The need to grasp and harness online interactions has become paramount in the rapidly evolving digital sphere, where social media platforms wield considerable influence over communication. This entails understanding the broader landscape of social media dynamics and delving into specific elements like hashtags, which serve as vital markers of discourse and trends. Thus, this introduction serves as a prelude to exploring the strategic application of CrowdTangle, a prominent data collection tool, within the domain of digital research. By delving into its functionalities and technical intricacies, we unravel how CrowdTangle facilitates a nuanced understanding of social media landscapes, including collecting and analyzing hashtag data, enabling researchers to navigate the complexities of the digital terrain with precision.

CrowdTangle emerges as an indispensable asset for professionals immersed in social media data collection and analysis, particularly within the vast expanse of Facebook. Its multifaceted capabilities extend to monitoring social media activities, offering insights into optimal post timing and engagement strategies, proficiently identifying sources, and quantitatively analyzing hashtag interactions. Furthermore, incorporating video view metrics adds more depth to its utility.

Technical details on CrowdTangle include its robust Application Programming Interface (API), which allows for seamless integration with various data analysis tools and platforms. Its intuitive interface simplifies data collection, offering customizable dashboards and real-time monitoring features. Additionally, CrowdTangle's advanced filtering options enable users to target specific content or demographics for analysis, enhancing the granularity of insights from social media data.

In conclusion, the strategic integration of CrowdTangle represents a sophisticated approach to social media data collection and analysis within digital research, encompassing the nuanced exploration of hashtags alongside broader online dynamics. Its versatility across platforms, coupled with robust monitoring, analysis, and reporting features, renders it indispensable for comprehending the intricacies of online interactions, including the nuances of Indigenous identity and communities. As the digital realm continues to shape communication paradigms, leveraging tools like CrowdTangle becomes imperative for navigating and comprehending the intricate interplay of information and interaction in the digital age.

5.2.3 Navigating the Complexities of Social Media Data

Within social media data navigation, researchers grapple with the multifaceted dimensions arising from online interactions' diverse and ever-changing nature. The contemporary research landscape is marked by a continuous evolution, with methodologies adapting to the dynamic nuances of the vast and complex digital ecosystem.

The intricacies of collecting and formatting social media data are not only contingent upon the specific behavioural patterns under investigation. Still, they are also influenced by the choice of platforms serving as primary data sources. Different social media platforms exhibit unique user dynamics, linguistic nuances, and interaction patterns, all contributing to the rich tapestry of data awaiting exploration. Researchers must navigate this intricate mosaic to extract meaningful insights, necessitating an approach that is versatile and attuned to the subtleties inherent in the chosen online environments. As Wilson, Gosling, and Graham (2012) highlighted, the landscape of social media data is characterized by its dynamism, prompting the need for equally adaptable research practices.

This adaptability is crucial in addressing the challenges of the ever-shifting online landscape, where user behaviours, communication styles, and content trends can transform rapidly. It requires researchers to embrace innovative techniques and frameworks that can seamlessly integrate with established quantitative and qualitative methodologies.

The introduction of automated technological tools has been a pivotal, transformative force in this domain. These tools, ranging from web crawlers to sophisticated machine learning algorithms, empower researchers to collect vast amounts of data and process and analyze it at unprecedented speeds. Automating these tasks minimizes the manual workload, allowing researchers to focus on the interpretation and contextualization of the data rather than getting bogged down by the intricacies of data collection and preparation.

Social media data collection's real-time nature distinguishes it from traditional research methods. This real-time immediacy allows researchers to capture and analyze unfolding events, conversations, and trends as they happen. The agility afforded by this characteristic enables a more responsive and timely understanding of societal dynamics, making social media data an invaluable resource for tracking emerging issues and monitoring the pulse of public sentiment. In contrast to traditional research methods, which often involve extensive resource investments and time constraints, social media data collection presents a more streamlined and efficient alternative. The speed at which data can be gathered and analyzed allows researchers to keep pace with the rapid evolution of online spaces, providing a more up-to-date perspective on societal phenomena.

Navigating the complexities of social media data demands a holistic and adaptive approach that recognizes the unique challenges and opportunities the digital landscape presents. Researchers must skillfully blend traditional methodologies with contemporary

automated tools, embracing the online environment's fluidity to unlock social media's full potential as a rich, real-time, population-level data source. This integration facilitates a deeper understanding of human behaviour in the digital age and positions researchers to explore novel avenues for studying societal trends, cultural shifts, and the ever-changing dynamics of online communities.

Chapter 6: Indigenous Perspectives of Community in Digital Spaces

Chapter 6 delves deeply into Indigenous perspectives within digital spaces, emphasizing the importance of interconnectedness and community voice, resonating with the symbolic attributes associated with the West Direction. It explores how digital platforms facilitate relationships and enhance comprehension of Indigenous experiences and identities. This section draws from an accumulation of interviews and questionnaire data utilized to map out the impact of digital media on various aspects of Indigenous lives within the broader research theme. By employing methodologies such as interviews and questionnaires, the chapter aims to uncover the influence of social media on Indigenous individuals' narratives, identities, and interconnectedness. Ultimately, it seeks to foster a nuanced discussion that accurately reflects Indigenous perspectives within digital landscapes.

6.1 East Quadrant: Birth and Renewal

The East quadrant of the Medicine Wheel is a symbol of fire, the ascending sun, and the genesis of existence. It embodies the concepts of birth, rejuvenation, and the flourishing of knowledge and insight. This quadrant stands as a testament to new beginnings, where the emergence of light follows the darkness, encapsulating an aura of optimism and boundless growth potential.

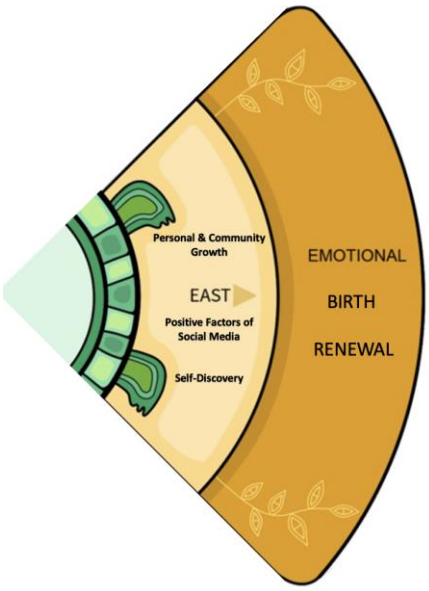


Figure 4: East Quadrant Summary of Data Analysis

In the realm of research, the East quadrant of the Medicine Wheel becomes a focal point for exploring the intricate dynamics of asserting Indigenous identity and authenticity within the digital landscape. It acknowledges the transformative influence

of social media in magnifying Indigenous voices and narratives, as Smith (2012) emphasized. Embarking on the journey in the East, the Medicine Wheel highlights the foundational principles of birth, renewal, and the perpetual pursuit of comprehension. Just as the rising sun signifies the start of a new day, this quadrant emphasizes the commencement of exploring the complexities of Indigenous identity in the digital era.

6.1.1 Indigenous Identity Diversity and Unity

From the frozen expanses of the Arctic, where the Inuit people have thrived for millennia, to the verdant landscapes of New Zealand, home to the resilient Māori, each Indigenous community holds a sacred connection to their ancestral lands; Indigenous identities are diverse and vibrant, intricately woven with threads of various cultures, languages, and traditions, stretching across the globe. One participant passionately expressed, "Our identity is not a singular thread but a rich mosaic, with each cultural element contributing to the beauty of the whole." This celebration of diversity underscores the richness inherent in Indigenous identity, urging its preservation and transmission to future generations as a cherished cultural inheritance.

Personal Identity Exploration and Complexity

The journey of Indigenous identity is deeply personal, marked by a complex interplay of historical legacies, familial dynamics, and external perceptions. Survivors of historical traumas, such as the devastating impacts of colonialism and forced assimilation policies like the 60s Scoop, often grapple with the challenge of fitting into established societal categories. "Our identity is not static; it is a living story," remarked one participant, encapsulating the dynamic nature of Indigenous identity. This narrative of ongoing self-discovery underscores the complexity and resilience of Indigenous individuals as they

navigate the nuances of their heritage within contemporary contexts. Amidst this complexity, there is a call for mutual respect and understanding, emphasizing the importance of recognizing and embracing each individual's unique Indigenous journey.

Reconnection and Healing

For many Indigenous individuals and communities, the journey of identity involves a process of reconnection with ancestral roots and healing from historical traumas. The scars of the past, including the intergenerational impacts of residential schools and cultural erasure, remain profound. "Reconnecting with our Indigenous community and heritage is like reclaiming a lost part of ourselves," a participant highlighted this journey's emotional and spiritual significance. This theme underscores the communal healing aspect, emphasizing the interconnectedness of Indigenous identity with collective well-being. It speaks to the resilience of Indigenous communities in overcoming historical injustices and forging a path toward a brighter future grounded in cultural pride and solidarity.

Digital Expression and Community Narratives

In the digital age, Indigenous individuals and communities find powerful avenues for self-expression and community building through online platforms. Social media, in particular, has emerged as a modern-day storytelling circle, amplifying Indigenous voices and narratives globally. Through digital art, storytelling, and cultural showcases, Indigenous creators reclaim agency over their representations, challenging stereotypes and reclaiming their cultural narratives from mainstream media. "Social media is our modern-day storytelling circle," remarked one participant, highlighting the transformative potential of digital platforms in fostering community solidarity and cultural resurgence. This theme celebrates the adaptability of Indigenous identity in the face of modern challenges, utilizing technology for cultural preservation and empowerment.

Social Media Evolution and Indigenous Engagement

The evolution of social media platforms has facilitated active Indigenous engagement and advocacy within digital spaces. From the early days of Facebook to the rise of platforms like Instagram and TikTok, Indigenous individuals have utilized these spaces to shape their narratives and connect with like-minded community members. Beyond personal connections, there is a palpable commitment to community engagement and advocacy for positive online interactions. Indigenous content creators actively use these platforms to showcase their cultures, challenge stereotypes, and amplify Indigenous voices on issues ranging from environmental justice to Indigenous rights.

This theme underscores the importance of digital spaces as dynamic hubs for Indigenous activism and cultural resurgence, highlighting the transformative power of online communities in shaping contemporary Indigenous identities. As one participant aptly articulated, the transition from early Facebook use to active engagement on platforms like X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, and TikTok signifies a shift from individual connections to communal engagement. As a participant eloquently stated, "Expressing the 'collective identity of my community' now entails sharing with a much broader audience, transforming what was once confined to a smaller group into a discourse accessible to nearly anybody."

Balancing Social Media Engagement with Personal and Family Life

Navigating social media usage involves a delicate balance between online engagement and real-world connections, particularly for Indigenous individuals seeking to maintain a sense of cultural authenticity and connection to their communities. Purposeful social media usage aligns online activities with personal and familial values, emphasizing the importance of setting boundaries for a fulfilling lifestyle.

One participant noted, "Social media can be a valuable tool for connection and education when used purposefully." This sentiment underscores the need for Indigenous individuals to navigate digital spaces mindfully, ensuring that online interactions complement rather than overshadow their personal and family lives. By striking a balance between virtual engagement and real-world connections, Indigenous individuals can navigate social media in a manner that preserves cultural authenticity and fosters meaningful relationships within their communities.

Indigenous Online Community Engagement

Digital platforms are vibrant hubs for Indigenous online communities, fostering cultural preservation, identity involvement, and social activism. Indigenous individuals actively engage in online spaces like Facebook groups, Instagram communities, and TikTok, utilizing these platforms to connect with like-minded individuals, share cultural knowledge, and advocate for Indigenous causes. This theme emphasizes the transformative potential of digital platforms in building connections, preserving culture, and amplifying Indigenous voices on a global scale. One participant affirmed, "The online community serves as a lifeline, fostering a sense of belonging and solidarity in an increasingly digitized world."

6.2 South Quadrant: Growth and Relationships

As we progress from the East to the South in the symbolic journey of the Medicine Wheel, the emphasis on relationships becomes increasingly pronounced, highlighting their indispensable role in the perpetual cycle of personal and communal growth. Delving into the intricacies of online engagement and advocacy within this quadrant requires an exploration of the challenges and a nuanced understanding of generational differences. In the ever-evolving social media landscape, recognizing the unfolding dynamics becomes

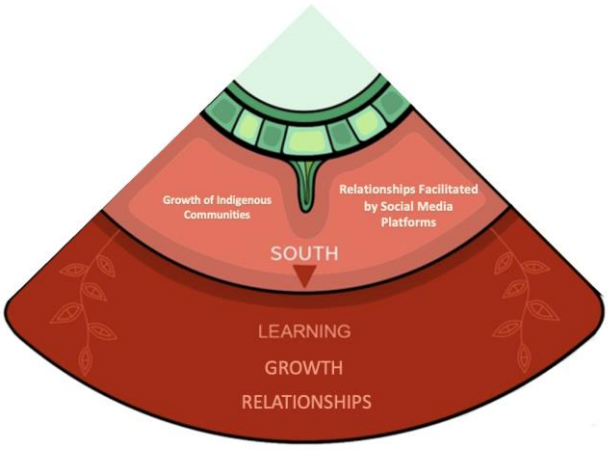


Figure 5: South Quadrant Summary of Data Analysis

crucial. The Medicine Wheel serves as a guide, reminding us that personal and communal growth is an ongoing journey that relies heavily on the strength and depth of our connections. Moreover, in the digital landscape of the Southern quadrant, Indigenous Peoples harness potent tools to bridge temporal and spatial divides, weaving connections between their contemporary lives and rich cultural heritage. This digital bridge facilitates self-expression and nurtures a sense of belonging, contributing to preserving and revitalizing Indigenous identities.

The synergy between the Southern quadrant and the digital realm underscores resilience, adaptation, and empowerment. It highlights the transformative potential of reconnecting with Indigenous culture and community, transcending boundaries, and actively shaping cultural identity narrative in the modern world.

6.2.1 Navigating Digital Spaces for Indigenous Identity Renewal

At the heart of this discussion is the theme of reconnection, where Indigenous individuals use digital tools to bridge the gap between their contemporary lives and cultural heritage. Through this, they find a sense of belonging and contribute to preserving and revitalizing Indigenous traditions, languages, and values. This synergy underscores the significance of reconnecting with Indigenous culture and community within the digital landscape, portraying a narrative of resilience, adaptation, and empowerment.

Maintaining a consistent and authentic Indigenous identity involves a journey of self-discovery and self-acceptance. It is a dynamic process where individuals strive to align their online and in-person identities, reflecting a commitment to genuine self-expression. Participants express the unique space that online platforms provide for fearlessly voicing opinions, emphasizing the courage facilitated by the relative anonymity of the digital realm. They also reflect on how their online presence has evolved, highlighting personal growth and privacy preferences shifts.

Challenges Across Generations: Identity and Resistance

Navigating Indigenous identity presents distinct hurdles, especially in environments where Indigenous perspectives may be marginalized. Across generations, these challenges manifest differently; older individuals often grapple with identity in light of historical traumas and concerns surrounding discrimination. A noticeable dichotomy exists between online assertiveness and discomfort in predominantly white physical spaces. Participants also draw attention to the scrutiny and pressure faced offline, juxtaposed with online platforms' inclusive and welcoming nature.

A participant acknowledged social media's role in bridging generational and geographical divides, stating that it "bridges geographical gaps, making it easier for individuals to access the wisdom and teachings of elders." This highlights digital platforms' potential to facilitate intergenerational knowledge exchange and community building.

Reflecting on Indigenous empowerment through technology, another participant envisioned a blend of platforms, expressing, "We want a platform like Duolingo or YouTube as we do not currently have a way to learn our languages through technology." This underscores the community's yearning for innovative approaches to education and community-building.

Advocacy in the Digital Realm: Raising Voices Online

Advocacy in the digital realm has empowered Indigenous individuals to amplify their voices and advocate for crucial issues affecting their communities. Online platforms provide a powerful medium for raising awareness about issues such as Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW), social justice problems, land rights, and environmental issues. Indigenous activists can reach a global audience and mobilize support for their causes through social media campaigns, online petitions, blogs, and digital storytelling. Participants in these advocacy efforts express their deep commitment to these issues, leveraging digital tools to create positive change and demand accountability from policymakers and institutions. However, they also navigate the delicate balance between personal and professional engagement online, considering the potential impact on their personal lives, professional reputations, and mental well-being.

Reconnecting with Roots: Cultural and Spiritual Journeys

Reconnecting with Indigenous heritage is a transformative journey for many individuals within Indigenous communities that involves embracing cultural practices, traditions, languages, and spiritual beliefs passed down through generations. This journey often entails exploring one's ancestry, learning about traditional ceremonies and customs, and reclaiming Indigenous identity in the face of historical trauma and cultural assimilation. Participants emphasized the importance of transparency and openness in this process, acknowledging the complexities and challenges of navigating Indigenous identities in contemporary society. They reflect on the richness and diversity within Indigenous cultures, recognizing the resilience of Indigenous Peoples and the enduring significance of their cultural heritage in shaping their identities and sense of belonging. Through cultural

revitalization efforts and spiritual practices, individuals seek to heal historical wounds and strengthen connections with their communities and ancestral lands.

Opportunities for Indigenous Cultural Revitalization and Preservation

Cultural revitalization and preservation through social media have become incredibly important in our contemporary world. We examine how these platforms enable Indigenous communities to celebrate their heritage and transmit traditional knowledge to future generations. Social media is a dynamic repository of cultural wisdom, stories, and practices. Additionally, we explore the broader impact of social media on Indigenous communities, highlighting how these digital spaces function as virtual gathering places where Indigenous Peoples from diverse geographical locations can connect, share experiences, and engage in cultural exchange. The community-building potential of these platforms is a driving force behind preserving Indigenous ways of life. Moreover, we discuss how technology's influence extends to fostering a deeper understanding of Indigenous cultures and contributing to the well-being of Indigenous Peoples. Access to information and resources has expanded through social media, contributing to cultural resurgence and individual well-being.

Empowerment forms a central theme within this section, emphasizing how social media empowers Indigenous voices and facilitates knowledge sharing. Through these platforms, Indigenous individuals have found a global stage to showcase their talents, share their wisdom, and advocate for preserving their cultures and rights. This section encapsulates social media's positive impact on Indigenous cultural revitalization and preservation, highlighting its role in fostering community, deepening cultural understanding, and empowering Indigenous voices. It portrays the transformative potential of these digital platforms in safeguarding and honouring Indigenous culture and traditions.

Cultural Revitalization and Preservation through Social Media

Social media platforms have emerged as powerful tools in revitalizing and preserving Indigenous cultural practices that were once suppressed or lost due to historical factors. Platforms like Instagram and Facebook enable Indigenous communities to reconnect with their roots innovatively. For instance, the Inuit tattoo revitalization project on Instagram is a beacon showcasing the potency of social media in resurrecting ancient customs.

Indigenous individuals utilize these platforms to share their personal journeys of rediscovery, shedding light on the historical significance and context of traditions like tattooing. Through these narratives, they keep their culture vibrant and enlighten a global audience about their rich culture and traditions.

The impact of social media on cultural resurgence is profound. Consider the story of one participant who found solace and connection through Instagram and Facebook despite the historical suppression inflicted by Moravian colonization in Labrador. Through these platforms, they reclaimed and embraced their cultural markings, symbolizing the power of social media in reclaiming lost or suppressed elements of culture across generations.

One participant emphasizes the practical advantages of technology in safeguarding Indigenous traditions, particularly highlighting how social media functions as "a practical and effective way to promote and preserve traditions and languages." This observation underscores the dual role that social media plays, serving not only as a preservation tool but also as a platform for cultural promotion. Through social media, Indigenous communities can share their traditions and languages with a broader audience, ensuring their preservation while fostering greater awareness and appreciation of their cultural heritage.

In contrast, another participant exudes optimism regarding revitalizing endangered languages through digital platforms. They express that "it's opened up the ability to spread the language more…languages close to becoming extinct can now access younger generations to help spread again." This hopeful sentiment underscores the transformative potential of social media in preserving and revitalizing endangered cultural facets. By leveraging digital platforms, communities can reach younger generations who may otherwise be disconnected from their cultural heritage, ensuring the continuity and revival of endangered languages and traditions.

6.2.2 Identity and Connection in the Digital Age

Exploring Indigenous identity and authenticity reveals a consistent thread transcending the digital and physical realms. As articulated by one participant, "It is not just about presenting ourselves; it is about being true to who we are, whether online or offline." This commitment to self-expression is not a mere performance but rather an authentic reflection of individuals' true selves, irrespective of the platform. The theme underscores the significance of embracing one's Indigenous identity with unwavering pride, echoing the sentiment expressed by another participant, "Pride knows no boundaries; it extends seamlessly across virtual and real-world boundaries."

Within this overarching theme is a deep exploration of personal growth and privacy. In the words of one participant, "authenticity is not just about showing who we are but also about acknowledging the depth and diversity within our own identities." As individuals embark on journeys of self-discovery, they find solace in openness and transparency. Authenticity goes beyond projecting one's true self; it involves acknowledging the rich diversity and unity within Indigenous identities. This theme delves into the challenges of

asserting one's identity, the transformative journey toward self-acceptance, and the shifts in how Indigenous individuals perceive and present themselves in the digital age.

The dynamics of Indigenous identity in online and offline spaces are examined within the context of evolving engagement with identities in the digital era. The dichotomy between online and in-person expression is closely scrutinized, revealing the unique freedom that online spaces provide. As one participant aptly phrases it, "The digital realm is a canvas of uninhibited expression, a space where anonymity allows our voices to resonate without fear." This cloak of anonymity in the digital world allows for more uninhibited expression, particularly on critical issues such as missing and murdered Indigenous women, addiction, homelessness, and social justice. Online platforms become tools for advocacy, where impassioned voices rally together to raise awareness and enact meaningful change.

Conversely, the exploration delves into the contrasting dynamics of in-person interactions, where judgments rooted in knowledge and protocol can sometimes emerge. Acknowledging the diverse backgrounds and practices within Indigenous communities, the narrative recognizes the challenges of fitting in. However, amidst these challenges, there is a notable shift towards fostering more understanding communities. As expressed by one participant, "In-person interactions may come with challenges, but there is a growing realization that understanding communities can bridge gaps." Many Indigenous individuals find comfort in connecting with like-minded individuals who share similar experiences online, turning the digital world into a bridge that fosters connections and alternative ways of understanding.

As participants voiced, these interconnected themes illuminate the intricate interplay between identity and the digital age, offering valuable insights into how

Indigenous individuals navigate authenticity and engagement in online and in-person spaces. The exploration unveils the evolving landscape of Indigenous identity and underscores the transformative power of digital platforms in shaping, amplifying, and connecting these voices.

6.2.3 Social Media's Impact on Indigenous Communities

The impact of social media on Indigenous communities is significant. While platforms like TikTok champion freedom of speech and an open approach, there are contrasts with Instagram's content censorship issues, raising questions about the user experience. Nevertheless, there has been a notable resurgence of support for Indigenous culture in recent years, partly fueled by social media. For example, events like the Nishga Nation's New Year celebration have seen increased attendance due to effective promotion and vendor engagement on social platforms. Another significant aspect is the role of online communities in fostering identity and cultural learning, with platforms providing a space for education and awareness, challenging stereotypes, and building bridges between Indigenous and non-Indigenous individuals.

Participant responses further emphasize the positive impact of social media in supporting Indigenous culture. Examples include increased attendance at cultural events like the Nishga Nation's New Year celebration due to effective promotion on social platforms. Participants note that social media has contributed to a resurgence of interest and support for Indigenous culture in recent years. Additionally, the mention of online communities underscores the role of these platforms in facilitating connections, challenging stereotypes, and promoting cultural awareness.

Technology's Influence on Cultural Understanding and Well-being

Technology, including social media, influences cultural understanding, identity, and emotional well-being. On the positive side, it has made information about Indigenous cultures more accessible. It has also normalized conversations about Indigenous ancestry and identity, allowing individuals to embrace their culture openly. However, there are potential downsides, such as the risk of oversimplifying complex traditions due to rapid access to information. Nonetheless, many find social media to be an uplifting and positive space. The immediacy of platforms like TikTok provides quick access to cultural content, events, and classes, contributing to preserving and disseminating Indigenous knowledge.

Participant responses provide additional perspectives on the positive influence of social media on cultural understanding and well-being. One participant highlights the positive aspects, noting that social media has made information about Indigenous cultures more accessible. They appreciate the normalization of conversations about Indigenous ancestry and identity, creating an environment where individuals can openly embrace their heritage. The mention of potential downsides, such as oversimplification, adds nuance to the discussion, acknowledging the complexities of navigating cultural information online.

Empowerment of Indigenous Voices and Knowledge Sharing

Social media is a powerful platform for empowering Indigenous voices and facilitating knowledge sharing. Indigenous content creators on platforms like TikTok are vital in bringing Indigenous people together and raising awareness about their cultures. They offer insights into traditions and practices, bridging geographical gaps and connecting Indigenous individuals with their culture and identities. The intergenerational knowledge exchange facilitated by these creators helps bridge gaps between generations. Furthermore, social media platforms provide a comfortable space for Indigenous elders and community

members to share their wisdom, dispel myths, and contribute to preserving and disseminating Indigenous culture. Social media has catalyzed cultural reconnection and empowerment by overcoming historical stigmas and fostering openness about Indigenous identity.

Participant responses align with the theme of empowerment and knowledge sharing. One participant acknowledged the role of Indigenous content creators on platforms like TikTok, emphasizing their contribution to bringing Indigenous people together and raising awareness about their cultures. The mention of intergenerational knowledge exchange and the comfortable space provided for elders and community members to share wisdom adds depth to the narrative. Acknowledging overcoming historical stigmas and fostering openness reflects the transformative potential of social media in the context of Indigenous cultural empowerment.

The integration of participant responses illuminates the multifaceted impact of social media on the revitalization and preservation of Indigenous cultures. These insights showcase how platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok contribute to reconnecting individuals with suppressed cultural practices, fostering community engagement, and empowering Indigenous voices. The participants' diverse experiences highlight the positive aspects of social media in promoting cultural understanding, dispelling stereotypes, and creating spaces for knowledge exchange. While acknowledging challenges such as content censorship, the overall narrative underscores the transformative power of social media in supporting Indigenous cultural reconnection and empowerment. As we navigate the digital age, these reflections offer valuable considerations for the ongoing dialogue on the intersection of technology, culture, and identity.

6.3 West Quadrant: Challenges and Experiences of Life

In the sacred expanse of the West quadrant, Indigenous identities intertwine with the very essence of the earth and the setting sun, symbolizing the journey of self-discovery and introspection into adulthood. Here, amidst life's trials, individuals grapple with the intricate tapestry of their cultural heritage, seeking personal growth and metamorphosis.

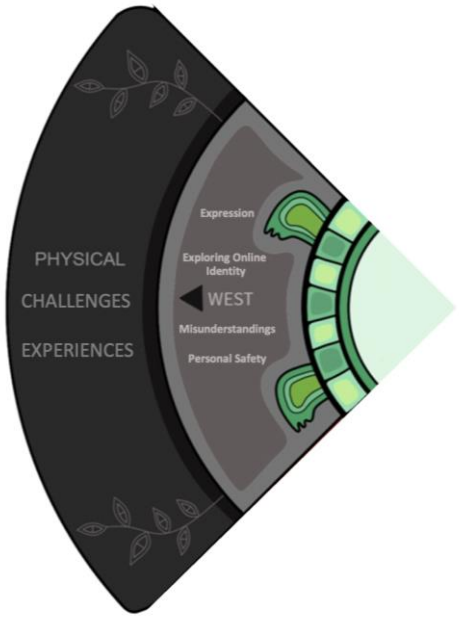


Figure 6: West Quadrant Summary of Data Analysis

Indigenous communities navigate this hallowed space's digital landscape, confronting obstacles that shape their online personas. Our exploration delves deep into the rich complexities of Indigenous digital identities, underscoring the paramount importance of upholding personal safety and responsibility in virtual realms, echoing the timeless teachings of Cajete (1999). Amidst the flux of technological progress, Indigenous individuals imbue resilience and adaptability into their digital presence, reconciling tradition with innovation.

The Western quadrant emerges as a dynamic crucible where Indigenous identities evolve in the crucible of the digital age's challenges and opportunities. It serves as a sacred canvas for self-discovery and collective empowerment, reverently honouring ancestral traditions while embracing the transformative potential of technology.

6.3.1 Intersectionality and Indigenous Identities

Central to our discourse is the nuanced exploration of Indigenous experiences, often fraught with misunderstandings and misrepresentations online. We delve deep into the unique challenges Indigenous Peoples face, such as stereotypes and biases, shedding light on how these intersect with their digital presence. At the forefront is the central theme of online identity and expression among Indigenous Peoples, illuminating how they navigate digital platforms to authentically express their cultural identities, values, and beliefs. Additionally, this section underscores the vital issue of personal safety and identity in the online sphere, examining how Indigenous individuals safeguard their personal information and digital identities amidst historical vulnerabilities.

Intersectionality takes center stage as we dissect how different facets of an individual's identity, particularly Indigenous identities intersecting with other marginalized groups, give rise to distinct misunderstandings and obstacles within the digital landscape. Moreover, we delve into the transformative potential of education in empowering Indigenous communities in the digital age, emphasizing its role in dispelling stereotypes and fostering respectful online interactions.

Online Identity and Expression

Navigating the realm of online identity and expression, it is essential to acknowledge social media's dual nature, as highlighted by one participant who emphasized its potential for education alongside its capacity for harm: "Social media is a way to educate people more on our traditional ways, our traditional teachings... But there are definitely ways where it can cause harm, too." This insight underscores the need for responsible digital engagement and the protection of Indigenous knowledge in virtual spaces.

Within this landscape, the focus shifts to 2SLGBTQ Indigenous individuals, for whom social media serves as a vital tool for authentically expressing their identities. Participants' firsthand experiences emphasize the significance of online platforms as safe havens for reclaiming and celebrating true selves, especially within conservative, close-knit communities. These narratives are compelling illustrations of how digital spaces enable the reshaping of identities in a positive and empowering manner, fostering a sense of community and online support.

Personal Safety and Identity

Concerns surrounding personal safety in digital spaces, especially for Indigenous women navigating intersectionality, are foregrounded in participant responses. The cautious approach to disclosing Indigenous identity online intertwines with considerations of safety, reflecting a deep-seated apprehension rooted in historical vulnerabilities. These narratives provide poignant insights into the challenges faced by Indigenous women online, underscoring the ongoing imperative to address safety concerns within the context of intersectionality.

Intersectionality and Misunderstandings

In probing the complexities of intersectionality and misunderstandings in digital spheres, a participant raised pertinent questions about the alignment of these spaces with Indigenous values. They caution against solely relying on digital platforms, noting, "... digital spaces, they are great, but they are not the whole piece... potential conflict could be that people may solely rely on digital platforms..." This perspective emphasizes the necessity of holistic approaches to cultural preservation and transmission.

Through participants' narratives, the intricate dynamics of intersectionality within digital realms come to light, revealing how misunderstandings often stem from a need for

more understanding. Instances of doxxing based on Indigenous identity serve as poignant examples of the challenges faced at the intersection of multiple identities, underscoring the imperative for a nuanced comprehension of intersectionality in digital landscapes. The discourse underscores the importance of empathy and education in navigating such complexities, advocating for a more inclusive digital environment.

Education emerges as a transformative force in navigating intersectionality online, empowering individuals to traverse the digital realm with confidence and efficacy. Participants share stories of transcending negative community statistics through education, illustrating its pivotal role in nurturing informed, empowered digital citizens within the context of intersectionality.

6.3.2 Decolonization and Indigenous Self-Determination

At the core of our exploration into decolonization and Indigenous self-determination, one participant brings attention to the potential of social media in preserving Indigenous knowledges, while also highlighting its impermanence: "I think that social media does have a better chance, maybe in some ways, of being able to preserve a lot of things... while social media is up, it still has that chance of being able to preserve what we have left." This viewpoint underscores the transient nature of digital platforms and emphasizes the importance of proactive efforts in cultural preservation.

Central to our discussion is the theme of empowerment and activism through social media, revealing how Indigenous Peoples utilize these platforms to amplify their voices, garner support, and enact change. While recognizing the democratizing impact of social media, this segment also delves into the complexities and challenges inherent in Indigenous

engagement with digital spaces, including considerations of online safety, ethical dilemmas, and the delicate balance between advocacy and potential risks.

Personal introspection and advocacy emerge as key focal points, illustrating how Indigenous individuals leverage social media platforms to share their personal narratives and reflections, thus contributing to a deeper understanding of their experiences and challenges. This section critically examines traditional forms of activism and advocacy compared to their digital counterparts, offering insights into the evolving landscape of Indigenous advocacy efforts.

Empowerment and Activism Through Social Media

Social media plays a pivotal role as a platform where intimate personal reflections and advocacy intersect. It enables Indigenous individuals to share their narratives and advocate for causes such as decolonization and Indigenous rights. Leaders strategically utilize these platforms to educate a broad audience, fostering mutual understanding between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities while highlighting the transformative impact of personal advocacy in effecting significant societal change.

Participants emphasize social media's profound influence in fostering global solidarity among Indigenous communities. Movements like the "Standoff" in North Dakota exemplify how digital platforms facilitate collaborative efforts across cultural boundaries, providing a crucial forum for Indigenous voices to address pressing issues like environmental degradation and systemic oppression worldwide.

However, alongside the opportunities presented by social media, participants also confront the complex realities and challenges Indigenous activists encounter. Issues such as surveillance tactics observed during movements like the "Standoff" underscore the importance of vigilance and resilience in navigating digital environments. The discussion

explores how Indigenous individuals navigate the intricacies of managing personal and professional online identities while navigating diverse community perspectives and adapting to evolving platform regulations.

While celebrating social media's capacity to unify and empower Indigenous communities globally, this dialogue acknowledges the nuanced complexities and ongoing struggles inherent in effectively leveraging these digital platforms.

Challenges and Complexities

While acknowledging the opportunities provided by social media, participants delve into the challenges and intricacies Indigenous activists face, including surveillance tactics employed during movements like the "Standoff." The discussion highlights the need for Indigenous individuals to navigate the delicate balance between personal and professional online identities amidst diverse perspectives within their communities and evolving platform regulations.

Personal Reflection and Advocacy

Social media emerges as a space for intimate personal reflection and advocacy, where Indigenous individuals share their experiences and advocate for complex issues like decolonization and Indigenous rights. Leaders strategically utilize these platforms to educate Indigenous and non-Indigenous audiences, emphasizing personal advocacy as a catalyst for change and deeper understanding.

Critique of Traditional Activism

There is a growing critique within Indigenous communities regarding the effectiveness of traditional activism methods, prompting a call for a more nuanced and strategic approach. Participants advocate for collaborative efforts with government officials and established

channels, stressing the need for cultural sensitivity and the effectiveness of advocacy endeavours.

In discussing Indigenous engagement with social media, participants offer a nuanced exploration encompassing empowering opportunities and intricate challenges. One participant expresses skepticism about the compatibility of digital platforms with Indigenous values, stating, "I believe digital spaces were not created with Indigenous values in mind... So I don't believe they align with traditional values, ways of life, or self-determination at all." This viewpoint underscores concerns about the inherent cultural biases within digital technologies.

This critique adds depth to the conversation, highlighting ongoing tensions between traditional activism methods and the evolving digital landscape, where Indigenous communities navigate complex intersections of culture, technology, and advocacy.

6.3.3 Supporting and Empowering Indigenous Identities Through Social Media

In this section, we delve into the impact of the digital age on the revival and preservation of Indigenous culture, emphasizing the pivotal role of social media platforms in this transformative process.

At the core of our discussion lies the theme of cultural preservation and revitalization, highlighting how social media serves as a dynamic repository of Indigenous knowledge, traditions, and practices. While recognizing the challenges within these platforms, such as cultural appropriation and misrepresentation, we explore the vast opportunities they offer for education, awareness, and cultural sharing.

Community empowerment and responsibility emerge as central themes, focusing on how social media empowers Indigenous communities to assert their cultural identities

and advocate for their rights. Additionally, the section addresses the significance of cross-cultural learning and connections facilitated by social media, fostering mutual understanding and appreciation.

In the age of digital connectivity, Indigenous communities harness the power of social media to breathe new life into their cultural traditions. These platforms serve as communication tools and dynamic spaces for learning, practicing, and preserving Indigenous knowledge. Access to cultural activities, like fish skin tanning, has been transformed through online events and promotions on platforms like Zoom and social media. The limited availability of certain cultural practices in physical spaces prompts Indigenous individuals to seek learning opportunities online, breaking down physical barriers and enabling engagement regardless of location.

Challenges and Opportunities in Social Media Platforms

Social media platforms, while offering a powerful platform for Indigenous voices, present significant challenges such as content removal, bias, and limited control over representation. These obstacles highlight the urgent need for more inclusive and equitable online spaces that uphold Indigenous perspectives and respect cultural boundaries. Indigenous advocates call for platforms to address harassment reports promptly and effectively and to ensure that Indigenous teachings are shared with the public in a respectful manner.

Despite these challenges, social media platforms also serve as vital bridges that connect Indigenous communities globally. They facilitate cross-cultural learning and strengthen intergenerational connections, with platforms like TikTok becoming venues for language revitalization through lessons and conversations. Moreover, these platforms

enable Indigenous individuals to explore and appreciate diverse Indigenous cultures and traditions, fostering a deeper cultural understanding.

Participant insights provide a view of the nuanced journey of Indigenous engagement with social media. They highlight themes such as cultural preservation, the complexities of platform dynamics, opportunities for community empowerment, and the role of social media in promoting cross-cultural learning and understanding.

6.3.4 Ethical Reflections in Digital Spaces

This section delves into the importance of cultural respect, understanding, and responsible engagement within Indigenous cultures and digital platforms, highlighting the need for sensitive and ethical interactions.

At its core, the discussion advocates for cultural sensitivity and respect, urging a deeper recognition and appreciation of Indigenous cultures within digital platforms. Participants illuminate challenges such as conflicts and instances of lateral violence within online Indigenous communities, underscoring the critical importance of ethical conduct and thoughtful technology use. Moreover, there is a poignant call to acknowledge historical injustices and amplify Indigenous voices in discussions that concern them.

Participants emphasized the pressing need for educational initiatives that promote cultural sensitivity, advocating for reforms within mainstream education to accurately portray Indigenous cultures. They stressed the significance of learning directly from Indigenous voices and implementing comprehensive cultural sensitivity training across various sectors. Additionally, the dialogue emphasizes the imperative of fostering unity, addressing internal conflicts, and cultivating safe spaces conducive to open dialogue and diversity acceptance. Strategies aimed at healing, mutual understanding, and solidarity are

highlighted as essential for strengthening the social fabric within Indigenous communities, promoting resilience and cohesion in digital realms.

Recognizing the dual role of technology in both preserving and disseminating Indigenous cultures, participants advocate for Indigenous communities to have agency in their online representation. They propose the development of digital literacy programs aimed at empowering younger generations with the skills necessary for responsible online engagement, ensuring that technology supports the positive preservation and sharing of Indigenous heritage. Furthermore, participants stressed the importance of prioritizing and centering Indigenous perspectives on digital platforms, advocating for a commitment to rectifying historical injustices and fostering inclusivity in online spaces.

The discussion encapsulated the multifaceted nature of engaging with Indigenous identity in digital contexts, highlighting a diversity of viewpoints and experiences within Indigenous communities regarding digital engagement. One participant acknowledges the nuanced relationship between digital spaces and Indigenous values, noting, "The alignment or potential conflicts between digital spaces and Indigenous traditional values and ways of life can vary... Where they align are in cultural preservation, cultural revitalization, and with advocacy and awareness." This recognition underscores the complexity of Indigenous perspectives on digital involvement.

Another participant reflects on the challenges of maintaining cultural integrity amidst digital interactions, stating, "It's really hard to maintain original directions and original instructions... when you're constantly dealing with people... wanting to change things... And the stream of consciousness... without having the wisdom to do that." This insight sheds light on the intricate dynamics Indigenous communities navigate in digital

spaces, emphasizing the ongoing importance of preserving cultural authenticity and integrity.

Together, these perspectives contribute to a rich understanding of ethical reflections in digital spaces within Indigenous contexts, advocating for an inclusive and empathetic approach that respects and uplifts Indigenous cultures amidst the evolving digital landscape.

6.4 North Quadrant: Wisdom, Healing, and Culmination

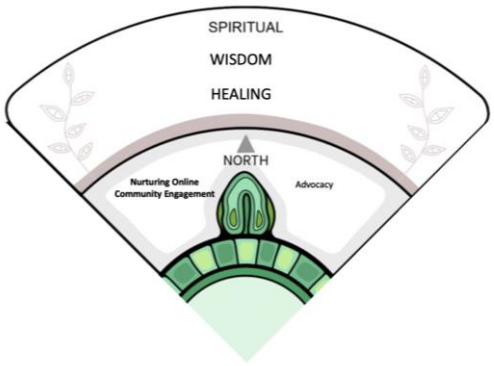


Figure 7: North Quadrant Summary of Data Analysis

The North quadrant embodies the essence of Indigenous identities, intertwined with the element of air, the embrace of cold temperatures, and the wisdom of elders. It serves as a beacon of Indigenous knowledge, healing practices, and the culmination of life's sacred journey. Within this quadrant, the spotlight shines brightly on preserving and amplifying Indigenous voices, traditions, and knowledge systems.

In the realm of research within the North quadrant, the central focus revolves around nurturing online community engagement and advocacy within Indigenous contexts. This endeavour is deeply rooted in acknowledging and honouring the intricate balance between online presence and the sanctity of personal and familial life within Indigenous communities. The research delves into the transformative potential of social media platforms in fostering cultural revitalization, reclaiming identity, and promoting social justice, echoing the insights of Atalay (2012). Moreover, the North quadrant underscores

the imperative of empowering Indigenous voices, fostering cross-cultural understanding, and cultivating meaningful connections across digital landscapes. It exalts the significance of Indigenous cultural expressions and solidarity in navigating the complexities of the digital age, as eloquently articulated by Smith (2012). Moreover, centring conversations around Indigenous identities requires acknowledging the impact of Indigenous cultural expression, solidarity, and evolving perspectives in the digital age.

6.4.1 Revitalizing Indigenous Cultural Expression and Identity

In the digital era, Indigenous cultural expression and identity thrive with transformative power, prominently showcased through social media platforms. These spaces provide Indigenous individuals and communities a dynamic platform to assert their unique cultural identities, values, and traditions. Through social media, they advocate for rights, promote their cultures, and cultivate empowerment and agency. Additionally, these digital landscapes foster connections and solidarity among Indigenous groups, advocating for social justice and cultural preservation.

Indigenous voices resonate strongly in these digital spaces, where cultural expression flourishes in various forms. Collective movements like the "Make Muskrat Right" protests and personal narratives celebrating traditional crafts and archaeological discoveries are amplified, enriching the broader narrative of Indigenous identity.

The role of social media in Indigenous empowerment is profound, serving as a global platform for preserving and sharing Indigenous knowledge and wisdom. This convergence of online resources and traditional wisdom empowers the expression of Indigenous identity, fostering shared knowledge that strengthens community voices. Digital spaces transcend boundaries, building support networks and celebrating Afro-

Indigenous identities and shared experiences, highlighting the inclusivity of Indigenous culture online. However, navigating challenges such as historical injustices and online negativity remains pivotal for Indigenous individuals in digital spaces. Social media acts as both a catalyst for positive change and a reflection of the complexities of Indigenous identity in the digital age. Specific examples illustrate how these platforms play a transformative role in shaping and expressing Indigenous identity, from collective protests to personal narratives that empower, connect, and celebrate the multifaceted nature of Indigenous cultures.

Participants underscore the significance of representation in digital spaces, asserting, "The more that individuals... express themselves and reclaim their voices and reclaim their indigeneity because there is more representation." This highlights how digital platforms enable Indigenous individuals to assert their identities and reclaim agency in shaping their narratives.

Echoing this sentiment, another participant emphasizes the role of social media in reclaiming space and voice, stating, "Taking up space in something that's meant for others historically... that's one way that I think it can contribute to voice reclamation and representation." This perspective underscores the importance of Indigenous presence in digital spaces to challenge historical marginalization and assert cultural visibility. Moreover, another participant added to this discourse by acknowledging the power of social media in presenting Indigenous identities globally, noting, "Being able to present to the world on a global platform our own Indigenous identities is quite new, and it's powerful." This highlights how digital platforms facilitate cross-cultural dialogue and challenge stereotypes, contributing to broader understanding and appreciation of Indigenous cultures.

A participant further reflects on the strength of community building facilitated by social media, stating, "There's strength in numbers... social media definitely does give people that opportunity to come together." This underscores the role of digital platforms in fostering solidarity and promoting collective action within Indigenous communities, uniting individuals around shared goals and values.

In essence, these diverse perspectives and experiences illustrate the nuanced dynamics of Indigenous engagement with digital platforms, highlighting their transformative potential in asserting cultural identity, fostering community resilience, and advocating for social change on a global scale.

6.4.2 Preserving and Promoting Indigenous Culture on Social Media

Exploring Indigenous identity and cultural preservation on social media reveals a complex interplay of deeply personal themes that are crucial for community cohesion yet fraught with challenges such as authenticity and exploitation. For Indigenous content creators navigating these digital landscapes, enhancing their visibility and protecting cultural integrity are paramount goals. Recommendations include implementing curated content pages and improving search functionalities, elevating Indigenous voices and safeguarding against misrepresentation and appropriation.

Promoting Indigenous culture on social media transcends mere content dissemination; it necessitates a nuanced approach rooted in cultural respect and awareness. Central to this effort is the commitment to understanding and honouring diverse Indigenous practices and protocols. By fostering an environment where Indigenous cultures are shared respectfully, digital platforms can cultivate inclusivity and allow for the harmonious coexistence of diverse perspectives.

This exploration dives deep into the vibrant discussions surrounding Indigenous identity in digital spaces, underscoring the urgency of fostering inclusivity and respect. It highlights the role of social media in upholding and propagating Indigenous knowledge and traditions while navigating the challenges posed by historical injustices and online negativity.

Preserving Indigenous identity amidst digital interactions requires a delicate balance. Collaborative efforts with Indigenous leaders are crucial in guiding inclusive authentication practices that deter cultural appropriation without stifling genuine community expression. Platforms can evolve by incorporating user-driven suggestions such as curated content pages and enhanced search tools, amplifying authentic Indigenous voices and experiences.

Fostering cultural respect and awareness involves acknowledging Indigenous protocols and actively promoting an understanding of diverse Indigenous traditions. Platforms can collaborate with Indigenous leaders to develop guidelines that promote respectful sharing of cultural content and advocate for the significance of supporting Indigenous enterprises and initiatives.

Insights from research participants shed light on the complexities of safeguarding and elevating Indigenous cultures online. As social media platforms evolve, the active engagement of Indigenous voices becomes pivotal in ensuring alignment with community values and aspirations. Through collaborative efforts and a steadfast commitment to inclusivity, digital platforms can emerge as potent tools for preserving and celebrating Indigenous cultures and ways of life.

A participant underscores the empowering role of representation within digital realms, noting, "Representation is a tool... social media is the tool... we're using it often

quite well as that tool." This assertion underscores the agency of Indigenous communities in leveraging digital platforms to amplify their voices and advocate for their rights, challenging historical marginalization. Moreover, another participant emphasized the transformative potential of digital platforms in amplifying Indigenous voices and experiences, stating, "Through the amplification of voices, digital platforms provide a space for Indigenous individuals and communities to share their own stories, perspectives, and experiences." This highlights how social media democratizes Indigenous storytelling, fostering cultural exchange and challenging stereotypes through global visibility.

In essence, these perspectives underscore the dynamic role of social media in Indigenous cultural resurgence. Social media navigates complexities while empowering communities to reclaim narratives and promote cross-cultural understanding on a global scale.

6.4.3 Digital Cultural Resurgence of Indigenous Communities

Social media's influence on Indigenous cultural preservation and revitalization in the digital age is profound, presenting opportunities and challenges for Indigenous communities striving to uphold the authenticity of their heritage. Platforms like social media enable Indigenous peoples to showcase and celebrate their cultural practices, languages, ceremonies, and artistic expressions globally, as emphasized by one participant, who highlights how these platforms have "made a lot more young people proud of who they are and where they come from." This visibility not only preserves Indigenous cultures but also empowers communities to assert their identities on their own terms, fostering cultural pride and self-confidence among younger generations. However, alongside these opportunities come significant challenges, such as the risk of misrepresentation and cultural

appropriation. Another participant underscored the importance of social media in instilling confidence and empowering Indigenous voices, noting how it "helps instill confidence in people that their voice matters and that their stories matter." This sentiment highlights the transformative potential of digital platforms in promoting self-expression and community engagement while advocating for cultural sovereignty.

Social media also serves as a powerful tool for Indigenous community building and advocacy, as illustrated by hashtags, campaigns, and online petitions to amplify Indigenous voices for causes like environmental protection and social justice. These platforms enable Indigenous activists and advocates to mobilize support and solidarity across vast distances, fostering community resilience and resistance, as described through various participant examples. Moreover, digital spaces facilitate cultural revival and reconnection by providing virtual platforms for workshops, tutorials, and educational resources where Indigenous elders pass down traditional knowledge to younger generations. This exchange strengthens intergenerational bonds and reaffirms Indigenous resilience in the face of historical traumas, as participants articulate. Furthermore, social media fosters meaningful interactions and understanding between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities, transcending geographical and cultural barriers. Indigenous individuals share their stories and perspectives globally, challenging stereotypes and fostering empathy. At the same time, non-Indigenous allies learn from and support Indigenous initiatives, recognizing the value of Indigenous knowledge in broader social and environmental movements.

In conclusion, the digital cultural resurgence of Indigenous communities is a dynamic phenomenon shaped by the interplay of opportunities and challenges presented by social media. By harnessing the transformative potential of digital platforms, Indigenous peoples continue to assert their cultural sovereignty, strengthen community ties, and

amplify their voices on the global stage. This ongoing engagement paves the way for a more just and inclusive future where Indigenous voices are valued, respected, and integral to shaping a diverse and interconnected world.

6.4.4 Digital Dynamics of Indigenous Identity and Community Building

The digital realm unfolds as a complex tapestry where Indigenous identity and community dynamics play out uniquely. Social media platforms serve as canvases for Indigenous online communities, showcasing a spectrum of attitudes and behaviours. Despite challenges, opportunities for empowerment, identity formation, cultural exchange, and education abound within these digital spaces.

Diversity of Indigenous Online Communities

Indigenous communities on social media form a vibrant mosaic of attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours, showcasing the rich tapestry of Indigenous identities and experiences. Engaging with these communities offers a glimpse into Indigenous online spaces' diverse perspectives and cultural nuances. From discussions on traditional practices to contemporary issues, the diversity of voices contributes to the dynamic and evolving nature of Indigenous digital presence, highlighting the resilience and complexity of Indigenous cultures in the online sphere.

Challenges and Negative Trends

While Indigenous online communities serve as hubs for constructive dialogue and connection, they also contend with negative trends that can impede meaningful interaction. Criticism and hostility, if unchecked, pose significant challenges to fostering an environment conducive to respectful exchange. Striking a balance between promoting open

discourse and respecting individual boundaries is essential for cultivating healthy and inclusive digital spaces where diverse perspectives can thrive harmoniously.

Empowerment and Identity Formation

Within Indigenous online communities, silent observers occupy a transformative role in shaping digital narratives and fostering a sense of empowerment and identity affirmation. Social media platforms provide safe havens for individuals to authentically explore and embrace their cultural heritage and personal identities. Through observation and engagement with diverse content, silent observers find validation and support, contributing to Indigenous digital communities' collective empowerment and resilience.

Cultural Exchange and Education

Indigenous online communities catalyze cross-cultural interactions, fostering mutual understanding and appreciation among Indigenous and non-Indigenous individuals. These platforms become invaluable educational tools through shared stories, traditions, and perspectives, shedding light on the richness and diversity of Indigenous cultures and their contributions to society. By promoting cultural exchange and education, Indigenous online communities bridge divides, encourage empathy, and pave the way for meaningful dialogue and collaboration in the pursuit of shared understanding and respect.

Indigenous online communities embody diverse attitudes and behaviours, offering opportunities for empowerment, education, and cultural exchange. Navigating these digital spaces requires a nuanced understanding of Indigenous identity production and a commitment to fostering supportive and inclusive environments.

6.4.5 Navigating the Complex Digital Landscape for Indigenous Peoples

As the digital age reshapes human interaction, Indigenous individuals navigate a unique and complex terrain within social media. Insights from research participants highlight themes such as online safety, meaningful engagement, generational perspectives, and balanced online mindfulness, providing guiding principles for Indigenous individuals in digital interactions.

Online Safety and Authenticity

Indigenous individuals often face heightened vulnerability to targeted threats, emphasizing the critical importance of vigilance and authenticity in their online interactions. Safeguarding personal information and maintaining a genuine digital presence is paramount for ensuring the safety and integrity of Indigenous voices amidst potential risks and challenges. Upholding authenticity protects against exploitation and reinforces the trust and credibility essential for meaningful engagement within online communities.

Meaningful Connections and Engagement

Cultivating meaningful connections and engagement online serves as a cornerstone for personal growth and community empowerment within Indigenous contexts. Through active listening, empathetic communication, and the exchange of diverse perspectives, Indigenous individuals forge bonds that transcend virtual boundaries, fostering a sense of belonging and solidarity. These genuine interactions enrich individual experiences and contribute to Indigenous communities' collective resilience and cultural vibrancy in the digital sphere.

Generational Perspectives and Values

Despite the inevitable nuances shaped by generational differences, Indigenous individuals share a fundamental commitment to self-definition rooted in their cultural values and lived experiences. This intentional approach to identity preservation and expression honours

ancestral wisdom and ensures the continuity of Indigenous heritage across generations. By embracing diverse perspectives and evolving values, Indigenous communities affirm their resilience and adaptability in navigating the complexities of the online world while upholding the richness of their cultures.

Balanced Online Mindfulness

Navigating the digital realm requires a delicate balance between engagement and introspection to safeguard mental and emotional well-being. Practicing mindful social media use involves consciously curating uplifting content, fostering positive interactions, and prioritizing self-care to mitigate the impact of negativity and stress. By cultivating a sense of digital mindfulness, Indigenous individuals empower themselves to navigate online spaces with resilience and authenticity, promoting holistic wellness and sustainable community connections.

In navigating the digital landscape, Indigenous individuals draw on these themes to preserve authenticity, foster connections, honour generational values, and maintain mindful engagement online.

Chapter 7: Understandings of Online Communities

7.1 Utilizing Thematic Analysis in Discourse: TikTok and Indigenous Identities

Conducting a thematic analysis of discourse involves a systematic approach to identifying and analyzing themes within textual data that originate from various forms of discourse. This qualitative research method enables researchers to distill complex data sets into comprehensible themes that capture the essence of the discourse. While the process aligns with the general steps of thematic analysis, applying it specifically to discourse analysis requires a nuanced understanding of both the content and the context in which the language is used.

Analyzing metrics such as likes, comments, saves, and shares, we gain a deeper understanding of Indigenous user interactions and perceptions within digital spaces. This approach allows me to uncover the underlying power dynamics, social inequalities, and ideological biases that shape Indigenous experiences online. By examining how language and discourse manifest in these metrics, we can better grasp the nuanced ways in which Indigenous identities are constructed and negotiated on social media platforms. This enriches our comprehension of the digital space and fosters cultural inclusivity by recognizing and validating Indigenous perspectives and voices.

Integrating thematic analysis into social media metrics analysis ultimately enhances our ability to promote diverse representation and meaningful engagement with Indigenous Peoples in online communities. This section outlines a structured approach to fluidly blending thematic analysis with discourse analysis, guiding researchers through the essential steps from initial data engagement to the detailed analysis of themes.

User Identification Metrics: Username and Verification Status

User identification metrics, such as Username and Verification Status, serve as platforms for Indigenous expression and credibility within the TikTok community. For Indigenous users, usernames provide a medium for cultural representation and personal identity expression. Meanwhile, verification badges enhance credibility, reflecting cultural authenticity and fostering trust among Indigenous content creators.

User Engagement Metrics: Follower Count and Following Count

Follower and Following Counts reveal insights into Indigenous users' social connections and engagement strategies within the TikTok environment. These metrics showcase reciprocity patterns and online community dynamics within Indigenous TikTok communities. Comparative analysis allows a deeper exploration of how verification status influences Indigenous engagement and content dissemination strategies.

Content Engagement Metrics: Likes, Comments, & Shares

Heart Count, Comment Count, and Share Count indicate Indigenous user engagement and community interactions on TikTok. These metrics highlight the resonance of Indigenous content within the platform and foster cultural appreciation within online communities. The comparative analysis further explores how specific content types or user categories elicit more engagement, shaping Indigenous digital narratives.

Video-related Metrics: Video Duration and Play Count

Video Duration and Play Count offer valuable insights into Indigenous content consumption and engagement strategies on TikTok. These metrics show how Indigenous users interact with video content and contribute to forming online communities. Comparative analysis helps uncover how video duration influences Indigenous user engagement and retention, enriching our understanding of Indigenous digital dynamics.

7.1.1 Indigenous Representation on TikTok

TikTok's diverse features facilitate Indigenous cultural expression and connectivity within the digital sphere. The socio-technical characteristics unique to TikTok activate Indigenous discursive practices, providing platforms for cultural resurgence and online community empowerment.

Indigenous features on TikTok, like hashtags, enable the localization and sharing of Indigenous knowledge, fostering and reinforcing cultural connections within online communities. Analyzing these features helps us grasp the broader cultural practices and technical aspects that define Indigenous digital identities.

Expressing Cultural Appreciation: Indigenous Heart (Like) Button

Indigenous expression on TikTok centers around the heart-shaped "Like" button, allowing users to convey cultural appreciation with a simple tap. The Indigenous heart count serves as a quantitative benchmark, reflecting the resonance of Indigenous content within the TikTok community and amplifying Indigenous cultural narratives.

Fostering Online Community Interaction: The Comment Section

The comment section serves as a virtual gathering space for Indigenous voices, facilitating dialogue and collaboration within online communities. Comment counts provide qualitative insights into Indigenous user interactions and sentiments, contributing to a deeper understanding of Indigenous cultural dynamics on TikTok.

Establishing Indigenous Connections: Follower and Following

The follow button establishes connections within Indigenous TikTok communities, fostering reciprocal relationships and online community engagement. Follower and following counts offer insights into Indigenous user popularity and engagement strategies, highlighting the interconnectedness of Indigenous digital identities.

Enhancing Indigenous Credibility: The Verification Badge

The verification badge enhances Indigenous user credibility and authenticity on TikTok, distinguishing Indigenous content creators and fostering trust within online communities. Comparative analysis discerns the impact of verification status on Indigenous content dissemination and cultural influence, promoting Indigenous representation and visibility within the digital landscape.

Engaging in public discussions about Indigenous representation and features on TikTok is crucial for fostering cultural inclusivity and comprehension in the digital realm. By integrating Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Indigenous viewpoints, researchers enhance our understanding of how TikTok influences Indigenous identities and online communities, leading to a more inclusive perspective.

7.2 Methods of TikTok Video Sampling

7.2.1. Identifying Relevant Hashtags

In the East Quadrant, the meticulously curated hashtag #IndigenousPride is a conduit for delving into the assertion of Indigenous identity and authenticity within the digital sphere. This hashtag resonates deeply with the foundational birth and renewal principles defining the East Quadrant by accentuating the pride inherent in Indigenous identity. Turning to the South Quadrant, the hashtag #IndigenousArt was chosen with careful consideration. Acknowledging art as a potent vehicle for self-expression, it plays a pivotal role in preserving and revitalizing Indigenous traditions. This choice aligns seamlessly with the South Quadrant's themes, where digital platforms are utilized for self-expression and connection to cultural heritage. In the West Quadrant, the hashtag #Decolonize was selected, reflecting the formidable challenges and barriers Indigenous Peoples encounter in

the digital era. "Decolonize" underscores the urgent need to confront historical injustices while navigating the digital landscape with resilience and adaptability. Finally, in the North Quadrant, #IndigenousPeoplesDay is aligned with the emphasis on nurturing online community engagement and advocacy within Indigenous contexts. This hashtag serves as a celebration of Indigenous cultural expression and solidarity amidst the digital age.

Digital Sample Scope and Size

CrowdTangle, a publicly available insights tool developed by Facebook, facilitates the observation, analysis, and documentation of public content across various social media platforms, including Facebook Pages, Groups, and Instagram accounts. It is designed to monitor influential accounts such as verified users, celebrities, athletes, politicians, and media entities. It is important to note that CrowdTangle does not track regular Facebook profiles, content from non-public Instagram accounts, or general hashtag usage.

Regarding the metrics it tracks, CrowdTangle provides information on post timing, source, interactions (likes, comments, etc.), and video views. However, it does not track metrics such as reach, impressions, revenue, 1-minute video views, unfollows, link clicks, or demographic details of users engaging with the content. Additionally, it does not support tracking Facebook/Instagram Stories, Events, Fundraisers, Watch Parties, geo-gated or age-gated posts, ads, deleted content, or profile photo updates. While CrowdTangle offers valuable insights into public content engagement, it has limitations in tracking certain metrics and specific types of content across different platforms.

Data Collection

The TikTok data was collected on November 30, 2023, using a Firefox crawler called Zeeschuimer, which the University of Amsterdam developed. Another dataset from TikTok was collected on December 8, 2023, using the Bellingcat Python script called tiktok-

hashtag-analysis, utilizing the same hashtags mentioned above. All hashtags were collected, except for an error when searching for #native on TikTok.

The hashtag dataset with the highest frequency was chosen from the two TikTok data collection tools, resulting in 15,108 videos. The breakdown of the dataset by hashtag, social media platform, and sample size is as follows:

Hashtag	Social Media Platform	Sample Size
#NativeTikTok	TikTok	n= 976
#Indigenous	TikTok	n=1029
#IndigenousPride (East)	TikTok	n=930
#IndigenousArt (South)	TikTok	n= 936
#Decolonize (West)	TikTok	n=976
#IndigenousPeoplesDay (North)	TikTok	n= 913

Integrating Convenience and Purposive Sampling Techniques

The sampling procedure utilized in this study can be described as a combination of purposive and convenience sampling. The initial dataset was obtained through CrowdTangle data collection, a convenient method for accessing many TikTok videos. Convenience sampling was employed in this step because the researchers accessed videos readily available through the CrowdTangle platform without randomization or specific selection criteria. However, purposive sampling was applied within this larger dataset to ensure a representative sample. Six videos were randomly selected from each corresponding quadrant, adhering to specific criteria such as video length (more than thirty seconds) and the presence of both verified and unverified profiles. This purposive sampling approach was chosen to ensure diversity and representation within each quadrant, aligning with the research objectives. Therefore, the combination of convenience sampling through CrowdTangle data collection and purposive sampling within the selected dataset allowed for accessibility and representation of the sample. The rationale behind this approach was

to leverage the convenience of accessing a large dataset while ensuring that the selected sample adequately represents the desired characteristics for analysis.

7.2.2 Metric Analysis

Metadata was recorded for each video to provide valuable insights into the content's context. This information serves as a foundation for understanding user interactions. The sampling and analysis process was meticulously repeated for each hashtag within every quadrant, ensuring a diverse representation of TikTok content across different regions.

An assessment was undertaken in the quantitative analysis, focusing on two critical aspects of TikTok's user engagement: The Heart (Like) Button and the Share Button. Through meticulous quantification, engagement metrics, such as the number of likes and shares, were systematically measured. This quantitative approach aimed to unravel insights into user interactions and discern patterns in content popularity across the sampled videos.

Simultaneously, a nuanced examination was conducted on two additional metrics – the Friend List and the Verification Badge. This analysis delved into the presence and impact of these elements, concentrating on discerning patterns associated with user influence and verification status. Metrics such as follower counts and badge presence were scrutinized, providing an understanding of how these features contribute to the dynamics of user engagement within the TikTok community.

Moving to the *qualitative* analysis, an exploration was undertaken in each video's vibrant landscape of the Comment Section. This qualitative investigation sought in-depth insights into user sentiments, prevailing trends, and the dynamics of user interactions within this space. Moreover, comments were meticulously categorized based on thematic content, revealing patterns in user engagement. This qualitative approach allowed for a holistic

understanding of the nature of comments, prevalent emotions, and recurring topics, providing a nuanced perspective on the online community dynamics surrounding the sampled TikTok videos.

In parallel, an additional layer of analysis was introduced to probe the correlation between features such as the Friend List, Verification Badge, and user influence. This qualitative exploration aimed to assess how these elements interplay and contribute to the broader dynamics of user engagement and the dissemination of content within the TikTok community. By examining the nuanced relationships between these features, this analysis sought to uncover insights into the multifaceted nature of user influence and verification status on the platform.

The synergistic integration of quantitative and qualitative analyses is an approach to unraveling the intricate dynamics within the TikTok ecosystem. By quantifying key engagement metrics, such as likes and shares, the quantitative analysis offers valuable insights into the numerical aspects of user interaction and the popularity of content across diverse TikTok videos. This numerical lens, complemented by the assessment of features like the Friend List and Verification Badge, unveils patterns related to user influence and verification status, providing a quantitative foundation for understanding the multifaceted nature of user engagement.

On the other hand, the qualitative analysis takes a deep dive into the qualitative nuances of the TikTok experience. The exploration of the Comment Section unveils the rich tapestry of user sentiments, prevailing trends, and dynamic interactions within the online community. By categorizing comments based on themes, this qualitative approach captures the essence of user engagement, shedding light on the nuanced nature of conversations, prevalent emotions, and recurring topics. Simultaneously, the User

Influence and Verification Status Analysis adds extra depth by exploring the correlation between crucial engagement features and user influence. This qualitative dimension enriches the understanding of how features like the Friend List and Verification Badge contribute to the broader dynamics of user engagement and content dissemination within the TikTok community.

7.3 Digital Bridges: #Indigenous and #NativeTikTok

Social media platforms have become vital avenues for Indigenous Peoples to express their identities, celebrate their cultures, and advocate for their rights. Hashtags like #Indigenous and #NativeTikTok have emerged as powerful tools for Indigenous Peoples to reclaim their narratives, connect with others who share their heritage, and address pressing issues. This section delves into the significance of these hashtags, emphasizing their role in centering Indigenous identities on social media platforms.

7.3.2 #Indigenous on Social Media

Embracing Cultural Heritage and Revitalization

The hashtag #Indigenous serves as a cornerstone for Indigenous cultural expression and revitalization in the digital sphere. It provides a platform for Indigenous individuals to showcase and preserve traditional practices passed down through generations. Through videos depicting activities like beadwork, drumming, and traditional dances, users offer glimpses into the rich tapestry of Indigenous cultures. By sharing these cultural elements, individuals celebrate their heritage and foster global appreciation and respect for the diversity within online communities. Moreover, social media helps dispel stereotypes and misconceptions surrounding Indigenous cultures, fostering more understanding and respect.

Preserving Languages and Cultural Knowledge

Beyond cultural practices, the hashtag #Indigenous also plays a crucial role in preserving Indigenous languages, which are often endangered in the face of globalization. Users utilize social media platforms to share linguistic knowledge, facilitate language learning, and bridge generational divides within online communities. By emphasizing the importance of respectful engagement with Indigenous languages and cultures, users contribute to decolonizing digital spaces and ensuring the survival of Indigenous languages as vibrant forms of expression.

Advancing Activism and Advocacy

#Indigenous is a powerful form of Indigenous-focused activism, enabling individuals to raise awareness about land rights and representation. Activists leverage social media platforms to amplify their voices, challenge stereotypes, and advocate for change. Dr. Crystal Echo Hawk's pioneering work in visual storytelling exemplifies the transformative potential of narratives in reshaping public perceptions of Indigenous communities. Through strategic use of visual content and hashtags like #Indigenous, activists spark conversations, foster empathy, and garner support for Indigenous causes, contributing to a more equitable representation of Indigenous peoples in the public consciousness.

7.3.3 #NativeTikTok and Online Community Building

Cultural Celebrations through Dance Challenges

Under the umbrella of #NativeTikTok, users engage in dance challenges that draw inspiration from various Indigenous cultures. These challenges celebrate traditional dances and foster an online community as users from diverse Indigenous backgrounds participate and share their interpretations. This communal celebration through dance aligns with the

work of Dr. Dian Million, emphasizing the importance of digital spaces in fostering connections that contribute to a collective sense of identity and resistance (Million, 2013).

Strengthening Online Community Bonds Through Storytelling

#NativeTikTok is a digital gathering space where Indigenous individuals share personal narratives deeply rooted in their Indigenous identities. Through storytelling, users express their unique experiences and forge deeper connections with their peers. By exchanging stories and experiences, users foster empathy and understanding and reaffirm their collective Indigenous identity, strengthening the bonds of online community and solidarity.

Empowering Language Revitalization Efforts

Within #NativeTikTok, language exchange and learning circles flourish as Indigenous users collaborate to teach and learn Indigenous languages. This collaborative effort amplifies the importance of preserving linguistic diversity and empowers individuals to reclaim and revitalize their Indigenous languages. By actively engaging in language revitalization, users safeguard cultural heritage and reinforce the bonds within the online community, underscoring the critical role of language in preserving Indigenous identity and fostering a sense of unity and pride.

#Indigenous and #NativeTikTok are digital hubs for Indigenous identity, culture, and activism. By centring Indigenous voices and experiences, these hashtags contribute to the ongoing revitalization and empowerment of Indigenous Peoples within online communities.

7.4 East Quadrant: Exploring #IndigenousPride

Within this quadrant, we explore the rejuvenation of Indigenous identities, cultures, and online communities through the power of social media. We delve into how social media

platforms have become catalysts for Indigenous renewal, fostering a sense of pride, connecting with ancestral languages, and nurturing the creative expressions of Indigenous artistry.

The East Quadrant encompasses two key dimensions, each shedding light on the intricate interplay between Indigenous identity and the digital realm. The first dimension, ***Affirmation of Identity***, delves into how digital platforms, notably social media, affirm Indigenous identity. Within this context, an exploration ensues, scrutinizing the intricate dynamics underpinning digital spaces' role in shaping and reinforcing Indigenous identities. The lens widens to examine the utilization of hashtags such as #IndigenousPride as potent tools in expressing and amplifying Indigenous voices within the vast expanse of the digital sphere. This examination further dissects the nuanced process of asserting and authenticating Indigenous identity within the multifaceted landscape of digital interaction.

The second dimension, ***Digital Birth and Renewal***, spotlighted the manifestation of the East Quadrant themes of birth and renewal in the digital realm. Here, an investigation unfolds, probing into how social media platforms serve as fertile ground for the perpetual pursuit of comprehension of Indigenous identity. The examination extends beyond mere exploration, encompassing an assessment of how the digital landscape symbolizes a new beginning for Indigenous narratives and expressions. This digital rebirth signifies a continuation of cultural legacies and a dynamic space for the renewal and evolution of Indigenous stories and experiences.

The East Quadrant guides navigating the intricate relationship between Indigenous identity and the digital world. Through the lenses of Affirmation of Identity and Digital Birth and Renewal, it provides a nuanced understanding of how digital platforms shape,

validate, and perpetuate Indigenous narratives, offering both a mirror reflecting the richness of cultural identity and a canvas for the ongoing creation and renewal of Indigenous stories.

#IndigenousPride, a prominent symbol, encapsulates the optimism and pride associated with Indigenous identities and cultures. It represents a resurgence of self-affirmation and a celebration of cultural heritage. This hashtag symbolizes the renewal and positive aspects digital forms bring to Indigenous Peoples' lives. It signifies the birth of a collective consciousness that exudes pride and confidence in one's Indigenous heritage.

7.4.2 Metric Analysis

Table 1: Metrics for TikTok Videos using #IndigenousPride

Video #	Username *Name*	Date Posted	Verified	Video Time	Follower Count	Following Count	Heart Count	Comment Count	Saved Count	Share Count
1	Makhnachov *Andrian Makhnachov*	2022-12-22	Y	50s	395K	150	21K	1095	746	99
2	sherry.mckay *Sherry Mckay*	2020-11-4	Y	37s	630.4K	4241	18.2K	413	209	945
3	Aichella *Aïcha Bastien-N'Diaye*	2020-8-24	Y	30s	336.1K	1642	4221	90	48	36
4	Elsiepaul *Elsie Paul*	2021-12-23	N	174s	63.4K	8	70.1K	2361	2673	4643
5	xxtegansmallwoodxx *Tegan Smallwood*	2022-1-9	N	128s	222.5K	118	45K	715	4638	3588
6	lukecapasso *Luke Capasso*	2022-6-13	N	380s	579.2K	360	13.6K	442	1175	922

Overview of Quantitative Data

Hearts (Likes)

The distribution of likes among the featured TikTok videos illustrates the complex dynamics of audience appreciation. *Makhnachov*'s (#1) 21K hearts for a concise 50s video suggests an exceptional engagement rate, emphasizing the potential impact of succinct content. Conversely, *Paul*'s (#4) 70.1K hearts for a longer 174s video signals that captivating storytelling and detailed narratives can also garner significant likes. This

dichotomy challenges preconceived notions about the relationship between video duration and audience approval, highlighting the need for content creators to strike a balance between brevity and depth.

Followers

The follower counts show the creators' reach and influence within the TikTok community. *Mckay*'s (#2) substantial 630.4K followers indicate a significant presence and impact, possibly due to captivating content and consistent engagement. Meanwhile, Capasso (#6), with 579.2K followers, showcases that building a substantial following is achievable even with a smaller gap than *Mckay*'s (#2). The lower follower count for Paul (#4) suggests a niche following, emphasizing the importance of quality over quantity in fostering a meaningful online community.

Following

The number of users a content creator follows unveils their approach to online community engagement. While *Makhnachov* (#1) and *Bastien-N'Diaye* (#3) maintain relatively limited followings, Mckay's (#2) extensive 4,241 following indicates a broad exploration of content within the TikTok community. On the contrary, *Paul*'s (#4) minimalistic approach of following only eight users may suggest a more focused and curated experience. This diversity in following strategies underscores the personalized nature of TikTok engagement and the different ways creators navigate the vast content landscape.

Comments

Beyond numerical counts, the comments on these videos provide insights into the depth of audience interaction. *Makhnachov*'s (#1) 1,095 comments suggest a vibrant online community discussion, potentially fueled by the content's relatability or controversy. In contrast, *Bastien-N'Diaye*'s (#3) 90 comments may indicate a more intimate, yet impactful,

exchange between the creator and their audience. The quality and nature of comments further highlight how users engage with and contribute to the conversation around #IndigenousPride content on TikTok.

Saved

The "Saved" metric represents a user's desire to revisit and cherish a piece of content. *Smallwood*'s (#5) 4,638 saves for a 128s video signal a connection with the audience, implying that the content holds enduring value and resonance. *Bastien-N'Diaye*'s (#3) 48 saves, while fewer in number, indicate a select group of viewers who find lasting significance in the video. The "Saved" count transcends metrics, pointing towards the lasting impact and emotional connection fostered by specific #IndigenousPride videos on TikTok.

Shares

The share count reflects the content's ability to transcend its immediate audience and resonate with a broader online community. *Paul*'s remarkable 4,643 shares suggest a video that resonated and prompted users to share it actively with their networks. *Mckay*'s (#2) 945 shares similarly contribute to the content's extended reach. The share count amplifies the video's impact and underscores the power of #IndigenousPride content in fostering a sense of online community and solidarity on the TikTok platform.

A nuanced understanding of the features—Hearts, Followers, Following, Comments, Saved, and Shares—reveals the intricate tapestry of user interactions and perceptions within the TikTok #IndigenousPride online community. It showcases that success on TikTok is not a one-size-fits-all formula; somewhat, it is shaped by the unique storytelling, engagement strategies, and community dynamics woven by each content creator.

7.4.3 Overview of Qualitative Data

Andrian Makhnachov (aka Makhnachov)

Viral TikTok Star Andrian Makhnachov moved to Saskatchewan from Ukraine in May 2022. He has gone viral on TikTok for the stuff he found shocking about Canada and learning to be Canadian. The video showcases a genuine interest in Indigenous cultures as the creator delves into the significance of these beautifully crafted moccasins. What follows in the comments section is a tapestry of emotions, insights, and offers from the Indigenous TikTok community, which highlight bridging cultural gaps through genuine curiosity and respect.

Respecting Indigenous Heritage and Traditions

Makhnachov's open-minded curiosity and respect for the Indigenous cultures in Canada resonated deeply with TikTok users, predominantly Indigenous individuals. The overwhelmingly positive sentiment in the comments not only expressed gratitude for the creator's eagerness to share and educate on cultural traditions but also highlighted the rarity of such respectful engagement in the digital sphere. By showcasing and honouring Indigenous traditions with authenticity and respect, Makhnachov's content serves as a platform for Indigenous voices to be heard and celebrated, fostering a stronger sense of cultural pride and identity for Indigenous Peoples in online communities.

Fostering Unity and Identity Celebration

As noticed in the comment sections of Makhnachov’s videos, many commenters represent a vibrant mosaic of identities, with individuals proudly declaring their specific Indigenous nations. This diversity is a powerful testament to the rich and varied cultural landscape that defines online communities in Canada and worldwide. The various nations coming together in a digital space foster a sense of unity and showcase the complexity and beauty of

Indigenous identities, dispelling stereotypes and promoting a more accurate representation. By openly honouring Indigenous heritage and identity on a platform like TikTok, users affirm their cultural roots and contribute to a broader recognition of the diverse Indigenous cultures, strengthening bonds within online communities.

Encouraging Cultural Exchange and Learning

Beyond expressions of appreciation, many TikTok users like Makhnachov and Indigenous individuals actively engage in meaningful dialogue and exchange regarding Indigenous history and culture. By delving deeper into Indigenous traditions and experiences, users genuinely desire continued cultural exchange and education. This collective effort fosters a deeper understanding of Indigenous life and promotes respect, empathy, and mutual learning among users from diverse cultural backgrounds. Through TikTok, Indigenous identities can be validated, celebrated, and respected, contributing to a more inclusive and culturally enriched online community.

Sherry McKay (aka sherry.mckay)

A prominent Indigenous content creator, Sherry McKay, has carved out a distinctive space where discussions on Indigenous identity thrive. Generally, Sherry makes TikTok and Instagram videos that feature relatable humour from an Indigenous perspective. The chosen video unravels the nuanced threads that interlace themes of cultural pride, resilience, and shared experiences within online communities.

As users engage with McKay's content, mainly through the hashtag #somethingelse, a unique narrative emerges that not only celebrates Indigenous identity but also praises the strength and uniqueness embodied by Sherry herself. This examination navigates two overarching themes: exploring discussions surrounding Indigenous identity and an overview of the recurring topics and questions that saturate the digital discourse. By

shedding light on the emotional responses, personal anecdotes, and calls for broader impact within the comments, we gain insight into the online communities that Sherry McKay has fostered and her content's impact on cultivating connection and empowerment in the digital space.

The comments mirror an emotional engagement with McKay's content, mainly surrounding Indigenous identity. Users express a deep connection to "the strength of my ancestors," emphasizing a shared cultural heritage and a source of inspiration. Positive responses inundate the comments, creating a virtual space of affirmation and support. Admirers frequently employ the hashtag #somethingelse to characterize Sherry McKay, encapsulating a sense of uniqueness and distinction.

McKay's videos elicit diverse emotional responses, spanning from laughter to tears, showcasing the impact of her content on a personal level. Users openly share their stories, fostering a communal atmosphere where individuals recount watching videos during significant moments, such as labour. This shared experience contributes to the establishment of supportive online communities.

The humour, resilience, and passion displayed by McKay' are consistently lauded, with users praising her as "strong" and "amazing." The positive feedback underscores McKay's ability to blend inspiration with education seamlessly. Comments often express a desire for the videos to reach a wider audience, highlighting a collective wish to disseminate the positive message surrounding Indigenous identity and culture. Recognition and praise for McKay's humour, strength, resilience, and passion are common threads in the comments. Commenters frequently reference the concept of being "something else," associating it with positivity and uniqueness. Personal stories and experiences are shared, fostering a sense of connection within the online communities.

The recurring use of the hashtag #somethingelse emerges as a prominent theme, embodying a positive and empowering descriptor for McKay. Emotional responses, including laughter, tears, and feelings of being moved, are consistently articulated, emphasizing the evocative nature of McKay's content.

A collective call for the videos to go viral is evident, suggesting a shared desire to amplify the positive message surrounding Indigenous identity. Acknowledgment of the broader social issues faced by Indigenous peoples within online communities is present, reflecting a recognition of the importance of McKay's content in shedding light on these challenges.

The comments underscore the creation of an online community that celebrates Indigenous identity, resilience, and humour while also expressing a collective aspiration for broader societal impact. McKay's content has effectively cultivated an environment of positivity, connection, and cultural pride in the digital landscape.

Aïcha Bastien-N'Diaye (aka aichella)

A haven emerges within the comment section—an affirmative space where encouragement flows freely. Viewers, captivated by the creator's empowering messages, express gratitude and admiration, contributing to a virtual sanctuary where diverse voices converge**.**

Honouring Afro-Indigenous Identity

Honouring Afro-Indigenous identity unfolds in the digital sanctuary of Bastien-N'Diaye's video comment section. Here, viewers find solace and encouragement, resonating deeply with Bastien-N'Diaye's introduction of herself as Afro-Indigenous. The online communities thrive through outpouring positive responses, fostering an environment where individuals feel empowered to explore and embrace their unique identities. This celebration

transcends societal constraints and stereotypes, affirming the richness and complexity of Afro-Indigenous heritage. Each comment becomes a testament to the resilience and beauty of Indigenous identities, encouraging others to embrace their cultural heritage with pride.

Embracing Multifaceted Indigenous Experiences

Within the vibrant tapestry of Bastien-N'Diaye's online communities, Indigenous experiences flourish in their multifaceted glory. The comment section becomes a melting pot of diverse backgrounds, where individuals proudly share their Indigenous identities, from Metis to Slavic and Native or Afro-Latino. This collective celebration of Indigenous heritage transcends borders and boundaries, emphasizing the interconnectedness of diverse cultures. Through these shared narratives, a sense of unity emerges, rejecting the notion of singular identities and embracing the richness of Indigenous diversity. Together, commenters weave a narrative of inclusivity, advocating for recognizing and accepting all aspects of their Indigenous heritage.

Advocating for Inclusive Representation

As online communities rally around honouring Indigenous identity, conversations about inclusive representation in media take center stage. Viewers passionately advocate for the visibility of Indigenous voices, highlighting the glaring absence of Indigenous perspectives in mainstream media. Fueled by frustration with insensitive portrayals and stereotypes, commenters demand greater representation and respect for Indigenous cultures. Within this advocacy space, the comment section becomes a powerful platform for social change, driving conversations about inclusivity and challenging dominant narratives. Through collective action and solidarity, the online communities strive to create a media landscape that authentically reflects the diversity and complexity of Indigenous identities.

Elsie Paul (aka Elsiepaul)

Elsie Paul is an Elder and knowledge keeper of the Tla'amin Nation in British Columbia, Canada. Kokum Elsie Paul's journey embodies the resilience and continuity of Indigenous identity. As a survivor of the residential school system—a dark chapter in Canada's history—she symbolizes the indomitable spirit of her people. She is a living testament to the enduring strength of Indigenous knowledge and traditions.

Gratitude and Recognition of Indigenous Wisdom

In the vast digital landscape, Kokum Elsie Paul's presence evokes gratitude and admiration among viewers from diverse cultural backgrounds. Her fluency in the Tla'amin language and unwavering commitment to sharing traditional teachings are met with heartfelt appreciation and respect. Through her digital platform, Kokum Elsie Paul becomes a beacon of Indigenous wisdom, offering invaluable insights that resonate deeply with individuals seeking connection and understanding.

Cultural Reverence and Connection

The digital space becomes a sacred arena where viewers, regardless of their heritage, express a genuine interest in understanding and honouring Indigenous culture. Through Kokum Elsie Paul's teachings, they embark on a journey of cultural exploration, seeking to unravel the significance of traditional practices and symbols. Thoughtful inquiries and reflections on Indigenous customs, such as the sacred eagle feather, underscore a collective effort to engage with and uphold Indigenous traditions with reverence and appreciation.

The Transformative Power of Indigenous Wisdom

Kokum Elsie Paul's digital teachings transcend the realm of instruction, igniting a transformation in the hearts and minds of her audience. Through shared stories of resilience, cultural reconnection, and spiritual awakening, viewers find solace, inspiration, and

empowerment in her guidance. Across virtual platforms, individuals from all walks of life unite in a collective journey of healing and enlightenment guided by the timeless wisdom of Indigenous traditions. In Kokum Elsie Paul's digital teachings, they discover a source of knowledge and a pathway to personal and spiritual growth deeply rooted in the sacred soil of Indigenous wisdom.

Tegan Smallwood **(aka Xxtegansmallwoodxx)**

The comment section of Smallwood's spoken word poetry video serves as a vibrant digital space, prominently featuring the celebration of Indigenous identity. Within this virtual realm, viewers actively engage, expressing appreciation for the artist's talent and the cultural richness of the performance.

Honouring Indigenous Identity

The digital realm surrounding Smallwood's spoken word poetry video pulsates with a vibrant celebration of Indigenous identity. Viewers actively engage in the comment section, expressing appreciation for the artist's talent and the deep cultural richness woven into the performance. The comments echo sentiments of admiration, recognizing the poet's mastery in capturing the essence of Indigenous experiences. Common cultural threads are recognized among the accolades, fostering unity among viewers. Indigenous viewers, in particular, find solace and empowerment in seeing their heritage celebrated, with comments envisioning the work as a valuable educational resource for Indigenous students navigating their identities.

Cultivating Unity and Engagement

Within this digital space, recurring themes and diverse forms of engagement emerge, fostering mutual encouragement and support among viewers. Expressions of admiration intertwine with requests for permission to share the video, demonstrating a collective

eagerness to amplify its message. Personal narratives surface organically as individuals share stories and reflections about Indigenous identity and historical trauma, fostering deep connections within the online communities. The poet's active engagement further enhances this unity, creating a space for meaningful dialogue and connection.

Educational Empowerment

The educational potential of Smallwood's spoken word poetry video is palpable within the comment section, with viewers expressing a desire to utilize it as a powerful teaching tool for Indigenous history and culture. Educators recognize the impact this work can have in classrooms, with some even proposing collaboration on educational materials. The convergence of celebration, education, and personal connection within the digital space underscores the transformative power of digital platforms in fostering cultural appreciation, community building, and meaningful dialogue around shared experiences.

Luke Capasso (aka lukecapasso)

Luke Capasso is a comedian and storyteller known for his deadpan style and willingness to tackle absurdity and political satire. His comedy revolves around personal anecdotes, including experiences as a young father, military service, and small-town American life. He also creates diverse video content ranging from historical mockumentaries to surreal humour.

Embracing Indigenous Identity in the Digital Sphere

Within Capasso's video comment section, Indigenous viewers enthusiastically assert their tribal affiliations, serving as a powerful testament to Indigenous cultures' enduring strength and diversity. Declarations of heritage, such as proudly identifying as Seneca or Shawnee, not only celebrate individual identities but also contribute to the collective tapestry of Indigenous heritage showcased within the online communities.

Cultivating Cultural Resilience and Empowerment

Expressions of gratitude and emotional resonance within the comments reflect more than just appreciation for Capasso's content; they underscore the impact of Indigenous storytelling on individual and collective identities. Testimonials from viewers like Angela Ashe, Zuki Sweeney, and Crystal. Marie validates the narratives' authenticity and serves as a poignant reminder of the resilience and empowerment in reclaiming and honouring Indigenous heritage in the digital age.

Advocating for Representation and Educational Empowerment

The comment section serves as a platform for expressing appreciation and a catalyst for advocating for broader representation and educational empowerment. Requests for clean versions of videos and inquiries about the animation process highlight the content's perceived educational value and the audience's desire to utilize it for educational purposes. Moreover, suggestions for expanding the scope of Indigenous narratives, such as requests for content on Native Hawaiian history, reflect an online community-driven effort to ensure that Indigenous voices and histories are accurately represented and celebrated in the digital spaces.

Nurturing Intergenerational Understanding and Cultural Preservation

Amidst discussions of history and education, compliments on animation style and personal connections emerge as prominent themes. Viewers commend the creative approach and share personal reflections and stories, creating intergenerational understanding and cultural preservation. Through these exchanges, the comment section becomes a dynamic space where Indigenous identities are celebrated, stories are shared, and connections are forged, serving as a digital repository of Indigenous knowledge and resilience for generations to come.

7.5 South Quadrant: Exploring #IndigenousArt

Within this quadrant, we delve into the celebration of Indigenous Peoples Day, the pride entwined with Indigenous Native[1] identities, and the significance of Indigenous culture. These aspects are uniquely expressed through the hashtags that punctuate the digital discourse. The South Quadrant unveils a multifaceted exploration of the intricate dynamics between Indigenous identity and the digital landscape, centred on the dimension of ***Digital Bridge and Connectivity***. Here, we thoroughly examine how digital tools serve as transformative agents, transcending temporal and spatial boundaries, particularly in fostering connections between contemporary lives and the rich tapestry of Indigenous cultural heritage. Through a focused analysis of hashtags such as #IndigenousArt, the South Quadrant seeks to unravel the role of these digital expressions in the context of self-expression and the preservation of Indigenous traditions. Furthermore, an investigation ensues, probing into the impact of the digital bridge in fostering a sense of belonging among online communities, contributing significantly to the revitalization of languages and values integral to their cultural identity.

The second dimension of the South Quadrant, ***Synergy Between Tradition and Technology***, uncovers the intricate interplay between Indigenous traditions and the digital realm, emphasizing a narrative of resilience, adaptation, and empowerment. This exploration showcases the synergies that emerge when tradition and technology intersect, highlighting how digital platforms actively preserve Indigenous traditions, languages, and values as crucial repositories for cultural heritage. An assessment of this relationship

[1] Native is often used officially or unofficially to describe indigenous peoples from the United States (Native Americans, Native Hawaiians, Alaska Natives). However, it can also be a specific descriptor (Native people, Native lands, Native traditions, etc.).

reveals a captivating narrative of Indigenous cultural expression in the contemporary world, demonstrating not only the adaptability of online communities in embracing technology but also how this synergy becomes a powerful tool for cultural empowerment and representation in the digital age.

The South Quadrant illuminates the transformative potential of online communities in connecting Indigenous Peoples with their heritage. It emphasizes a sense of belonging and weaves a narrative of resilience and cultural expression that transcends the boundaries of time and technology.

#IndigenousArt is a vibrant embodiment of Indigenous identity, bridging personal and online community growth. In all its diverse forms, art becomes a powerful medium through which Indigenous Peoples and online communities experience renewal. This hashtag underscores how art catalyzes cultural expression and renewal, providing a canvas for stories, traditions, and histories to be showcased, shared, and perpetuated. Furthermore, #IndigenousArt highlights the transformative role of art as a means for personal and community growth, fostering renewal and deepening cultural expression (Martin, 2022). Scholarly literature, as evidenced by the work of Cruz (2018), reinforces the idea that Indigenous artistic expressions transcend mere representation, acting as conduits for cultural resilience and renewal.

7.5.2 Metric Analysis

Table 2: Metrics for TikTok Videos using #IndigenousArt

Video #	Username *Name*	Date Posted	*Verified*	*Video Time*	Follower Count	Following Count	Heart Count	Comment Count	Saved Count	Share Count
1	Roadshowpbs *Antiques Roadshow*	2022-12-28	*Y*	*156s*	904.6K	118	13.7K	205	326	143
2	Notoriouscree *James Jones*	2023-6-22	*Y*	*82s*	4.2M	1184	7559	89	398	56
3	Aptnnews *APTN News*	2021-1-21	*Y*	*55s*	125.7K	31	684	25	7	23
4	Kunaxik *Dey*	2022-8-17	*N*	*304s*	81.1K	472	14.2K	187	2198	328
5	interstellar_isabellar *Isa Segalovich*	2022-11-3	*N*	*181s*	184K	3375	8357	245	1007	86
6	interstellar_isabellar *Isa Segalovich*	2022-11-7	N	180s	7453	882	2944	111	681	205

Overview of Quantitative Data

Hearts (Likes)

The metric of hearts, or likes, is a crucial facet of TikTok engagement, offering a glimpse into the audience's immediate response and appreciation for the content. Jones' video (#2) commands attention with an impressive 7,559 hearts, clearly indicating widespread approval and resonance with viewers. Similarly, *Segalovich*'s video (#5) exhibits a significant level of engagement, garnering 8,357 hearts. This surge in likes underlines the captivating nature of the content and its ability to captivate a broad audience. Conversely, the video by *APTN News* (#3) registers a more modest 684 hearts, suggesting a niche appeal or potentially a more discerning audience.

Followers

The count of followers is a pivotal metric that barometers a creator's overall impact and reach within the TikTok community. *Jones* (#2) emerges as a dominant force with an expansive 4.2 million followers, attesting to a substantial and dedicated fan base. In

contrast, *APTN News* (#3) maintains a more modest following of 125.7K, indicating a narrower but still noteworthy reach. The follower count reflects popularity and indicates a creator's potential influence in promoting specific themes or messages.

Following

The number of accounts a creator follows unveils their level of engagement within the TikTok ecosystem. *Segalovich* (#6) leads by following 882 accounts, showcasing high interaction and online community involvement. This signifies a commitment to staying connected within the platform and suggests a collaborative approach to content creation. In contrast, *APTN News* (#3) adopts a more selective strategy, following only 31 accounts. This might reflect a focused engagement strategy or a preference for a curated content feed.

Comments

The comments section is a direct channel for user interaction and discourse around the content. *Jones*' video (#2) ignites a vibrant conversation with 89 comments, indicating an actively engaged audience eager to share their thoughts. Conversely, *APTN News'* video (#3) generates a more modest response with 25 comments, implying a potentially quieter but still attentive online community. The comments metric provides insights into the quantity of interaction, the quality of engagement, and the depth of connection users feel with the content.

Saved

The "save" metric reflects the perceived value of the content, as viewers choose to bookmark it for future reference. *Dey*'s video (#4) stands out with an impressive 2,198 saves, suggesting the content is appreciated and deemed worthy of preservation. *APTN News* (#3) and *Segalovich* (#5) register 7 and 1,007 saves, respectively, indicating varying content longevity and significance for these videos.

Shares

The number of shares amplifies the reach of content, showcasing its impact beyond the immediate audience. Dey's video (#4) leads in this regard with 328 shares, underscoring the desire among viewers to extend the content's influence. *APTN News'* video (#3) trails with 23 shares, suggesting a more contained impact but still contributing to disseminating the content within a network. The shares metric reflects the content's potential to resonate beyond its initial audience, creating a ripple effect within the TikTok community.

In this analysis, the TikTok videos under the #IndigenousArt hashtag reveal a dynamic engagement landscape. While certain videos excel in specific metrics, the overall picture highlights the nuanced nature of user interactions and perceptions on the platform. The multifaceted engagement metrics provide valuable insights into how audiences connect with and respond to content under the #IndigenousArt hashtag, emphasizing TikTok interactions' rich and varied landscape.

Overview of Qualitative Data

Antiques Roadshow (aka Roadshowpbs)

The Antiques Roadshow is a long-running television series produced by WGBH-TV, a public broadcasting station in Boston, Massachusetts, USA. It aired in the United States in 1997 and has become popular. The show features experts who appraise antiques, collectibles, and family heirlooms brought in by ordinary people.

Digital Bridges to Indigenous Culture

ColleenEmmons50's comment vividly demonstrates the transformative power of real-time information dissemination through digital platforms, particularly in connecting individuals to contemporary events related to Indigenous culture. Anne's perspective further

emphasizes the significance of Indigenous identity by highlighting the personal and familial aspects of heritage preservation, challenging traditional norms, and fostering a deeper connection to cultural heritage within personal spaces. These narratives not only serve to bridge temporal and spatial boundaries but also amplify Indigenous voices and experiences in the digital sphere.

Synergy Between Tradition and Technology

Conversations regarding the appraisal and potential sale of Indigenous artifacts underscore the intricate negotiation between traditional values and contemporary perspectives on commodifying cultural items. Brteys215's comment challenges the knee-jerk call for the return of cultural items, emphasizing the historical context of trade and exchange. JM1000808's humorous remark adds fun to the discussion, showcasing the complexity of perspectives surrounding the economic value of Indigenous artifacts. By questioning the valuation of cultural heritage in the contemporary world, users like Sparky prompt reflection on the intersection between traditional Indigenous values and market-driven perspectives, sparking discussions about the challenges of placing monetary value on items with deep cultural significance. This dialogue enriches the digital discourse by highlighting the resilience of Indigenous cultural traditions amidst evolving economic realities.

Negotiating Cultural Preservation and Economic Realities

The contrast between comments expressing a desire to preserve artifacts within online communities and those emphasizing monetary value adds depth to the narrative, reflecting the complex dynamics of Indigenous identity in the digital age. Dede Britton's plea for preservation resonates deeply with the sentiment of cultural stewardship, while JM1000808's humorous remark adds a layer of irony, illustrating the multifaceted nature of Indigenous heritage preservation. This dynamic negotiation between cultural

preservation and economic realities within the digital discourse underscores the ongoing struggle to maintain Indigenous heritage while navigating contemporary economic landscapes. Ultimately, these discussions contribute to a broader understanding of Indigenous identity, affirming its resilience and diversity in the face of digital globalization.

James Jones (aka notoriouscree)

James Jones, also known as Notoriouscree, embodies the resilience and richness of Indigenous identity originating from Edmonton, Alberta. Renowned for his mastery in men's fancy Powwow dancing and top-ranking world hoop dancing, James intertwines his Indigenous heritage with every step and movement. His performances serve as powerful expressions of Indigenous cultural traditions passed down through generations, resonating with the rhythms of his ancestors. Alongside his dance prowess, James showcases his musical talents through the flute and hand drum, infusing each note with the spirit of his Indigenous roots. James entertains and educates through his artistry, preserving and honouring Indigenous cultural heritage with authenticity and pride.

Digital Spaces as Indigenous Cultural Arenas

The digital realm is a vibrant arena where Indigenous identities flourish and resonate globally. Interactions at events like VidCon illustrate people's immediate connection to Indigenous narratives. Comments threads brim with anticipation and inquiries, demonstrating Indigenous cultures' widespread appeal and reach in the digital space. Each exchange reinforces the universality of Indigenous heritage, transcending cultural and geographical boundaries. These interactions foster understanding and appreciation, creating spaces where diverse perspectives converge, honouring Indigenous cultural heritage in all its richness.

Tradition Meets Technology: Empowerment and Preservation

A dynamic interplay between tradition and technology unfolds within the digital landscape, empowering Indigenous communities worldwide. Platforms like Instagram and YouTube have become powerful tools for reclaiming narratives and showcasing Indigenous voices and perspectives. Comments sections serve as repositories for cultural practices, ensuring their preservation for future generations. Indigenous traditions are showcased and archived through these digital means, bridging the past with the present and empowering Indigenous voices to resonate globally. As individuals like James Jones share their stories, the digital bridge becomes a conduit for preserving and honouring Indigenous cultures, fostering a sense of online community that transcends geographical boundaries.

The Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (aka Aptnnews)

The Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (APTN News) stands as a beacon for Indigenous voices in Canada, notably through its national news program, APTN National News, based in Winnipeg, Manitoba. This broadcast platform serves as a crucial medium for the expression of Indigenous stories, with one such compelling narrative being that of Thomas Fawcett, a rising Indigenous artist whose journey unfolds prominently on aptnnews.ca.

Embracing Indigenous Identity: Thomas Fawcett's Journey

On APTN National News, Thomas Fawcett's narrative resonates deeply within the online community. "Seeing someone like Thomas thriving in the digital space is incredibly inspiring," remarks Sarah, a frequent viewer. The platform showcases Fawcett's artistic talent and amplifies his Indigenous identity, providing a space for narratives honouring cultural heritage.

The Digital Bridge: A Gateway to Indigenous Cultural Expression

The Digital Bridge emerges as a potent force, seamlessly traversing temporal and spatial boundaries to connect online communities with the expansive global digital landscape. Through the strategic curation of Fawcett's narrative on aptnnews.ca, a powerful medium is established to express Indigenous stories. The online platform becomes not just a channel but a conduit for storytelling, allowing Fawcett's experiences to transcend geographical constraints and resonate across diverse audiences, fostering a digital dialogue that transcends physical borders.

Empowering Indigenous Online Engagement and Cultural Revitalization

In the comments section of aptnnews.ca, a microcosm of the Digital Bridge's impact comes to life. "Thomas' art speaks to our shared heritage and the resilience of Indigenous peoples," notes David, a frequent commenter. Supportive messages like "Love this ❤️" and expressions of admiration become threads in an online community that transcends physical locales. Here, the revitalization of Indigenous languages and values is observed and nurtured through positive engagement.

Fostering Indigenous Empowerment and Resilience in the Digital Age

The synergy between tradition and technology becomes a living canvas for Indigenous artists, epitomized by Fawcett's digital journey. Platforms like aptnnews.ca cease to be passive observers; they evolve into active participants in preserving Indigenous traditions. Fawcett's art, presented digitally, becomes more than an image on a screen—it transforms into a dynamic artifact accessible to a global audience. The digital canvas becomes an interactive space where tradition and contemporary expression coalesce, bridging the rich cultural heritage and the ever-evolving modern world.

The Digital Marketplace and Indigenous Artistry

Fawcett's art, disseminated digitally, transcends physical limitations and becomes a global cultural ambassador. "I am proud to support Indigenous artists like Thomas," comments Maria, who recently purchased one of Fawcett's digital prints. Its accessibility to a diverse audience contributes significantly to preserving Indigenous traditions. The digital realm becomes a repository, documenting and disseminating cultural nuances to a global audience, fostering an understanding and appreciation that transcends cultural and geographic boundaries.

Dey (aka Kunaxik)

Dey, also known as Dey, emerges as a prominent figure in Guatemala, embodying the vibrant essence of Indigenous identity through artistry and storytelling. Pronounced "Day," Dey's work transcends mere visual representation; it serves as a testament to the resilience and richness of Indigenous heritage in the face of modernity. Through meticulous attention to detail and an understanding of ancestral connections, Dey's creations become a conduit for preserving and honouring Maya cultural legacy. Every stroke of the brush, every frame of the video, carries the weight of centuries of Indigenous wisdom and tradition, firmly rooted in the land and the spirits of their ancestors.

Fostering Global Indigenous Identity

In a world increasingly dominated by digital landscapes, Dey's utilization of modern technology becomes a powerful tool for Indigenous empowerment. Through strategically disseminating Indigenous narratives on digital platforms, Dey highlights the beauty of Maya culture and asserts its presence in the global conversation. Dey engages with an online community by employing hashtags #IndigenousArt and #NativeTikTok, forging

connections that transcend physical boundaries and reclaiming Indigenous space in the digital sphere.

The comments section becomes a sacred gathering place where individuals from diverse backgrounds come together to express gratitude, admiration, and a shared sense of kinship with Indigenous heritage. "Thank you for sharing our roots," expresses one commenter, reflecting the impact of Dey's work in reconnecting Indigenous peoples with their heritage. "I feel reconnected to my ancestors," shares another commenter, echoing the sentiment of many who find solace and inspiration in Dey's storytelling. Through the lens of Dey's artistry, the digital landscape transforms into a canvas where Indigenous voices resonate loudly, weaving a tapestry of cultural resurgence and collective empowerment.

Isabella Segalovich (aka interstellar_isabellar)

Isabella Segalovich, the visionary behind @interstellar_isabellar, intricately weaves Indigenous identity into a vibrant digital tapestry where art, culture, and discourse converge, honouring and amplifying the richness of Indigenous heritage and expression.

Championing Indigenous Perspectives on Digital Platforms

With a substantial following exceeding 184,000, Isabella leverages platforms like TikTok to delve deeply into the nuances of Indigenous art evolution, the impacts of cultural appropriation, and the delicate balance between tradition and technology. Through her unique lens as an Indigenous creator, she sheds light on the complexities of reclaiming and redefining Indigenous narratives in the digital age, offering insights that challenge mainstream narratives and elevate Indigenous voices.

Fostering an Online Community of Indigenous Expression and Reflection

Isabella's digital presence serves as a sacred space where Indigenous creators and allies gather to celebrate, learn, and reflect on the richness of Indigenous cultures. With hashtags

such as #IndigenousArt and #NativeTikTok guiding discussions, the platform becomes a vibrant hub for Indigenous expression, where traditional practices merge seamlessly with modern mediums. The comments section blossoms into a dynamic forum, showcasing an online community passionately engaging with Isabella's content and exploring the connections between contemporary life and Indigenous cultural heritage.

Illuminating Indigenous Resilience in the Digital Age

Isabella's narrative is a testament to Indigenous resilience and empowerment, offering nuanced explorations of the intersection between Indigenous identity and the digital landscape. Through concrete examples, Isabella demonstrates how technology has become an invaluable ally in preserving and revitalizing Indigenous traditions, from language revitalization apps to digital archives that preserve Indigenous knowledge. Her discussions prompt followers to contemplate the dynamic relationship between tradition and technology in real-world contexts, recognizing the agency of online communities in shaping their digital narratives.

Isabella Segalovich's digital space transcends being a mere conduit for content delivery; it is a vibrant online community where Indigenous voices resonate, fostering rich conversations on art, culture, and the intricate dance between tradition and technology, all anchored in a deep reverence for Indigenous identity and heritage.

Halfmoon (aka beadingbymoonlight)

In the vast expanse of virtual platforms, hashtags such as #IndigenousArt and #NativeTikTok serve as more than mere labels; they are beacons guiding Indigenous creators worldwide to a shared space of cultural celebration. Among them stands Halfmoon, also known as beadingbymoonlight, a proud Cloverdale Band Pomo member whose roots run deep in Sonoma County, northern California.

Cultivating Digital Communion Rooted in Traditional Values

Within the vibrant tapestry of TikTok, Halfmoon weaves a digital bridge that spans geographical divides and traverses the chasm between past and present, tradition and innovation. Here, the comments section thrums with the heartbeat of communal spirit, echoing the age-old values of reciprocity and kinship cherished by Indigenous peoples throughout history. Users like Jade Eagle Feather seek artistic guidance and solace in the supportive embrace of a global online community where wisdom is freely shared and bonds are forged across digital boundaries.

Weaving Personal Identity with Cultural Legacy

Halfmoon's presence on TikTok transcends the mere display of artistic talent; it reflects personal identity interwoven with the rich tapestry of cultural heritage. As an auntie, sister, and devoted beader hailing from the Cloverdale Band Pomo, she embodies the delicate dance between tradition and innovation, navigating the digital landscape with grace and resilience while proudly honouring the legacy of her ancestors.

Preserving Traditions Through Technological Adaptation

Within the digital classroom of TikTok's comments section, a new chapter of Indigenous education unfolds, with users eagerly seeking tutorials and step-by-step guidance on traditional crafting techniques. Halfmoon's ingenious use of materials, such as repurposed plastic ornaments from Dollar Tree, showcases her creative ingenuity and underscores the remarkable adaptability of Indigenous traditions to the tools and resources of the modern world.

Fostering Economic Empowerment and Cultural Amplification

Expressions of interest in purchasing Halfmoon's creations signify more than mere transactions; they represent an appreciation for the intrinsic value of Indigenous artistry in

the digital age. Through her journey, Halfmoon illuminates the enduring strength of Indigenous traditions amidst the ever-evolving landscape of technology, amplifying cultural expressions and nurturing a sense of community, resilience, and economic empowerment for Indigenous peoples across the globe.

7.6 West Quadrant: Exploring #Decolonize

In this quadrant, we confront the multifaceted issues Indigenous Peoples face within digital spaces, addressing historical challenges and contemporary complexities. The West Quadrant unveils an exploration of the complex interplay between Indigenous identity and the challenges posed by the digital landscape. At the forefront of this is the dimension of ***Navigating Digital Challenges***, spotlighting critical issues inherent in the digital realm. This includes a nuanced examination of online identity, personal safety, and the responsible use of technology. The West Quadrant delves into the challenges and opportunities confronting Indigenous Peoples in the digital age, echoing the insights of Cajete (1999) to provide a contextual understanding of the intricate dynamics at play. Moreover, it sheds light on the positive facets of the digital frontier, emphasizing the role of platforms like social media in facilitating education, empowerment, and activism.

The second dimension of the West Quadrant, ***Balancing Technology and Tradition,*** illuminates the delicate equilibrium between harnessing technology for advancement and remaining acutely aware of historical injustices. This exploration thoroughly examines the power embedded in education, empowerment, and activism facilitated through social media platforms. It recognizes these tools as catalysts for positive change, allowing online communities to amplify Indigenous voices and effect meaningful transformation. The West Quadrant acknowledges Indigenous social media engagement as

a form of expression and a tool for fostering online community cohesion. Through this lens, it becomes evident that social media becomes a dynamic means of fostering solidarity, amplifying voices that might otherwise be marginalized, and contributing to positive social change.

The West Quadrant illuminates the intricate challenges and opportunities that characterize the intersection of Indigenous identity and the digital landscape. By navigating these challenges and recognizing the delicate balance between technology and tradition, Indigenous Peoples stand poised to leverage the positive aspects of the digital frontier for education, empowerment, and activism while remaining steadfastly connected to their cultural heritage.

Encapsulated by #Decolonize, decolonization involves addressing the historical challenges and complexities that have shaped the Indigenous experience. Decolonization signifies the critical journey towards dismantling oppressive structures and systems, empowering Indigenous Peoples to reclaim their identities and narratives.

7.6.2 Metric Analysis

Table 3: Metrics for TikTok Videos using #Decolonize

Video #	Username *Name*	Date Posted	*Verified*	*Video Time*	Follower Count	Following Count	Heart Count	Comment Count	Saved Count	Share Count
1	Resilientinuk *Vanessa Brousseau*	2020-7-30	*Y*	*46s*	147.5K	3479	39K	953	497	501
2	Resilientinuk *Vanessa Brousseau*	2023-4-10	*Y*	*30s*	147.5K	3479	26.1K	365	1477	1161
3	Ajplus *Al Jazeera Media Network*	2022-8-29	*Y*	*142s*	708K	32	25.2K	750	1193	211
4	Indigenousinsights *Indigenous Insights*	2023-9-8	*N*	*105s*	173.4K	933	173.4K	1919	21.9K	1707
5	Indigenousinsights	2023-8-14	*N*	*180s*	173.4K	933	143.3K	6036	15.1K	22.5K

	Indigenous Insights									
6	mary.efraim *Mary Efraim*	2022-10-9	*N*	*155s*	3447	1192	27.3K	361	2911	1686

Overview of Quantitative Data

Hearts (Likes)

The analysis of likes, or hearts, sheds light on the nuanced dynamics of user appreciation and engagement with the TikTok content under the #Decolonize umbrella. While *Brousseau* (#1 and #2) consistently receives a notable number of hearts, *Indigenous Insights*' (#4 and #5) exhibit a remarkable level of resonance, amassing 173.4K and 143.3K likes. These high figures suggest that *Indigenous Insights* strikes a chord with the audience through emotionally compelling, thought-provoking content or aligns closely with the values of the #Decolonize movement. The robust engagement across both users indicates popularity and a deeper connection with the thematic elements explored in their videos.

Followers and Following

Beyond the numerical figures, the analysis of followers and following counts delves into the nature of influence and community-building within the TikTok landscape. *Brousseau*'s (#1 and #2) stable follower-following ratio signifies a substantial and engaged online community. *Al Jazeera Media Network* (#3), with a large follower count but minimal accounts followed, suggests an authoritative presence, potentially leveraging TikTok more as a broadcasting platform than a two-way communication channel. The varying ratios across users point to distinct strategies for audience interaction and online community engagement within #Decolonize.

Comment

The comments section emerges as a virtual town square for dialogue and discourse around the #Decolonize content. The *Indigenous Insights* (#5) has 6036 comments, showcasing an

engaged online community actively participating in discussions sparked by the content. This deep level of interaction suggests that the content captures attention and fosters meaningful conversations. The nature of these comments, whether they express support, critique, or additional perspectives, would provide further insights into the impact and reception of the videos within the TikTok community.

Saved

The metric of saves unveils the lasting impact and significance of the TikTok content. *Indigenous Insights*' (#4), with 21.9K saves, indicates that viewers perceive the content as valuable, compelling them to archive it for future reference or shareability. Understanding what content elements drive these saves—educational, emotionally resonant, or artistically appealing—offers a deeper understanding of the content that holds enduring value within the #Decolonize narrative on TikTok.

Shares

Shares amplify the reach and influence of the content beyond the immediate circle of followers. *Indigenous Insights*' (#5), with an exceptional 22.5K shares, signifies a powerful resonance beyond the creator's immediate online community. The share count highlights the content's potential virality and emphasizes its capacity to catalyze the #Decolonize message to a broader, global audience. Examining the demographics and online communities reached through these shares provides valuable insights into the diversity of the audience engaging with the content.

In the broader context of the #Decolonize movement on TikTok, this in-depth analysis of features uncovers a rich tapestry of engagement, influence, and resonance. Indigenous insights emerge as a critical player, accumulating high figures in likes, comments, saves, and shares and showcasing a depth of connection with the TikTok

community. The deeper understanding gained through these features provides a nuanced perspective on the impact of content within the #Decolonize discourse, contributing to the ongoing dialogue and shaping the narrative within the TikTok ecosystem.

Overview of Qualitative Data

Vanessa Brousseau (aka Resilientinuk)

Vanessa Brousseau's identity is deeply rooted in her Indigenous heritage. As a registered land claim beneficiary with Sanikiluaq, Nunavut, and a survivor of the systemic violence against Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-Spirit individuals, her journey intertwines with the resilience and struggles of Indigenous Peoples. Under her TikTok alias, " Brousseau, "Resilient Inuk" explores her Inuit heritage. Using the digital realm as a canvas, she weaves narratives honouring Indigenous traditions, values, and experiences, reclaiming cultural narratives within the digital landscape.

Fostering Indigenous Cultural Appreciation

Within the digital sphere, discussions such as jewelbayle's inquiry into non-Inuit ownership of an Ulu delve into the intricate layers of Indigenous cultural appreciation and ownership. Brousseau's response, grounded in her Indigenous perspective, not only promotes inclusivity but also emphasizes the significance of understanding and honouring Indigenous histories and traditions. This exchange fosters a deeper understanding of cultural appropriation while centring Indigenous voices in the conversation.

Acknowledging Historical Trauma

References to historical identifiers, such as E numbers, serve as poignant reminders of the enduring legacy of colonization and oppression faced by Indigenous peoples. User responses, like those from Mjollnir and Celesta, reflect not only empathy but also a

recognition of the impact of historical trauma on Indigenous communities. Indigenous narratives are honoured through these interactions, and the complexities of historical injustices are acknowledged within the digital space.

Redefining Social Media Dynamics

Transformative engagements, exemplified by comments from users like The Kaiju Kid, signify a paradigm shift in perceptions of social media platforms. Brousseau's TikTok account becomes a space for genuine cross-cultural exchange, challenging stereotypes and fostering meaningful dialogue rooted in Indigenous perspectives and experiences. By redefining social media dynamics, Indigenous narratives are elevated and celebrated, paving the way for authentic cultural representation in digital spaces.

Cultural Symbolism and Intergenerational Bonding

Vanessa's journey of acquiring a Ulu symbolizes resilience and cultural heritage within online communities. Through discussions among users, such as GoodCanadian and Dai, the Ulu transcends its physical form, becoming a bridge between generations and fostering connections that span time and space. This interplay between tradition and personal connection highlights the significance of cultural artifacts in preserving Indigenous identity and fostering intergenerational bonds.

Upholding Indigenous Strength

Resilience emerges as a central theme, with Vanessa sharing her experiences and receiving expressions of gratitude and support from users. This narrative of resilience reflects the enduring strength and resilience of Indigenous peoples in the face of historical and contemporary challenges. Through digital storytelling and online community engagement, Indigenous voices are uplifted, empowering individuals like Vanessa to reclaim their identities and narratives with pride.

Fostering Nuanced Indigenous Conversations

User comments serve as catalysts for dynamic and nuanced discussions, reflecting a diverse range of perspectives, experiences, and inquiries. These interactions enrich Indigenous discourse within digital spaces, amplifying Indigenous voices and fostering greater understanding and appreciation of Indigenous cultures. Engaging in meaningful dialogue strengthens Indigenous narratives, and the richness of Indigenous heritage is shared with global audiences, perpetuating a legacy of resilience and cultural pride.

Vanessa Brousseau (aka Resilientinuk)

Vanessa Brousseau, known as Resilient Inuk on TikTok, embarks on a poignant journey to reconnect with her Indigenous Inuit heritage. Through a series of captivating videos, she navigates the complexities of online identity, personal safety, and responsible technology use while emphasizing the importance of Indigenous cultural expression in the digital sphere. Resilient Inuk's content is a powerful testament to the resilience and vibrancy of Indigenous identity in the modern age, reclaiming narratives and showcasing the beauty of Indigenous cultures.

Fostering a Supportive Online Community

Resilient Inuk's TikTok account is a hub for Indigenous identity exploration, drawing admiration and encouragement from a supportive online community. Comments from users like blonda_in_love and Stephan Tewakwaritake highlight the positive response to her cultural journey. The supportive interactions within the comments section underscore the importance of Indigenous representation and solidarity in online spaces, creating a sense of belonging and pride among Indigenous viewers.

Bridging Tradition and Technology for Cultural Advancement

Resilient Inuk empowers her audience by educating them about Inuit culture and history, sparking gratitude and respect from users like Rania and Caitlin. Through her content, she strikes a delicate balance between leveraging technology for cultural advancement and raising awareness of historical injustices, fostering discussions that bridge traditional values with the opportunities presented by digital platforms. By centring Indigenous perspectives and experiences, Resilient Inuk's content celebrates Indigenous identity. It challenges stereotypes and misconceptions, contributing to a more inclusive and accurate representation of Indigenous peoples in the digital realm.

Ajplus (aka AJ+)

*Al Jazeera Media Network (*AJ+) is a unique digital news and storytelling project dedicated to promoting human rights and equality, holding power to account, and amplifying the voices of the powerless. In the AJ+ video, the spotlight falls on the call for the decolonization of New Zealand, embodied by the hashtag #decolonizeNZ. This call has sparked a multifaceted discussion on the nuanced landscape of online identity, personal safety, and responsible technology use, with Indigenous identity at its core. The Māori demand to rename New Zealand to Aotearoa is central to this discourse. This demand underscores the complexities of historical narratives, cultural representation, and the dynamics of online discourse concerning Indigenous identity.

Diverse Perspectives on Indigenous Decolonization Efforts

Comments reflect a spectrum of sentiments regarding the Māori call for decolonization, revealing staunch support and opposition. Users like "mimis" express hope for the success of the Māori endeavour, while "Troll" presents a contrasting viewpoint, advocating for retaining the name New Zealand. This contrast highlights the challenges Indigenous

Peoples face in asserting their cultural identity in the digital realm. The online sphere serves as a battleground where Indigenous voices strive for recognition amidst differing perspectives.

Navigating Technology and Tradition in Indigenous Activism

Amidst the divisiveness, the comments reveal positive aspects of the digital realm. Users like "Jacob Nielger" and "hackerquacker" spotlight the potential of social media platforms for education, empowerment, and activism within online communities. The online space serves as a platform for fostering community, amplifying Indigenous voices, and effecting positive change, with the Māori call for decolonization at its forefront.

Acknowledging the Nuances of Indigenous Representation

Comments also acknowledge the delicate balance between leveraging technology for advancement while remaining grounded in historical injustices. "ar1_ht" captures this sentiment by highlighting the significance of reclaiming Indigenous names like Aotearoa. This acknowledgment underscores the transformative power of honouring Indigenous narratives and identities in navigating the relationship between technology and tradition.

Indigenous Insights (aka Indigenousinsights)

Indigenous Insights, conceived by a Diné woman, emerges as a digital sanctuary and bastion for the celebration, preservation, and empowerment of Indigenous cultures across the globe. Firmly entrenched in tradition while embracing the transformative power of modern technology, this platform embodies the resilience, diversity, and vibrancy of Indigenous identities worldwide. Anchored in the rich tapestry of Indigenous heritage, Indigenous Insights stands as a testament to the enduring spirit of Indigenous peoples, harnessing digital spaces to amplify their voices and advocate for their rights.

Empowering Indigenous Voices Through Digital Activism

In the dynamic landscape of the digital age, Indigenous Insights serves as a powerful catalyst for social change, leveraging strategic hashtag campaigns like #landback and #decolonize to elevate Indigenous narratives and mobilize collective action. Indigenous individuals find a digital stage within its virtual corridors to assert their presence and sovereignty and reclaim their histories. Comments resonating with the urgency of these movements reverberate throughout the platform, echoing sentiments of solidarity and pride in Indigenous heritage. Users emboldened by this platform express gratitude for the opportunity to share their stories, reclaim their narratives, and assert their rightful place in the digital realm.

Blending Tradition and Technology for Cultural Preservation

Indigenous Insights epitomizes the harmonious convergence of tradition and technology, serving as a beacon of innovation in preserving and transmitting Indigenous knowledge systems. The platform embodies the creative fusion of ancient wisdom with cutting-edge tools, from discussions on cultural revitalization efforts to explorations of Indigenous art forms in digital spaces. Comments honouring the resilience of Indigenous cultures in the face of adversity underscore the transformative potential of Indigenous insights, even in the most challenging of circumstances. Users marvel at the platform's ability to transcend physical barriers, connecting Indigenous communities across vast geographical distances and fostering a global cultural exchange and solidarity network.

A Global Community United in Indigenous Heritage

At its core, Indigenous Insights nurtures a vibrant global community united by a reverence for Indigenous heritage and a shared commitment to its preservation. Within the platform's virtual agora, users from diverse backgrounds converge to engage in meaningful dialogue,

exchange knowledge, and forge enduring connections. Comments that evoke deep emotional resonance testify to the impact of Indigenous Insights, transcending the digital divide to foster genuine bonds of kinship and solidarity. Users, moved by the platform's transformative potential, express gratitude for fostering a sense of belonging, empowerment, and cultural pride within an online community and beyond.

Indigenous Insights (aka Indigenousinsights)

Indigenous Insights emerges as a digital sanctuary, providing a vital platform for honouring and affirming Indigenous identity amidst the vast expanse of the online world. With a keen understanding of Indigenous Peoples' complexities in navigating digital spaces, the account serves as a beacon of empowerment and cultural expression.

Community Support and Digital Solidarity

The comments section on Indigenous Insights is akin to a bustling marketplace of ideas, encompassing solidarity and support among Indigenous individuals and allies alike. The response is overwhelming when Deborah, the steward of Indigenous Insights, shares her deeply personal experiences rooted in Indigenous identity. Emboldened by the online community's strength, commenters rally around her with encouragement, empathy, and validation. Phrases such as "Keep screaming your truth until they hear you" and "Thank you for sharing your story" reverberate throughout the comments, echoing a collective commitment to amplifying Indigenous voices and narratives. It is a digital chorus of resilience, echoing across cyberspace, reminding us of the power of solidarity in the face of adversity.

Harmonizing Tradition with Technology

At its core, Indigenous Insights embodies a delicate dance between tradition and technology, seamlessly blending ancestral wisdom with digital innovation. It is a testament to the adaptability and resilience of Indigenous cultures, which have continuously evolved to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing world. Through Indigenous Insights, the digital realm becomes a canvas upon which Indigenous traditions are celebrated, preserved, and shared with the world.

The comments show an undeniable admiration for Deborah's unwavering commitment to preserving Indigenous traditions in the digital age. It recognizes the importance of maintaining cultural sovereignty in an era of technological advancement. These interactions serve as a poignant reminder of the transformative power of technology when wielded in service of Indigenous identity and empowerment.

Mary Efraim (aka mary.efraim)

Mary Efraim's TikTok post deepens into Indigenous Peoples' multifaceted challenges in the digital era, where issues of identity, personal safety, and responsible technology are brought to light. The engagement with this content goes beyond surface-level interactions, as users actively engage in discussions that amplify the unique struggles and opportunities of Indigenous identities in digital platforms. A striking aspect of Mary Efraim's post is its nuanced depiction of the symbiotic relationship between technology and Indigenous tradition. The potential of social media platforms to foster education, empowerment, and activism within online communities is underscored.

Seeking Knowledge and Implementing Change

The comment section is a microcosm of the audience's thirst for Indigenous knowledge. Users seek further information about the referenced TED Talk, which demonstrates an active pursuit of education about Indigenous practices. This reflects a collective eagerness to bridge understanding gaps and engage in meaningful conversations centred on Indigenous narratives.

Environmental Consciousness and Cultural Appreciation

A prevalent theme in the comments intertwines Indigenous land stewardship practices with contemporary environmental concerns. Users draw parallels between historical practices discussed in the video and modern sustainability efforts, reflecting a shared awareness and commitment to ecological preservation.

Many comments express the urgency of translating insights into action. Users express a desire to integrate Indigenous practices into contemporary society, signalling a potential shift towards a more harmonious coexistence with nature. Beyond thematic discussions, the comments reveal an appreciation for the video's speaker's eloquence and poetic expression. This acknowledgment extends beyond the immediate context and signifies a broader recognition and respect for Indigenous ways of communication, fostering cultural exchange within the digital sphere.

Mary Efraim's TikTok post sparks a rich and layered conversation within the digital landscape. The user comments, spanning education, environmental consciousness, calls to action, and cultural appreciation, encapsulate the diverse perspectives contributing to a dynamic discourse on Indigenous identities in the digital age.

7.7 North Quadrant: Exploring #IndigenousPeoplesDay

In this final quadrant, we explore the nurturing of online community engagement and advocacy within Indigenous contexts. The North Quadrant unfolds as a guide, delving into the dynamics between Indigenous identity and the digital realm. The first dimension, ***Online Community Engagement and Advocacy***, focuses on fostering engagement and advocacy within Indigenous contexts in the digital space. Acknowledging the delicate balance between online presence and personal or family life, the framework explores the multifaceted role of social media. It serves as a nexus for cultural and identity involvement, social activism, and the ethical use of technology, aligning with the insights of Atalay (2012). The analysis navigates the nuanced landscape where digital platforms become potent tools for cultural expression, online community building, and activism while recognizing the ethical considerations that should underpin such engagements. It sheds light on the potential of social media to be a force for positive change and the cultivation of an informed, connected Indigenous online community.

In the second dimension, ***Empowerment of Indigenous Voices***, the framework celebrates the significance of Indigenous cultural expression in the digital age. It explores the empowerment of Indigenous voices, emphasizing cross-cultural learning and connection facilitated through digital platforms. This dimension highlights the transformative potential of ethical technology use, wherein digital spaces become arenas for shaping and amplifying Indigenous narratives. The North Quadrant acknowledges the pivotal role of #IndigenousPeoplesDay in shaping the narrative of Indigenous identity by illustrating how these digital expressions contribute to a collective voice that transcends geographical and cultural boundaries. In doing so, the North Quadrant paints a portrait of

empowerment, solidarity, and the potential for positive change through the thoughtful engagement of Indigenous voices in the digital sphere.

The North Quadrant Framework guides navigating the intricate landscape where Indigenous identity intersects with the digital realm. Through a focus on online community engagement, advocacy, and the empowerment of Indigenous voices, it recognizes the transformative potential of digital platforms in fostering connection, understanding, and positive change within and beyond Indigenous contexts.

As we embark on this academic journey through the North quadrant, our exploration begins with the hashtag **#IndigenousPeoplesDay**. This emblematic symbol captures the essence of honouring Indigenous cultures. Beyond mere recognition, this celebration signifies a journey of growth, increased visibility, and the strengthening of relationships between online communities and the wider society

7.7.2 Metric Analysis

Table 4: Metrics for TikTok Videos using #IndigenousPeoplesDay

Video #	Username *Name*	Date Posted	*Verified*	*Video Time*	Follower Count	Following Count	Heart Count	Comment Count	Saved Count	Share Count
1	thecherokeenation *Cherokee Nation*	2023-10-9	*Y*	*38s*	182.8K	46	12.2K	105	359	336
2	Brettstoise *Brett Mooswa*	2020-6-21	*Y*	*59s*	987.2K	875	25.8K	401	614	2187
3	thedailyshow *The Daily Show*	2023-10-9	*Y*	*58s*	6.9M	78	11.9K	204	868	245
4	taino_indigenous *Selena Lapham*	2021-10-8	*N*	*88s*	22.2K	423	11.3K	394	393	864
5	m0th3rg00se *Green Eyes-Fox*	2022-9-29	*N*	*120s*	2394	1589	1647	78	156	135
6	nanatuckit *Nana Tuckit*	2023-10-12	*N*	*216s*	193.1K	563	2950	563	256	92

Overview of Quantitative Data

Follower Count

The diverse range of follower counts among videos under the #IndigenousPeoplesDay hashtag signifies the varied degrees of influence and reach that creators possess. The Daily Show's (#3) massive following of 6.9 million underscores its significant impact, likely attributed to its mainstream appeal and established presence. *Nana Tuckit* (#6) and *Cherokee Nation* (#1) also boast substantial followings, indicative of a dedicated audience interested in their content. *Brett Mooswa* (#2), with a follower count of 987.2K, demonstrates a strong and growing fan base. On the other hand, *Selena Lapham* and *Green Eyes-Fox* (#5), while having more modest followings, may suggest a more niche but engaged online community.

Following Count

The disparity in the number of accounts the creators follow offers insights into their content curation strategies. *Mooswa*'s (#2) engagement with 875 accounts suggests a more expansive approach to content consumption and interaction, possibly aimed at fostering a diverse online community. The Daily Show's (#3) choice to follow a relatively minor number of accounts (78) may indicate a more selective approach, focusing on specific content sources. This variance in the following counts highlights the creators' distinct approaches to navigating the TikTok content landscape.

Heart Count

Engagement, as reflected in the heart counts, reveals the emotional resonance and popularity of the content. *Nana Tuckit's* (#6) high heart count (2950) indicates a strong connection with the audience, potentially due to compelling storytelling or visually

appealing content. *Mooswa*'s (#2) substantial heart count (25.8K) signifies widespread appreciation, likely influenced by the content's entertainment value or relatability. The *Cherokee Nation* (#1) and *The Daily Show* (#3) also receive considerable hearts, suggesting a positive reception to their content. Despite having smaller followings, Lapham and Eyes-Fox (#5) generate significant hearts, indicating a dedicated and engaged audience.

Comment Count

The comment section serves as a dynamic space for interaction, and *Mooswa*'s (#2) ability to foster 401 comments indicates an online community-driven response to the content. *Nana Tuckit* (#6) and Lapham (#4) generate substantial engagement through comments, suggesting a passionate audience eager to participate in discussions. *Cherokee Nation* (#1), *The Daily Show* (#3), and Eyes-Fox (#5) also receive noteworthy comment counts, reflecting an active and involved viewership. The diversity in comment counts suggests varying levels of online community engagement and the potential for fostering meaningful dialogues.

Saved Count

The number of saves provides insights into the perceived value and longevity of the content. The Daily Show's (#3) high number of saves (868) suggests that viewers find the content engaging and worth revisiting. *Mooswa* (#2) and Nana Tuckit (#6) also score high in saves, reinforcing their content has lasting significance for the audience. *Lapham* (#4), *Cherokee Nation* (#1), and Eyes-Fox (#5) also receive a considerable number of saves, reflecting the value viewers attribute to their content as a resource for future reference.

Share Count

The share counts shed light on the extent to which viewers feel compelled to amplify the content within their networks. *Mooswa*'s (#2) video stands out with 2,187 shares,

emphasizing its shareability and potential virality. *Lapham* (#4) and *Cherokee Nation* (#1) also garner a notable number of shares, indicating a willingness among viewers to contribute to the broader dissemination of the content. *The Daily Show* (#3) and *Nan Tucket* (#6) also generate significant shares, suggesting that their content is enjoyed and deemed share-worthy, contributing to the overall visibility and impact of the videos.

The TikTok videos under the #IndigenousPeoplesDay hashtag showcase not only varying levels of popularity but also diverse strategies employed by creators to engage their audiences. The follower count reflects the overall reach, while the following count unveils the creators' content curation approaches. The heart, comment, save, and share counts provide nuanced insights into the depth of engagement, audience connection, and the lasting impact of the content on TikTok's dynamic platform. Each creator's unique approach to content creation is unveiled through these features, contributing to a rich tapestry of user interactions and perceptions within the realm of #IndigenousPeoplesDay.

Overview of Qualitative Data

Cherokee Nation (aka thecherokeenation)

The Cherokee Nation, also known as the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma, is the largest of three federally recognized Cherokee tribes in the United States. The Cherokee Nation TikTok account is a poignant example of how these platforms can be harnessed to celebrate Indigenous Peoples' Day and amplify Indigenous Peoples' diverse and rich cultures.

Engagement and Advocacy: Amplifying Diverse Indigenous Voices

The content on the Cherokee Nation TikTok account strategically celebrates Indigenous Peoples' Day, resonating deeply with its audience. Viewers express gratitude for the educational content provided by Indigenous creators, fostering a sense of online community

and shared identity. One commenter, @NativeVibes, wrote: "Finally, a platform representing our rich heritage and culture! Thank you, Cherokee Nation, for amplifying Indigenous voices on TikTok!"

Empowerment of Indigenous Voices: Cultivating Cultural Pride and Diversity

The comments reflect an understanding of the importance of Indigenous representation in shaping the narrative of Indigenous identity on social media. Users actively engage with Indigenous voices, employing hashtags like #nativetok and #cherokeenation to amplify cultural pride. Another commenter, @SpiritWalks, commented: "This is more than just a TikTok account; it is a digital sanctuary where our stories are heard and celebrated. Let us keep uplifting our Indigenous voices and reclaiming our narratives!"

Fostering Unity and Advocacy: Striving for Change and Recognition

The comments on the Cherokee Nation TikTok account underscore the empowering nature of digital platforms for Indigenous communities. Beyond cultural celebration, there is a recognition of the importance of Indigenous representation in political realms, advocating for broader societal impact and meaningful recognition of diverse Indigenous identities. A user going by @Trailblazer shared: "Our voices matter, not just in cultural celebrations, but in shaping policies and decisions affecting online communities. Let us use this platform to advocate for real change and recognition of the diverse identities within Indigenous cultures!"

The Cherokee Nation TikTok account is a digital haven where Indigenous engagement, cultural celebration, and advocacy converge seamlessly. It celebrates cultural identity while empowering Indigenous voices in the digital age. The comments reveal an online community actively supporting one another, resonating with positivity, shared

identity, and a commitment to broader societal change and recognition of diverse Indigenous identities.

Brett Mooswa (aka brettstoise)

Brett Mooswa, proudly representing his Indigenous heritage from the Makwa Sahgaiehcan First Nation in northern Saskatchewan, emerges as a beacon of Indigenous empowerment on TikTok. Beyond his comedic talent, Mooswa strategically utilizes hashtags like #IndigenousPeoplesDay and #NationalIndigenousDay2020 to center conversations around Indigenous identity and pertinent issues. His presence on social media is a powerful assertion of Indigenous voices in the digital landscape.

Online Community Connectivity and Cultural Exchange

Within the comments section of Mooswa's videos, a rich tapestry of Indigenous identities intertwines, weaving a virtual space where solidarity and support among Indigenous Peoples can flourish. From the traditional lands of the Cree to the ancestral grounds of the Navajo, individuals from diverse Indigenous backgrounds converge, fostering not only interaction but a cultural exchange.

One commenter from the Cree Nation shares, "Seeing someone like Brett on TikTok makes me feel seen and heard. We are reclaiming our space, one video at a time." Discussions span from ancestral traditions to contemporary challenges, transforming the comments section into a vibrant forum for honouring and preserving Indigenous identities.

Resilience and Advocacy in the Digital Sphere

Mooswa's TikTok presence serves as more than mere entertainment; it stands as a testament to the resilience and advocacy of Indigenous peoples in the digital age. Seamlessly transitioning from humour to poignant themes, Mooswa amplifies the multifaceted nature

of Indigenous narratives, advocating for cultural preservation, representation, and social justice.

A follower from the Navajo Nation remarks, "Brett's videos not only make me laugh but also remind me of our strength as Indigenous peoples. It is empowering to see our stories shared and celebrated." His content sparks vital discussions, amplifying the voices of people within online communities globally and challenging historical injustices. Through his digital platform, Mooswa amplifies the strength and resilience of Indigenous identities, forging a path towards greater understanding, recognition, and empowerment.

The Daily Show (aka thedailyshow)

“The Daily Show”, hosted by South African comedian Trevor Noah, provides satirical commentary on current events in the United States; however, a recent post on the show's digital platform has ignited a discussion on Indigenous representation, self-determination, and the challenges Indigenous communities face in online communities.

Navigating Digital Spaces with Indigenous Identity

Comments shared reveal the intricate dance. Indigenous individuals perform between their personal life and their online presence. Instances of cultural misrepresentation and stereotypes are recounted, shedding light on the ongoing struggle to preserve cultural integrity in digital spaces. "It is disheartening to see our culture reduced to caricatures and stereotypes online," lamented one commenter. Another user shared their frustration, saying, "Our identities are not commodities for digital consumption. We must reclaim our narratives in the digital realm."

Honouring Indigenous Cultural Expression

The post exudes the significance of Indigenous cultural expression and solidarity in the digital age, epitomized by the hashtag #IndigenousPeoplesDay. Comments overflow with pride in Indigenous identity and underscore the pivotal importance of representation. "Seeing our culture celebrated and respected online fills me with immense pride and hope for the future," exclaimed one user. Another commenter added, "Our cultural expression is not just about preserving traditions but also about asserting our presence and resilience in the face of historical erasure."

Cross-Cultural Learning and Connection

A cross-cultural learning and connection theme emerges as a beacon of hope in the digital discourse. Users are eager to delve deeper into Indigenous perspectives, showcasing the potential for enriching engagement and mutual understanding. "It is imperative for non-Indigenous people to actively listen and learn from Indigenous voices without exploitation or tokenism," stressed one user. Another emphasized the importance of reciprocal learning: "As Indigenous people, we also have much to learn from other cultures. It is a two-way street of understanding and respect."

The online discourse on "The Daily Show" post reveals a nuanced conversation centred on the Empowerment of Indigenous Voices. It showcases the global nature of these discussions, the challenges Indigenous Peoples face in online communities, and the positive impact of honouring and supporting authentic Indigenous representation.

Selena Lapham (aka taino_indigenous)

Selena Lapham, proudly identifying as Taíno from Boricua, immerses herself in the multifaceted discussions surrounding Columbus Day within online communities. She

emphasizes engaging with and empowering Indigenous voices, highlighting varied perspectives, and navigating the intersectionality of challenges faced by Indigenous peoples in reclaiming cultural heritage.

Advocacy for Recognition: Honouring Indigenous Resilience

In the online realm, Indigenous voices like Selena's find a platform to advocate for the recognition of their cultural identity. Comments resonate with pride and resilience, demanding acknowledgment and correcting historical narratives. For example, one user proudly declares, "Taíno here and proud to say that I am still fucking here ✊PR," while others challenge conventional celebrations of Columbus Day with humour and historical insight. Another commenter adds, "Oh... you mean COLUMBUS DAY??... 😁," humorously pointing out the irony behind the traditional holiday observance.

Empowerment Through Cultural Expression: Reclaiming Ancestral Narratives

Digital platforms empower Indigenous individuals to celebrate their cultural expression and solidarity. Comments express a desire to reclaim ancestral lands and challenge traditional historical perspectives. The narrative surrounding Columbus's encounter with the Taíno people is scrutinized, highlighting the ongoing struggle for recognition and justice within online communities. One user passionately asserts, "Tainó are still fighting!! Let their land back!!! HAPPY LATE INDIGENOUS DAY!!💖💖," emphasizing the enduring resilience and determination of Taíno descendants. Another comment challenges historical narratives: "Columbus worked with the Taino to take down the local Carib and Canib tribes. They had a peaceful encounter and worked together. Learn your history."

Intersectionality and Nuanced Perspectives: Navigating Complex Histories

Despite overarching themes of engagement and empowerment, the digital space accommodates a range of perspectives. Users touch upon issues of racial identity, familial forgiveness, and the impact of historical trauma, reflecting the complex nature of Indigenous experiences and opinions. These nuanced discussions underscore the challenges in navigating historical narratives while asserting Indigenous identity in the digital sphere. One commenter shares a personal perspective: "I do not want to erase you. I do not have to forgive anything. My great-grandma forgave and wanted us to do the same. I am brown. Grow up, we are ok!" These comments highlight the nuanced nature of discussions around Indigenous identity and the challenges in navigating complex historical narratives.

Digital Spaces as Platforms for Solidarity and Learning

Online platforms serve not only as avenues for self-expression but also as arenas for cross-cultural learning and solidarity. Users like Selena share knowledge about their heritage, fostering understanding and solidarity within Indigenous communities and across diverse ethnic backgrounds within online communities. These interactions illustrate the potential of online spaces for fostering engagement, advocacy, and empowerment while navigating historical complexities and fostering cross-cultural understanding.

Green Eyes-Fox (aka m0th3rg00se)

Green Eyes-Fox proudly identifies as an Anishinaabe from Canada. She uses her TikTok platform to forge genuine connections and promote Truth and Reconciliation efforts. Through strategic hashtag usage like #everychildmatters🤍 and #september30th, she ignites online engagement and raises awareness about crucial Indigenous events. The

comments section buzzes with gratitude, inquiries, and shared experiences, fostering a vibrant online community engaged in Indigenous discourse.

Commenter Interaction: Fostering Supportive Discourse

One follower, "Boring Me," appreciates the advice as a non-Indigenous individual struggling to discuss these issues with peers. They comment, "Thank you for guiding these topics. It is challenging to navigate, but your content helps make it more accessible." Green Eyes-Fox responds warmly, fostering a supportive and informative online community where diverse perspectives are valued and shared.

Advocacy and Engagement

Green Eyes-Fox's TikTok presence is a testament to her commitment to Indigenous advocacy and engagement. She leverages her bio to underscore the significance of authentic relationships, intertwining personal identity with a rallying cry for awareness of Colonialism and Assimilation's impact on Indigenous communities. Her content is steeped in Truth & Reconciliation 2022, marked by hashtags like #everychildmatters💙 and #orangeshirtday💙, serving as catalysts for dialogue and action.

Commenter Interaction: Empowering Through Education

Another commenter, "Seeker123," expresses gratitude for the insights shared, stating, "Your videos have helped me understand the importance of acknowledging Indigenous histories and supporting Truth and Reconciliation efforts. Thank you for educating us." Green Eyes-Fox emphasizes the importance of continued learning and engagement, fostering a culture of education and empowerment within her online community.

Cultural Celebration and Solidarity

Honouring Indigenous cultural expression takes center stage in Green Eyes-Fox's videos, where she showcases singing, praying, and artists like Fawn Wood. This celebration extends beyond personal content as she encourages others to engage with Indigenous cultures, recognizing the transformative power of hashtags like #IndigenousPeoplesDay in shaping digital narratives. Through cultural empowerment, she fosters a sense of solidarity and amplifies Indigenous voices in the digital sphere.

Commenter Interaction: Amplifying Indigenous Voices

One follower, "ArtisticSoul," shares, "Your videos featuring Indigenous artists like Fawn Wood inspire me to explore and celebrate Indigenous culture. Thank you for amplifying these voices." Green Eyes-Fox responds by expressing gratitude for the support and highlighting the importance of collective efforts in amplifying Indigenous voices and stories.

Ethical Technology Use and Education

Green Eyes-Fox navigates the complexities of digital activism with grace, emphasizing ethical technology use and reframing personal events as opportunities for education. She addresses challenges faced by followers, offering understanding and guidance, particularly regarding the sensitive nature of intergenerational traumas. Additionally, she calls attention to broader issues like the absence of formal apologies and designated days for Indigenous peoples in the U.S., catalyzing advocacy for change and collective action within her online community.

Nana Tuckit (aka nanatuckit)

Nana Tuckit, known as nanatuckit, a prominent drag queen from Portland, Oregon, proudly celebrates her Indigenous heritage, using her platform to uplift and empower Indigenous voices. The comments reflect an audience deeply appreciative of Nana's efforts to educate and advocate for Indigenous People's Day. One commenter, @IndigenousPride87, writes, "As a member of the Cherokee Nation, seeing Nana embrace and celebrate our culture fills my heart with pride. Thank you for being a positive representation of Indigenous identity."

Followers express gratitude for her teachings on Indigenous history, which foster a supportive atmosphere where Indigenous identity is celebrated and honoured. Another commenter, @RainbowWarrior23, shares, "Nana's discussions about Indigenous history have opened my eyes to the richness of our heritage. I am proud to be Indigenous, and Nana's platform makes me feel seen and valued."

Building Cross-Cultural Connections

Nana Tuckit's platform is vital for cross-cultural learning and connection, bringing together individuals from diverse Indigenous backgrounds. Followers proudly identify with their heritage, creating a sense of unity and solidarity within the online community. "I am a proud member of the Laguna Pueblo," shares @SpiritDancer45. "Nana's platform has connected me with Indigenous folks from all over. It is inspiring to see our cultures celebrated and respected here." Hashtags like #IndigenousPeoplesDay signify the platform's impact in shaping the narrative of Indigenous identity in the digital age. At the same time, positive comments about Nana's outfits highlight the visual representation of Indigenous pride.

Ethical Engagement and Empowerment

Nana Tuckit's platform indirectly addresses the ethical use of technology, challenging historical inaccuracies and promoting an understanding of Indigenous culture. Followers

value Nana's commitment to truth-telling and ethical advocacy, contributing to a more respectful representation of Indigenous identity. "The way Nana addresses historical issues with honesty and sensitivity is commendable," says @TruthSeeker99. "We need more voices like hers to challenge stereotypes and promote understanding." The positive engagement in discussions about history and cultural expression underscores the potential for digital spaces to foster empowerment and unity among Indigenous Peoples and allies within online communities.

Nana Tuckit's platform is a dynamic space for online engagement, advocacy, and empowering Indigenous voices. The positive and supportive online community, coupled with discussions about cultural expression and historical issues, underscores the ethical use of technology in shaping positive narratives and fostering a sense of unity within the digital space.

7.8 Cross-Quadrant Trends and Comparisons

Within the vast tapestry of social media narratives, the representation of Indigenous identity, pride, and cultural expression has taken center stage across various platforms. This study delves into a curated list of social media posts spanning different quadrants, each echoing the diverse and vibrant voices within the Indigenous community. Focusing on Indigenous pride, art, and the imperative call for decolonization, our analysis extends beyond surface-level metrics, unravelling the intricacies of video usage. By scrutinizing engagement patterns, thematic contributions, and the temporal dynamics of content creation, this exploration aims to unveil a deeper understanding of how these digital spaces shape and amplify narratives surrounding Indigenous identity. Our investigation not only dissects cross-quadrant trends but also seeks to provide a nuanced perspective on the impact

of video features in fostering a richer, more authentic representation of Indigenous voices on social media. Through this examination, we decipher Indigenous narratives' complexities, resilience, and diversity in the digital age.

7.8.1 Cross-Quadrant Trends

As we scrutinize the social media landscape across different quadrants, nuanced patterns in video usage provide a deeper understanding of the multifaceted dynamics within the Indigenous community. *Andrian Makhnachov's* exceptional engagement, with 21K hearts and 395K followers, suggests more than numerical success; it hints at an online community deeply connected with content that resonates emotionally. In *APTN News*, the strategic emphasis on shares indicates a deliberate effort to foster collaborative online community engagement, suggesting a nuanced approach prioritizing online community-building over sheer metrics. The intriguing aspect of *Luke Capasso*, with fewer hearts but a remarkable 922 shares, points to a unique content strategy emphasizing communal interaction and the organic spread of content. The variable content duration, ranging from concise 30s clips to more elaborate 180s videos, mirrors the rich diversity of creative storytelling methods employed across quadrants, reflecting the depth and complexity of Indigenous narratives.

7.8.2 Impact on Narrative Shaping

Delving into the specifics of these posts unveils the impact of video metrics in shaping narratives around Indigenous identity. *James Jones'* focus on Indigenous art contributes to a broader narrative of cultural expression and creativity and underscores the evolution of artistic forms within Indigenous communities. Content creator *Aïcha Bastien-N'Diaye* serves as a platform for personal narratives, offering a space for individual stories that contribute depth to the overarching narrative of Indigenous experiences.

7.8.3 Temporal Dynamics

Scrutinizing the temporal evolution of video usage provides nuanced insights into the dynamic nature of content creation and audience engagement. James Jones' post from 2020-11-4 captures a moment and signifies an enduring interest in Indigenous art, emphasizing specific themes' timeless and perennial nature. Luke Capasso's more recent post from 2022-6-13 reflects keen responsiveness to evolving content preferences, showcasing the adaptability of creators to stay relevant and engage with contemporary themes while maintaining cultural authenticity. *APTN News* posts from 2021-1-21 serve as historical anchors, sustaining engagement and underscoring the longevity of specific content themes, emphasizing the enduring appeal of particular narratives. Temporal trends in engagement highlight the importance of aligning content with current online community interests while recognizing the enduring and timeless elements that continue to resonate.

Exploring social media posts related to Indigenous pride, art, and decolonization unveils intricate layers of engagement patterns, thematic contributions, and the dynamic interplay between creators and their audiences. Recognizing and understanding these complexities enriches our comprehension of the impact video metrics wield in shaping nuanced narratives within online communities created on social media, showcasing Indigenous voices' resilience, adaptability, and diversity.

7.8.2 Navigating the Digital Tapestry of Indigenous Discourse

In the age of digital connectivity, online communities have become integral spaces for cultivating identity, dialogue, and cultural expression. The online community stands as a vibrant testament to the power of digital platforms in fostering a sense of belonging, amplifying voices, and driving advocacy. This exploration endeavours to unravel the

multifaceted dynamics of online community building, amplification of voices, advocacy, cultural exchange, and temporal evolution within this unique digital ecosystem.

Within the expansive canvas of the online community, the comment sections emerge as dynamic forums where members actively engage in discussions, sharing thoughts, experiences, and support through a meticulous analysis of prolific contributors, such as *Andrian Makhnachov*, a rich narrative of communal dialogue unfolds, reflecting the quantity and qualitative depth of these exchanges.

The "Follow" button, a seemingly simple feature, unravels a complex tapestry of online community integration. By scrutinizing followership patterns, exemplified by the substantial following of individuals like *Sherry Mckay*, we delve into how individuals become intertwined with the online community narrative. This extends beyond numerical metrics, embodying a commitment to shared values and a collective vision for representing Indigenous stories.

Likes and shares, represented by digital gestures, are pivotal in amplifying Indigenous voices. Beyond the sheer numbers, we explore the types of content that resonate and the potential impact on broader digital discourses. Verification badges and credibility symbols lead us to discuss influential figures shaping the narrative. The verified status becomes a mark of recognition and a tool for online community leadership and advocacy.

The realm of online activism unfolds as we examine the metrics of advocacy platforms within the online community. Specific instances, such as Indigenous Insights' engagement, highlight the transformation of digital spaces, particularly comment sections, into dynamic hubs for discussions and tangible mobilization.

Cross-cultural learning takes centerstage through a comparative analysis of engagement patterns across quadrants. Users like *AJ+* and *APTN News* exemplify the

global nature of the online community, fostering unity through shared narratives, challenges, and celebrations that transcend geographical boundaries.

Temporal dynamics offer a lens into the adaptive nature of online communities. Examining the growth of users like *Mary Efraim* over time reveals resilience and a proactive response to evolving trends, emerging voices, and shifting priorities within the digital landscape.

The following sections delve into each aspect, exploring nuanced examples that illuminate this digital tapestry's intricacies. Through these discussions, we seek to unravel the impact of interactions on community dynamics, cultural representation, and the preservation of Indigenous identity within the vast online world.

Dynamic Discourse in Comment Sections

The vibrant nature of discussions within comment sections represents more than a mere exchange of words; it is a dynamic discourse space where online community members actively contribute to conversations, share diverse perspectives, and forge connections. For example, the user *Andrian Makhnachov*, with a remarkable 1095 comments, not only quantifies engagement but also embodies the qualitative richness of these interactions. Through an in-depth analysis of specific comment threads, it becomes evident that these discussions often revolve around nuanced aspects of Indigenous identity, ranging from cultural practices to contemporary challenges. The comment section, thus, emerges as an evolving repository of shared experiences and a communal dialogue that nurtures a sense of belonging among participants.

Followership as a Measure of Online Community Integration

Beyond a numerical metric, the "Follow" button analysis reveals a nuanced understanding of how individuals integrate into the online community. The substantial following of users

such as *Sherry Mckay* is not just a quantitative reflection but also signifies a qualitative commitment to the community's narratives. Delving into specific follower interactions and examining the reasons behind following certain accounts provide insights into the varied motivations for online community integration. For instance, followers may be drawn to content and shared values, fostering a sense of community rooted in a collective vision for Indigenous representation and storytelling.

Likes, Shares, and the Amplification of Voices

The pivotal roles played by "Like" and "Share" buttons in amplifying Indigenous voices unfold a multifaceted discussion. Beyond sheer numbers, a nuanced analysis involves exploring the types of content that garner significant likes and shares. For example, the content creator *James Jones* may receive numerous likes, indicating resonance. However, delving deeper into the shared content unveils specific themes or narratives that resonate most strongly. Moreover, examining instances where content goes beyond the immediate online community, reaching wider audiences through shares, sheds light on the potential impact of Indigenous narratives in shaping broader digital discourses.

Verification Badges and Influential Figures

The presence of verification badges prompts a discussion on credibility and authority. Examining verified accounts, such as those held by *Antique Road Show* and the *Cherokee Nation*, goes beyond acknowledging their influential status. It involves understanding how these figures leverage their verified status to advocate for Indigenous causes. For instance, these individuals may use their platform to amplify lesser-known voices within the online community or initiate conversations around critical issues, showcasing the verification badge as a symbol and a tool for online community leadership and advocacy.

Online Activism and Mobilization

Specific cases illustrate online platforms' features and subsequent metrics for activism and mobilization within online communities. Taking Indigenous Insights as an example, the discussion unfolds how platforms, particularly the comment section, become spaces for discussion and mobilization. Beyond expressing opinions, users like *Indigenous Insights* may use these spaces to organize virtual events, share resources, or initiate campaigns, turning digital interactions into tangible avenues for social change and empowerment within an online community.

Cross-Cultural Learning and Unity

The cross-quadrant analysis sparks discussions on the role of diverse perspectives in fostering cultural exchange and unity. With substantial followers, users like *AJ+* and *APTN News* provide nuanced examples of how the online community is a global platform for sharing commonalities. For instance, collaborative projects may emerge between users from different cultural backgrounds, creating content that reflects a mosaic of Indigenous experiences. This cross-cultural collaboration enriches the online community and contributes to a shared identity transcending geographical and cultural boundaries.

Temporal Dynamics and Online Community Resilience

The temporal analysis prompts discussions on the adaptive nature of the online community. Examining the growth of users like *Mary Efraim* over time leads to reflections on evolving trends, emerging voices, and shifting priorities. Specific instances of content evolution, such as changes in thematic focus or adaptations to current events, offer nuanced insights into how those within online communities navigate the digital landscape. This dynamic response to temporal shifts showcases resilience and proactive engagement with the ever-changing dynamics of online discourse.

In traversing the virtual realms of online communities, our exploration reveals a vibrant ecosystem marked by dynamic discourse, community integration, voice amplification, advocacy, cross-cultural exchange, and adaptive evolution. Comment sections are lively hubs, fostering connections and a sense of belonging. The "Follow" button becomes a conduit for commitment to shared narratives, values, and aspirations.

Likes and shares emerge as digital catalysts, propelling Indigenous voices to the forefront and shaping broader conversations. Verification badges mark influential figures who leverage their status for online community leadership. Online activism, exemplified by users like Indigenous Insights, transforms digital spaces into arenas for tangible change.

Cross-cultural learning unites a global online community, fostering unity through shared experiences. Temporal dynamics reveal an adaptive online community responsive to emerging voices and changing priorities. In this digital tapestry, tradition and technology converge, showcasing the transformative power of digital connectivity—a force that empowers voices, fosters understanding, and sustains the enduring strength of Indigenous identity globally.

NORTH DIRECTION: BALANCE AND RESPECT – PUTTING INTO ACTION AND COLLECTIVE HEALING

Chapter 8: Coming Full Circle, Moving Beyond the Findings - Envisioning Next Steps

The "North Direction" embodies the essence of Indigenous wisdom, emphasizing equilibrium, reverence, action, and communal restoration. It is a clarion call to confront challenges and foster healing within Indigenous communities. Rooted in Indigenous knowledge, the North Direction underscores the imperative of achieving harmony, nurturing respect, and collectively striving for renewal and positive transformation. Furthermore, within Chapter 7, nestled within the North Direction, lies the culmination of our research journey, beckoning us to action, equilibrium, and communal restoration. It underscores the researcher's dedication to transcending mere findings and envisioning tangible avenues for constructive change. The North Direction advocates for respect, healing, and empowerment within Indigenous communities, embodying a holistic approach to research and community well-being.

In this pivotal chapter, we delve into the intricate dimensions of decision-making, intricately woven with Indigenous identity and perspectives, as illuminated by the findings unfurled throughout this dissertation. This research navigates the nuanced terrain of contemporary existence, delving into the dynamic interplay between digital platforms and physical realities and the influence of virtual spaces on tangible interactions.

Central to this exploration is an interrogation of identity in the 21st century, traversing its complexities as they intersect with Indigenous heritage and contemporary digital landscapes. Our inquiry extends beyond theoretical frameworks, embracing concrete manifestations of digital impact on everyday life. The findings underscore the

symbiotic relationship between online platforms and physical experiences, showcasing the digital realm's potential to catalyze real-world connections. Through the prism of Indigenous cultures, exemplified by the vibrant narratives of "Native TikTok," we witness the preservation and celebration of ancestral wisdom within the digital domain, seamlessly translating into tangible community engagements.

This chapter examines the interconnected web of decisions, revealing the ramifications of digital spaces on our lived realities. Drawing from diverse sources, including the evocative narratives interwoven in the fabric of Native TikTok, we navigate the landscape where the virtual and the tangible intersect, influencing the decisions that shape our interactions, perceptions, and collective identity.

This chapter invites readers to grapple with the complexities of decision-making in an era where the digital and physical realms are inextricably entwined. Through this lens, we illuminate the pathways forged by social media, the dynamic interplay between virtual and in-person engagements, and the evolving nature of identity in our technologically saturated landscape. The decisions explored herein are not merely binary choices but reflections of a nuanced dance between the digital and the tangible, each step echoing the impact of our interconnected world.

8.1 Limitations

The present dissertation explores various aspects of ad distribution and its impacts on participant pools, emphasizing the role of social media platforms. However, like any research endeavour, this study has limitations. This section delineates the constraints and challenges encountered during the research process.

Impacts of Ad Distribution and Participant Pool

The study grapples with inherent complexities when assessing ad distribution impacts on social media platforms. The ever-evolving landscape of online advertising and the diverse nature of participant pools present formidable challenges in effectively isolating and measuring the precise effects of ad campaigns. Furthermore, the study acknowledges that the heterogeneity among participant demographics and online behaviours can impact the generalizability of its findings.

Notably, the study is alert to biases introduced by the exclusive distribution of ads solely through the primary researcher's social media platforms. This awareness stems from recognizing that such a distribution strategy may not encapsulate the diversity inherent in the broader social media landscape. The study conscientiously confronts the challenge of extrapolating findings from this specific channel to the expansive spectrum of social media platforms. Varied platforms, each with unique user bases, engagement patterns, and algorithmic structures, may yield divergent results, influencing the generalizability of the study's findings due to the constrained scope of the chosen distribution channels. The study navigates a complex landscape shaped by the dynamic nature of online advertising, the diversity within the participant pool, and the potential biases stemming from the exclusive use of specific distribution channels. Recognizing the significance of these challenges, the study actively addresses them to fortify its robustness and enhance the relevance of its findings to the broader context of ad distribution on social media platforms. By mitigating biases and accounting for the intricate variables, the study provides insightful insights within specific parameters applicable and transferable to a more extensive social media milieu.

Access to Data Sets for TikTok (Netography)

The research study utilized netnography, a methodology focused on observing and analyzing online communities, to enhance and validate the qualitative research data. However, a significant limitation arises from the restricted access to representative datasets from platforms like TikTok. This constraint in data accessibility poses challenges that have noteworthy implications for the study's overall depth and breadth of analysis.

One notable concern is the potential introduction of sampling bias. The limited access to datasets may inadvertently result in a skewed representation of online communities, focusing on specific subsets of users or content while overlooking the broader diversity on these platforms. Therefore, findings stemming from these partial samples might require further consideration for broader applicability and an inclusive understanding of the complexities of the studied phenomena. Furthermore, the research risks incomplete insights due to constrained access to a wide range of data. A lack of wide-ranging datasets may fail to identify crucial trends, patterns, and interactions within online communities. This incompleteness hampers the researcher's ability to develop a holistic understanding of the studied phenomena, potentially leading to oversights that could significantly impact the study's validity.

Temporal limitations also emerge as a concern. Access to historical data is necessary for the study to trace the evolution of trends and behaviours over time, missing out on vital information regarding the temporal dynamics of online interactions, cultural shifts, and the lifecycle of specific topics or discussions within the platforms. Moreover, more contextual information in datasets is needed to ensure accurate interpretation. Context is essential for understanding the motivations behind online interactions, and limited data may hinder the researcher's ability to provide nuanced and contextually rich insights,

potentially leading to misinterpretations or incomplete understanding of the phenomena under investigation.

Ethical considerations further compound these limitations, especially when dealing with personally identifiable information or content that violates user privacy. Even when data is available, ethical constraints may restrict the use of certain information, thereby limiting the scope of exploration within online communities. Additionally, the dynamic nature of platforms like TikTok introduces challenges related to data's real-time or near-real-time nature. Limited access to timely information may impede the study's ability to capture emerging trends and swiftly evolving patterns, diminishing the relevance and timeliness of its findings.

Lastly, platform policies and restrictions shape the extent of data access for research purposes. These restrictions may encompass limitations on the type of data that can be accessed, the duration of access, or the specific methods of data collection, further constraining the researcher's ability to gather insights.

The research study's reliance on netnography faces significant obstacles due to the restricted access to datasets from platforms like TikTok. These limitations, encompassing sampling bias, incomplete insights, temporal constraints, lack of context, ethical considerations, dynamic platform nature, and policy restrictions, collectively impact the study's findings' robustness, reliability, and generalizability. Addressing these challenges thoughtfully is imperative for researchers to enhance the overall quality and validity of their netnographic analysis.

Indigenous-Focused Social Media Data

While navigating the intricacies of researching Indigenous-focused social media data, the study acknowledged and actively addressed various limitations beyond the initial challenge

of not exclusively centring on Indigenous perspectives. Recognizing the diverse nature of Indigenous communities, the research incorporated a multifaceted approach to capture a broad range of cultures, languages, and traditions. The study aimed to mitigate the potential oversight of nuanced experiences and foster a deeper understanding by implementing strategies to identify and analyze themes specific to different Indigenous groups.

Cultural sensitivity remained a focal point, with the research team engaging in ongoing dialogue with Indigenous community members to better understand and respect cultural practices, traditions, and sensitivities. This approach aimed to enhance the study's capacity to capture the intricacies of Indigenous experiences in the digital space while fostering a collaborative and ethical research environment.

Ethical considerations were systematically addressed by reviewing informed consent procedures and privacy protections. The research team prioritized transparency and collaboration, working closely with Indigenous communities to establish protocols that respected individual privacy rights. By incorporating these measures, the study aimed to uphold ethical standards and mitigate concerns related to data misuse.

The research adopted a dynamic methodology to counter temporal limitations, allowing continuous data collection and analysis. Regular updates and real-time engagement with social media trends enabled the research to remain relevant in the ever-evolving digital landscape of Indigenous communities.

Acknowledging algorithmic bias, the research sought to identify and mitigate any biases within social media platforms. The team collaborated with experts in algorithmic fairness to enhance the accuracy and fairness of data representation, thereby minimizing the potential distortion of Indigenous discourse online.

By conscientiously addressing these limitations, the research strived to recognize the complexity of studying Indigenous-focused social media data and contribute to developing more inclusive, respectful, and ethically sound research methodologies in the digital age.

Temporal Nature of Digital Data

The temporal nature of digital data, mainly when derived from social media platforms, introduces significant limitations to research studies. One primary challenge arises from the constant evolution of online environments, where platforms undergo frequent updates, feature changes, and algorithm adjustments. The dynamic nature of social media platforms means that findings captured at a specific time may quickly become outdated as new functionalities emerge, rendering initial conclusions less relevant or applicable. Moreover, the highly dynamic and user-generated content on social media platforms contributes to the study's limitations. Trending topics, hashtags, and user behaviours prevalent during the study period may evolve rapidly, impacting the generalizability of the findings to different temporal contexts. These platforms' continuous tweaking of algorithms further compounds the issue, as content visibility and reach changes can significantly alter identified patterns and trends.

User engagement on social media fluctuates based on external events, cultural shifts, and seasonal patterns. These fluctuations can introduce biases or anomalies, making it challenging to draw consistent conclusions about user behaviour. Additionally, a study's temporal snapshot approach restricts the ability to conduct meaningful longitudinal analyses. Understanding how online patterns evolve necessitates continuous data collection, and a single snapshot may not adequately capture these changes' nuances.

Digital data is not immune to decay, and certain content may become inaccessible or deleted over time. This decay introduces gaps in the dataset, potentially leading to incomplete or biased conclusions. Generalizability issues also emerge as findings may need more relevance beyond the specific time frame studied due to the rapid pace of change in the digital environment. The temporal nature of digital data heightens the ethical considerations associated with studying user-generated content. Privacy policies, community standards, and user consent may evolve, requiring ongoing ethical reviews and considerations for responsible research practices.

Unforeseen events, such as major global crises or social movements, can significantly impact online behaviour and discourse. These external factors may introduce confounding variables that are challenging to control for in a study focused on a specific period. In conclusion, while studying the temporal nature of digital data provides valuable insights into online phenomena, researchers must be aware of these limitations. Strategies such as continuous monitoring, real-time analyses, and acknowledging the potential for change can help mitigate some of these challenges, enabling more robust and nuanced interpretations of digital phenomena.

Limitations in Confirming Personal Identities

The research study faces significant challenges in confirming personal identities, primarily due to the limitations associated with digital data. While the investigation delves into user interests and interactions within online spaces, it grapples with the inability to validate the authenticity of individuals' identities. This constraint underscores the need to carefully interpret the study's findings, emphasizing the potential for misrepresented or pseudonymous online personas.

A critical limitation lies in the accuracy and reliability of the digital data upon which the study relies. User-generated content in online spaces can be susceptible to intentional or unintentional manipulation, casting doubts on the integrity of the collected data and, consequently, the representation of individuals' interactions and interests. The presence of inaccuracies introduces an element of uncertainty to the study's conclusions.

Sampling bias poses another challenge, as the research may be influenced by selecting specific online platforms or communities. Different online spaces attract diverse user demographics, and findings may need to be more readily generalizable to a broader population. This limitation necessitates caution when extrapolating results beyond the specific context of the chosen platforms.

Temporal constraints further complicate the study, as the ever-evolving nature of online platforms may limit the ability to capture an up-to-date understanding of user behaviours. The findings may be confined to a specific time frame, potentially overlooking changes in online trends or user behaviours.

The study's limitation in providing sufficient contextual information surrounding user interactions is also notable. Without a deeper understanding of socio-cultural factors, personal motivations, or external influences shaping online behaviours, the findings may lack the depth to understand individuals' digital identities broadly.

Ethical considerations related to privacy concerns may impede the depth of information available for analysis. Some users may employ privacy settings that restrict access to certain aspects of their online presence, hindering the ability to compile a dataset. This limitation underscores the importance of respecting individuals' privacy rights in the research process.

Technological constraints, such as platform restrictions, algorithmic biases, or limitations in data scraping tools, further impact the study's completeness and accuracy. These challenges highlight the need for researchers to navigate and address technological hurdles to ensure a robust and reliable data collection process. Additionally, the subjective nature of online interactions presents a hurdle in the study's ability to capture digital conversation's nuanced and context-dependent aspects. The lack of a cross-validation mechanism, such as comparing online behaviours with offline identities, also poses challenges in confirming the reliability of the collected data. Without a complementary approach to validate findings, the study's outcomes may lack the necessary robustness to withstand scrutiny.

Recognizing and addressing these limitations is crucial for researchers and readers. Understanding the constraints inherent in the research design and data collection process is essential to ensure a balanced and cautious interpretation of the study's conclusions regarding online identities and behaviours. Future studies should consider these challenges in their designs to contribute to a more accurate exploration of the complex landscape of digital identity.

Methodological Challenges in Netnography

Netnography, as a qualitative research method, encounters various methodological challenges that necessitate careful consideration. The reliance on observational data and the interpretation of online behaviours introduces potential biases and subjective interpretations. Researchers grapple with the ethical dilemma of observing individuals' online activities without explicit consent, raising privacy concerns. The challenge lies in determining the boundaries of ethical observation and addressing the potential intrusion into the digital lives of participants. Moreover, the extensive nature of online communities

poses a significant hurdle in achieving sample representativeness. The demographic and cultural variations among participants make it difficult to generalize findings to broader populations, jeopardizing the study's external validity.

A critical limitation in netnography revolves around the need for more contextual understanding due to the absence of non-verbal cues and situational context in online interactions. Misinterpretation of meanings becomes a concern, as researchers may need help fully comprehending the nuances and motivations of certain behaviours. Additionally, technological advancements and changes in platform design introduce uncertainties, impacting the accessibility and functionality of online platforms. This technological dynamism requires researchers to adapt their methods continuously to keep pace with these developments. Furthermore, the self-presentation and identity construction prevalent in online environments adds another layer of complexity. Individuals often curate their online personas, which may not accurately reflect their true beliefs or behaviours. Researchers must navigate the challenge of distinguishing between online personas and authentic identities to ensure the validity of their interpretations. The dynamic and uncontrollable nature of online spaces poses difficulties in controlling variables, as external factors like platform policies or unforeseen events can influence participant behaviours, undermining the researchers' ability to maintain control over relevant variables.

Netnography's reliance on the interpretation of observational data exposes it to subjectivity issues, where researchers may interpret the same data differently. Establishing inter-rater reliability becomes challenging, emphasizing the need for transparency in the analytical process. Additionally, the temporal nature of online communities introduces validity issues, as data collected at one point may not accurately represent the ongoing state of the community.

Addressing these methodological challenges in netnography requires a thoughtful and reflexive approach. Researchers must be transparent in their method reporting, navigate ethical considerations with care, and continuously adapt to the dynamic nature of online spaces. These measures are essential to enhancing the rigour and reliability of netnography as a qualitative research method.

Ethical Considerations in Digital Data Collection

The study on ethical considerations in digital data collection, specifically within social media, illuminates crucial concerns. However, it is imperative to recognize certain limitations that may impact the generalizability and depth of the findings. Cultural variations represent a significant challenge, as ethical standards can be context-dependent, varying across diverse societies and legal frameworks. The study might need to fully capture the spectrum of cultural nuances and differences in attitudes towards privacy and consent. This necessitates a meticulous approach to understanding the global landscape of digital data collection ethics.

Temporal dynamics pose another limitation, given the rapidly evolving nature of the digital landscape. The study's findings might quickly become outdated as new technologies emerge and social media platforms evolve, requiring ongoing research to maintain relevance and practical applicability. The dynamic nature of the digital environment emphasizes the need for flexibility and adaptability in ethical considerations over time.

A potential limitation in participant demographics arises as the study needs to adequately represent diverse groups. Age, socio-economic status, and digital literacy can significantly influence individuals' perspectives on privacy and consent. A fuller understanding of ethical considerations would necessitate a broader participant pool,

ensuring that the study's conclusions apply to a wider range of individuals and demographics.

The exclusive focus on social media platforms might limit the generalizability of the study's conclusions to the broader landscape of digital data collection. Other data collection forms, such as wearable devices, smart home technologies, or online questionnaires, may need heedful attention. A more holistic exploration of various data collection methods is essential for a deeper understanding of the ethical challenges that extend beyond social media; hence, this research's dynamic mixed-method approach incorporates both human participants and digital research.

Researcher bias and subjectivity represent potential limitations as well. The study's findings could inadvertently reflect the researchers' biases or preconceived notions about ethical considerations. The subjective nature of ethical evaluations might influence the interpretation of findings and recommendations, emphasizing the importance of maintaining objectivity and considering diverse perspectives in the study of digital data collection ethics.

Finally, the study may need to fully address the long-term impact of digital data collection on individuals and society. Ethical considerations extend beyond immediate privacy concerns, necessitating an examination of the broader societal implications of widespread data collection practices. Understanding the long-term impact is crucial for informed decision-making and developing ethical guidelines considering the broader societal context. While the study contributes significantly to understanding ethical challenges in digital data collection, recognizing and addressing these limitations is essential for researchers, policymakers, and practitioners to interpret the findings judiciously and implement ethical practices effectively.

Interpretation of Digital Communities

The research study's limitations in interpreting digital communities are multifarious and stem from the complex nature of online interactions. One notable limitation is the challenge of defining the concept of "digital communities." Unlike traditional communities with clear physical boundaries, online communities exist in a fluid and dynamic digital space, making establishing definitive parameters for their characteristics and membership challenging.

The fluid nature of online interactions poses a significant obstacle to researchers attempting to understand digital communities. Users can engage in diverse activities across various platforms, and their online presence might sometimes align with a singular community affiliation. This variability makes it difficult to establish consistent and universally applicable criteria for identifying and categorizing digital communities. Moreover, the diversity of online platforms and communication channels adds another layer of complexity. Digital communities can emerge on social media platforms, forums, chat groups, and other online spaces, each with its unique set of rules, norms, and dynamics. The study may need help to capture the entire digital community experiences due to the sheer variety of online environments.

The inherent subjectivity in interpreting digital community dynamics is another crucial limitation. Researchers may bring their biases, perspectives, and experiences to the analysis, potentially influencing their understanding of the community's functioning. The study acknowledges this subjectivity and highlights the need for reflexivity in the analytical process, emphasizing the importance of researchers being aware of their preconceptions and biases. Additionally, the fast-paced nature of digital interactions poses a challenge in capturing real-time dynamics. Online communities can evolve rapidly, and this study faced difficulties with keeping up with the ever-changing nature of these communities. This

temporal limitation may affect the study's ability to provide an up-to-date understanding of digital community dynamics.

Issues related to data privacy and ethical considerations may impact the study's scope. Obtaining consent and ensuring the anonymity of participants in digital communities can be challenging, raising ethical concerns that need careful consideration. These ethical constraints may limit the depth and breadth of data researchers can access and analyze.

The study on the interpretation of digital communities faces several limitations, including the elusive nature of defining digital communities, the diverse landscape of online platforms, the subjectivity inherent in interpretation, challenges in capturing real-time dynamics, and ethical considerations related to data privacy. Researchers must navigate these limitations carefully to provide a nuanced and contextually rich understanding of digital communities.

8.2 Center: Integration

At the center of the Medicine Wheel lies integration—a space where all aspects of Indigenous identity in digital spaces come together harmoniously. Here, we seek to synthesize the insights from the four quadrants to understand how a holistic view of Indigenous identity can contribute to the well-being of Indigenous communities. Questions in this section aim to explore the interconnectedness of the physical, intellectual, emotional, and social dimensions and offer guidance for meaningful digital engagement. By considering all these dimensions collectively, we understand how Indigenous individuals navigate and express their identities in the complex.

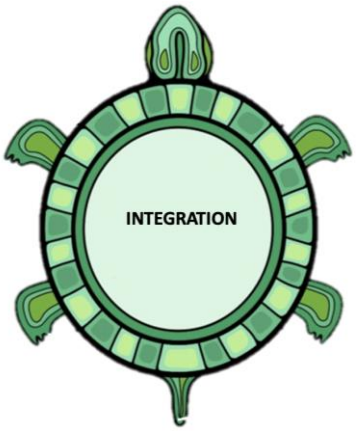


Figure 8: Center Summary of Data Analysis

Digital technology has given Indigenous communities unprecedented opportunities to assert their identities, challenge stereotypes, and reclaim agency over their narratives. Indigenous individuals navigate a complex cultural expression, activism, and community-building landscape through various digital platforms. In this introduction, we set the stage for analysis of the ways Indigenous peoples engage with the digital world, emphasizing the significance of online spaces in shaping Indigenous identity and social relations.

The exploration begins with examining the transformative power of digital platforms in empowering Indigenous communities. By sharing personal stories, cultural practices, and experiences online, Indigenous individuals challenge historical misrepresentations and mobilize collective action against systemic injustices. Despite challenges such as limited access to technology and regulatory constraints, Indigenous Internet engagement catalyzes cultural revitalization, activism, and the disruption of dominant narratives. Furthermore, this section highlights the importance of inclusive research frameworks that center on Indigenous perspectives and foster meaningful partnerships with Indigenous communities. By acknowledging the complexities of Indigenous Internet engagement, researchers can navigate the intricacies of digital bonding, community creation, and the interplay between online and offline interactions within Indigenous contexts.

Overall, this section aims to provide insights into the diverse ways Indigenous peoples navigate the digital landscape, shedding light on the complexities of identity construction, cultural expression, and social activism in the digital age. Through theoretical frameworks, empirical studies, and Indigenous voices, we seek to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of Indigenous experiences in online spaces and advocate for equitable and inclusive digital environments.

8.2.1 Exploring Complexities of Indigenous Identity and Online Engagement

Indigenous Peoples increasingly leverage the Internet as a multifaceted tool to assert and redefine their identities, challenging deeply ingrained stereotypes and misconceptions about their technological capacities (Niezen, 2005). In the digital landscape, Indigenous communities transcend geographical boundaries to confront sources of marginalization and reshape global perceptions of their cultures and histories (Landzelius, 2006a). Autoethnographic narratives emerge as powerful instruments for Indigenous individuals to reclaim autonomy over their stories and experiences, providing nuanced perspectives that disrupt dominant narratives perpetuated by mainstream media (Ginsburg, 2002; Niezen, 2009).

Utilization of Digital Platforms for Empowerment

The transformative potential of digital platforms in empowering Indigenous communities is insightful (Hill & Hughes, 2002). These platforms offer unprecedented opportunities for Indigenous peoples to reclaim agency over their narratives and advocate for self-determination (Prins, 2002). By sharing personal stories, cultural practices, and experiences online, Indigenous communities challenge historical misrepresentations and mobilize collective action against systemic injustices (Forte, 2006; Soriano, 2011). Nonetheless, challenges such as limited access to technology and regulatory constraints persist, emphasizing the need for inclusive approaches to digital empowerment (Landzelius, 2006a).

Challenges and Opportunities

Despite the empowering potential of digital platforms, Indigenous Internet engagement encounters multifaceted challenges rooted in historical legacies of colonization and ongoing struggles for recognition and rights (Niezen, 2009). Factors such as access to

technology, digital literacy, and socio-economic disparities significantly influence the extent and nature of Indigenous engagement online (Kovach, 2009). Nevertheless, the digital realm presents unprecedented opportunities for cultural revitalization, activism, and the disruption of dominant narratives (Lee, 2006; Belausteguigoitia, 2006). Inclusive research frameworks that center Indigenous perspectives and foster meaningful partnerships with Indigenous communities are essential for navigating the complexities of online engagement (Jones & Jenkins, 2008).

Cultural Revitalization and Activism

The Internet is a dynamic space for Indigenous cultural revitalization and activism, enabling communities to share traditional knowledge, language, and practices with global audiences (Fong, 2006). Digital storytelling and self-representation empower Indigenous individuals to navigate the complexities of their identities and challenge historical marginalization (Brown, 2006). Online communities play a crucial role in fostering dialogue, collaboration, and mutual support, which all contribute to preserving and revitalizing Indigenous cultures (Parks, 2011). Moreover, Indigenous activism in digital spaces is a powerful tool for raising awareness about systemic injustices and advocating for policy changes (Kukutai & Taylor, 2016).

Diverse Paths to Community Creation

Indigenous-initiated digital communities and spaces that center Indigenous narratives provide platforms for cultural continuity and broader engagement (Baym, 2010). Through interviews and surveys with self-identified Indigenous communities, researchers gain valuable insights into the dynamics of digital community building and the significance of Indigenous agencies in shaping online spaces (Kraut et al., 2002). Understanding the

diverse paths to community creation within Indigenous contexts is crucial for fostering inclusive and equitable online environments (Ellison et al., 2007).

Conceptualizing Digital Bonds: Beyond Hashtags

Digital bonding within Indigenous communities transcends superficial markers like hashtags, encompassing deep connections that intersect with traditional community cohesion and identity formation (Maddison & Matthews, 2019). Theory-focused research enriches our understanding of Indigenous digital relationships, shedding light on their transformative potential in strengthening bonds and empowering communities (Arizpe, 2018). Insights from network theory and social identity dynamics provide valuable frameworks for comprehending the structure and dynamics of online communities (Wellman, 2001; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). By acknowledging the complexities of digital bonding and its implications for offline interactions, researchers can navigate the intricacies of Indigenous digital relationships more effectively.

Bridging Online and Offline: Understanding the Dynamics of Digital Bonding

A multidisciplinary approach from psychology, sociology, and communication studies offers an understanding of digital bonding and its relationship to offline interactions (Kraut et al., 2002). While digital platforms facilitate meaningful connections, offline interactions remain crucial for fostering relationship depth and intimacy (Ellison et al., 2007). By integrating insights from various disciplines, researchers can navigate the complexities of digital bonding and its implications for social relationships in the digital age, fostering more meaningful and transformative online and offline interactions. Through deeper exploration, a richer understanding of the interplay between digital and physical interactions emerges, providing valuable insights into the dynamics of Indigenous community-building in both virtual and real-world settings.

8.2.2 Preserving Indigenous Identity in the Digital Age

Indigenous Identity and Cultural Preservation

In the digital age, the preservation of Indigenous identity faces new challenges and opportunities. Technological advancements bring promise and risks to the delicate balance between authenticity and accessibility. Research studies have delved into how digital platforms and technologies can empower Indigenous communities to safeguard their identity or inadvertently contribute to its dilution.

One aspect of preserving Indigenous identity in the digital age involves documenting and disseminating cultural practices. Online platforms allow Indigenous Peoples to share their traditions, stories, and art with a global audience. This fosters a sense of community among Indigenous individuals and educates the broader public about the richness and diversity of Indigenous cultures. However, researchers have also highlighted the need for caution, as the commodification of Indigenous culture on digital platforms can lead to misappropriation and exploitation. Furthermore, the role of social media in shaping and expressing Indigenous identity is a fascinating area of study. Platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter offer spaces for individuals to assert their Indigenous identity, connect with like-minded individuals and mobilize for social and political causes. However, researchers have noted the potential pitfalls, such as the spread of stereotypes, cultural appropriation, and the reinforcement of harmful narratives.

Identity verification in the digital realm presents another layer of complexity. While some Indigenous communities have embraced online tools to confirm membership and participation in cultural events, data security and privacy concerns have been raised. Striking a balance between ensuring authenticity and protecting sensitive information is an ongoing challenge that requires careful consideration.

The intersection of traditional markers of Indigenous identity with contemporary technologies is also a subject of exploration. For instance, digital storytelling, virtual reality, and augmented reality to convey Indigenous narratives have gained attention. Researchers are investigating how these immersive technologies can be harnessed to preserve and transmit cultural knowledge while respecting certain traditions' sacred and personal nature. Moreover, the impact of algorithms and artificial intelligence on the representation of Indigenous identity in digital spaces is a growing concern. Research findings emphasize the need for inclusive and culturally sensitive programming to avoid perpetuating stereotypes and biases. Collaboration between Indigenous communities and technology developers is crucial in designing algorithms that respect and accurately represent diverse Indigenous perspectives.

Enhancing Social Media Experience

In the contemporary age of social media, the experiences of Indigenous users and enthusiasts have emerged as a topic of growing importance. Researchers have explored innovative strategies to enhance the engagement and interaction of this demographic within social media platforms. The key findings of this research study suggest several avenues for improving the social media experience for Indigenous users.

One significant proposal is integrating curated featured pages akin to music playlists on platforms like Spotify. These curated pages would showcase Indigenous content creators, aiming to highlight trending and emerging voices within the community. This approach fosters a sense of community and facilitates the discovery of new content, creating a more enriching experience for users.

Another crucial aspect identified is the need for improved search functionality. The study recommends enhancements beyond generic algorithm-driven searches, allowing

users to explore specific content categories related to Indigenous culture. This tailored approach seeks to address the limitations of current search algorithms and provides a more personalized experience for users, ensuring they discover content aligned with their unique interests.

Diversity in content categories emerges as a critical theme in the research findings. By creating and promoting diverse categories such as Indigenous humour or cultural education, social media platforms can better cater to the interests of Indigenous users. This encourages broader representation and facilitates content discovery, enhancing overall user engagement.

User-friendly archiving tools are also highlighted as a crucial element in improving the social media experience for Indigenous users. These tools enable users to curate playlists and collections from others' videos, simplifying saving and sharing relevant content. Integrating such features promotes preserving and sharing Indigenous knowledge, fostering collaboration and community-driven content curation.

Despite the challenges, the research expresses a prevailing optimism regarding recent developments in social media tailored to Indigenous experiences. Social media platforms are recognized as powerful tools for knowledge exchange, community building, and the promotion of Indigenous culture. The continuous improvement of these platforms for content creators and consumers can significantly contribute to preserving and promoting Indigenous knowledge and traditions.

Cultural Respect and Awareness

Research findings on promoting Indigenous culture on social media reveal its nuanced nature, emphasizing the need for a culturally sensitive approach. The two-fold mission of

fostering cultural respect and spreading awareness is integral to the broader cultural preservation and understanding conversation.

One key aspect the research highlights is the intricate and sometimes subjective nature of Indigenous protocols. It is emphasized that navigating these protocols requires a careful and informed approach. The research underscores the importance of seeking guidance from elders or ceremony leaders when uncertainties arise, acknowledging their role as custodians of cultural knowledge and traditions.

The research advocates a deep commitment to understanding and respecting the unique practices of each Indigenous community in promoting cultural awareness. This involves recognizing the diversity within Indigenous cultures and avoiding generalizations. The approach to sharing Indigenous culture on social media should be marked by respect and openness, fostering a climate that encourages curiosity and a genuine desire to understand.

Embracing traditional Indigenous beliefs and practices while promoting mutual respect emerges as a central theme. The research suggests that social media platforms can bridge understanding between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities by creating an environment where diverse perspectives coexist harmoniously. This approach goes beyond mere representation, emphasizing the importance of active engagement and appreciation.

Supporting Indigenous businesses is a tangible way to promote cultural respect and understanding. Acknowledging the value of cultural items as luxury goods recognizes the craftsmanship and artistry involved and contributes to the economic empowerment of Indigenous communities. This dual recognition is a step towards rectifying historical injustices and promoting sustainable economic development.

8.2.3 Connecting Communities: Promoting Indigenous Identity Online

Collective Cultural Expression and Representation

The research study delves into the significance of collective cultural expression and representation, especially within the context of the digital age. Indigenous communities have emerged as influential contributors to the online cultural landscape, using digital platforms to share their unique indigeneity, cultural practices openly, and lived experiences. This sharing goes beyond mere celebration; it catalyzes the reclamation of cultural identity among Indigenous Peoples.

The study highlights the resilience and strength of Indigenous communities, emphasizing how their willingness to share fosters a vibrant and diverse online cultural milieu. Through sharing, Indigenous individuals inspire others to connect with and embrace their identities and heritage, fostering a sense of pride and belonging among diverse populations.

One notable outcome of this collective cultural expression is mainstream media's increasing recognition of Indigenous voices. There is a discernible shift in the media landscape, with dedicated segments addressing Indigenous topics and featuring artists, influencers, and activists from Indigenous communities. This newfound visibility provides a platform for individuals who may have otherwise been marginalized, allowing them to share their narratives, challenge stereotypes, and contribute to a more nuanced understanding of Indigenous cultures. Furthermore, the research study sheds light on the transformative impact of collective cultural expression in shaping a more inclusive digital world. As Indigenous perspectives gain prominence, the online space becomes a dynamic arena for cultural exchange, fostering mutual understanding and appreciation. This interconnectedness breaks down barriers and challenges preconceived notions, contributing

to the broader goal of creating a digital environment that respects and acknowledges the diversity of cultural expressions.

Amplification of Indigenous Voices and Empowerment

The research study findings on the amplification of Indigenous voices and empowerment underscore the transformative impact of digital platforms on Indigenous individuals and communities. This movement's significance lies in its ability to challenge pre-existing stereotypes, fostering a more accurate and nuanced understanding of Indigenous cultures and identities.

One of the critical aspects highlighted in the study is the proactive role Indigenous individuals play in utilizing digital platforms as tools for self-empowerment. By leveraging social media, blogs, podcasts, and other online spaces, Indigenous voices have found an unprecedented avenue to reclaim their narratives. This active engagement serves not only to counteract historical misrepresentations but also to construct a positive and authentic portrayal of Indigenous experiences.

The research reveals that digital platforms are dynamic arenas for creative self-expression and storytelling. Indigenous creators, artists, and influencers use these spaces to showcase their talents, share cultural practices, and articulate their unique perspectives. This contributes to a richer cultural tapestry and serves as a means of empowerment by fostering a sense of pride and self-esteem among Indigenous individuals.

A critical aspect explored in the study is the impact on mental health within Indigenous communities. The findings suggest that the ability to share stories and experiences on digital platforms creates a supportive virtual community, offering solidarity and connection. This virtual community becomes a crucial resource for combating feelings

of isolation and fostering a sense of belonging, ultimately contributing to improved mental well-being.

The research also delves into the historical context, emphasizing how oppressive policies, such as the Indian Act in Canada, have attempted to suppress Indigenous cultural practices. In contrast, the digital age represents a paradigm shift, providing a platform for cultural reclamation and representation. Indigenous individuals actively utilize these digital spaces to revive and celebrate their cultural heritage, reinforcing a positive sense of identity and resilience. Moreover, the study highlights the ongoing nature of this journey. The empowerment facilitated by digital platforms is not a one-time event but a continual process of reclaiming agency, fostering unity, and honouring the diverse tapestry of Indigenous identities. It underscores the importance of sustained efforts to amplify Indigenous voices in the digital realm to promote understanding, respect, and equity.

Promotion of Indigenous Communities and Identity

Promoting Indigenous communities and identity through digital platforms represents a significant stride towards fostering inclusivity, understanding, and empowerment. Research findings on this theme highlight the pivotal role that digital platforms play in amplifying Indigenous voices and narratives, thereby contributing to preserving and promoting their cultural heritage.

One key aspect of this research underscores the impact of personal connections with Indigenous communities. The study reveals that direct engagement with Indigenous individuals facilitates a deeper understanding of their unique perspectives and fosters transformative experiences for Indigenous and non-Indigenous individuals. Digital platforms provide a space where these connections can be forged, allowing for exchanging

ideas, cultural practices, and stories that contribute to a richer and more diverse global tapestry.

Social media emerges as a potent tool in this regard, serving as a dynamic space where individuals can build connections with like-minded peers who share an interest in promoting Indigenous cultures. The research findings suggest that these online communities provide a platform for dialogue and create opportunities for collaboration. Through shared initiatives and projects, members of these digital communities can work together to amplify Indigenous voices, raising awareness and appreciation for their unique contributions to the world. Furthermore, the research emphasizes the transformative power of technology in bridging gaps and connecting people from diverse backgrounds. Digital platforms facilitate the dissemination of information, breaking down geographical barriers and enabling a global audience to engage with Indigenous perspectives. The study reveals that technology catalyzes cultural exchange, promoting a more inclusive and interconnected world.

The research findings highlight the importance of respectful storytelling. Digital platforms serve as a medium through which Indigenous individuals can share their stories authentically, shaping their narratives on their terms. The research suggests that storytelling preserves cultural heritage and challenges stereotypes and misconceptions, fostering a more accurate and nuanced understanding of Indigenous identities.

Fostering Knowledge Sharing and Inclusivity

Research conducted by Indigenous scholars such as Dr. Robin Kimmerer (2013), a botanist and member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation, and Dr. Shawn Wilson (2008), a Cree scholar, have provided compelling evidence on fostering knowledge sharing and inclusivity within Indigenous communities. Their studies highlight how Indigenous knowledge

systems are deeply embedded in traditional oral storytelling and community engagement practices, which are now being revitalized and adapted to the digital age. Platforms like social media and online forums serve as contemporary spaces for Indigenous peoples to share their knowledge, experiences, and perspectives, contributing to a more inclusive dialogue and challenging dominant narratives.

One key finding of this research study highlights the power of social media in dismantling biases and promoting inclusivity. Platforms such as X, Instagram, and Facebook allow individuals from underrepresented groups to showcase their expertise and unique perspectives. These challenge preconceived notions and foster a more inclusive and diverse knowledge landscape. Moreover, the research emphasizes the role of active participation in knowledge sharing. Encouraging individuals to share their insights actively contributes to honouring diverse knowledge and narratives. This participation is crucial in creating a digital environment where many voices can be heard, acknowledged, and appreciated.

This research also underscores the significance of these efforts in preserving and disseminating valuable information. In a digital world that thrives on inclusivity and shared learning, actively sharing knowledge ensures that diverse perspectives are captured and accessible to a broader audience.

8.2.4 Social Media's Role in Indigenous Cultural Revitalization and Empowerment

Cultural Preservation and Representation

Research conducted by Indigenous scholars such as Dr. Kim TallBear (2023; 2017), Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate, and Dr. Cutcha Risling Baldy (2018; 2019), Hupa, Yurok, Karuk shed light on the complexities of Indigenous cultures face in preserving their

authenticity while navigating the digital landscape. TallBear's work on Indigenous genetic research ethics and Risling Baldy's research on decolonizing methodologies highlight the ongoing struggle Indigenous communities face in maintaining control over their cultural narratives amidst the pervasive influence of social media. One significant issue highlighted by these studies is the constant threat of misrepresentation and cultural appropriation, which necessitates a more accurate portrayal of traditional stories, customs, and artworks in museum exhibits and online platforms to counteract misinformation from various sources.

The ubiquity of Indigenous content on social media platforms has intensified concerns surrounding the amalgamation of narratives from distinct regions, potentially diluting the genuine essence of specific cultural stories. The rapid dissemination of information in the digital era raises questions about the accuracy and fidelity of Indigenous representation, as stories and traditions risk being distorted in the process. This phenomenon underscores the importance of navigating the digital landscape with caution to safeguard the integrity of Indigenous cultures and ensure they are treated with respect.

A critical aspect of this research focuses on the impact of misrepresentation on Indigenous communities. It sheds light on how distorted narratives contribute to the erasure of cultural nuances and reinforce stereotypes, perpetuating harmful misconceptions. Moreover, the digital age introduces the risk of cultural commodification, where elements of Indigenous heritage are exploited for commercial gain, further compromising the authenticity of these cultures.

Researchers also examine the role of museums and institutions in perpetuating misrepresentations. While museums play a crucial role in preserving cultural artifacts, a more compassionate approach is needed to ensure accurate contextualization and interpretation. Collaborative efforts between Indigenous communities and museums can

foster a more authentic representation of Indigenous cultures, address historical inaccuracies, and foster a respectful dialogue that honours the richness of these traditions.

In response to these challenges, some Indigenous communities are leveraging digital platforms to reclaim their narratives and counteract misrepresentations. Online initiatives, such as storytelling campaigns, virtual exhibitions curated by Indigenous individuals, and educational content, empower Indigenous voices to take control of their portrayal in the digital realm. This research underscores the importance of amplifying Indigenous perspectives within the digital space to counteract misrepresentation and foster a more accurate understanding of their cultures.

Community Building and Advocacy

In recent years, the intersection of community building and advocacy within Indigenous contexts has gained increasing attention, with social media emerging as a helpful tool. Numerous research studies have delved into the multifaceted impact of social media on Indigenous communities, shedding light on its implications for fostering connections, preserving cultural heritage, and advancing advocacy efforts.

Within the confines of this research study, a thorough exploration into the intricate dynamics of community building and advocacy within Indigenous contexts has been undertaken, specifically focusing on the influence of social media in shaping these phenomena. Compelling insights have emerged, shedding light on the impact of digital platforms on fostering connections, preserving cultural heritage, and advancing advocacy efforts within Indigenous communities.

A significant finding revolves around the influential role of social media in establishing and reinforcing community bonds among Indigenous populations. Digital spaces serve as a virtual meeting ground, enabling individuals from diverse Indigenous

backgrounds to share experiences, celebrate cultural practices, and exchange knowledge. This global connectivity transcends geographical constraints, creating a cohesive network that nurtures a collective sense of identity and pride among Indigenous people. Furthermore, the research underscores the potency of social media as a tool for advocacy within Indigenous causes. Activists and community leaders leverage these platforms to bring attention to pressing issues Indigenous communities face, encompassing environmental challenges, land rights, social justice, and cultural appropriation. The immediacy and global reach of social media amplify the impact of Indigenous advocacy efforts, garnering support and solidarity from a wider audience. However, this study also emphasizes the nuanced and delicate balance required when engaging in community building and advocacy on social media within Indigenous contexts. The findings underscore the paramount importance of responsible advocacy, urging non-Indigenous individuals and organizations to seek consultation with Indigenous communities before sharing content related to their culture. This collaborative approach ensures that advocacy aligns with the community's values, perspectives, and priorities, mitigating the risk of unintended harm or misrepresentation.

Ethical considerations in digital advocacy within Indigenous spaces emerge as a central theme in this research. Issues of consent, ownership, and respectful representation are identified as critical aspects that demand careful navigation. The study contends that recognizing and respecting Indigenous agencies in shaping their narrative on social media is integral to fostering genuine collaboration and establishing sustainable partnerships.

Cultural Revival and Reconnection

Recent studies by Indigenous scholars such as Dr. Jo-Ann Episkenew (2009; 2019), Métis, and Dr. Michelle L. Johnson-Jennings (2018; 2018), Choctaw Nation, have delved into the

transubstantiating power of social media in revitalizing Indigenous cultures. Episkenew's (2009; 2019) work on Indigenous health and wellness and Johnson-Jennings's (2018; 2018) research on Indigenous resilience and community empowerment highlight the significant role of digital platforms in reconnecting Indigenous individuals with their cultural heritage. Through online resources, Indigenous Peoples disconnected from traditional practices are rediscovering, relearning, and incorporating their cultural identities, as demonstrated in their studies and the narratives of Indigenous communities worldwide.

One key observation is the emergence of online communities that serve as virtual hubs for Indigenous people seeking to reconnect with their cultural roots. These digital spaces provide a supportive environment where individuals can share experiences, discuss challenges, and exchange knowledge about traditional practices. This virtual camaraderie is crucial in fostering a sense of belonging and empowerment among those who may have felt isolated from their cultural heritage.

The research underscores the significance of social media as a bridge that spans geographical barriers, enabling cultural knowledge exchange across vast distances. Virtual workshops and tutorials have become powerful tools for transmitting traditional bead work, weaving, and carving skills. Participants in these online learning environments acquire practical skills and engage in a meaningful cultural exchange that transcends physical boundaries. Furthermore, the study illuminates the impact of digital reconnection on individuals' identity formation. Many participants express a heightened sense of pride and connection to their Indigenous identity as they actively engage with and contribute to the online cultural revival movement. This newfound pride catalyzes the revitalization of traditional practices and values in their daily lives.

The findings also highlight the democratizing effect of social media on cultural preservation. The accessibility of online resources allows individuals with diverse backgrounds and experiences to participate in the revival and dissemination of Indigenous culture. This inclusivity fosters a sense of unity and solidarity among Indigenous people, transcending regional and cultural differences.

Interactions Across Cultures

The research findings delve deeper into the multifaceted impact of social media as a bridge between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities, shedding light on the nuanced dynamics of cross-cultural interactions. One noteworthy aspect is the active role of Indigenous Peoples in leveraging social media platforms to share not only their cultural heritage but also their ideals and day-to-day experiences. This intentional sharing catalyzes meaningful conversations that transcend geographical boundaries, allowing for a deeper understanding of the values and perspectives that shape Indigenous societies.

The study further underscores the importance of these cross-cultural dialogues in enriching the overall cultural fabric of society. The exchange of narratives, rituals, and traditions in the digital realm contributes to a tapestry of diversity, fostering an environment where different cultural threads intertwine harmoniously. Through the lens of social media, Indigenous communities become active participants in shaping the broader narrative, challenging stereotypes, and contributing to a more accurate and respectful representation of their heritage.

The observed impact on empathy and fear reduction among individuals with limited exposure to or knowledge of Indigenous cultures is equally significant. The virtual connections established through social media serve as a powerful antidote to misconceptions, allowing for a more humanized understanding of the unique challenges,

triumphs, and daily lives of Indigenous Peoples. As a result, social media emerges as a force for social cohesion, dismantling preconceived notions and fostering a sense of shared humanity.

8.2.5 Indigenous Identity Verification and Diverse Representation

Identity Verification and Digital Challenges

Within the rapidly evolving digital landscape, the imperative to address the intricacies of Indigenous identity verification becomes even more pronounced, underscoring the need for a deeper exploration of the challenges and potential solutions. The burgeoning interest in formulating a robust verification process tailored to Indigenous individuals in the online realm beckons us to delve deeper into the complexities of this issue.

The notion of a community-based verification system, wherein Indigenous communities assume the role of authenticators for their members, presents a compelling avenue. However, as we embark on this path, many challenges come to the forefront, demanding a nuanced approach. The crux of the matter lies in harmonizing the preservation of traditional ways of knowing and being, deeply ingrained in Indigenous cultures, with the demands and opportunities presented by the digital age.

The intersectionality of Indigenous identity and the digital era introduces many obstacles, prompting a careful examination of the most appropriate strategies for the online representation of Indigenous culture. The advent of technology forces us to grapple with the intricacies of safeguarding authenticity while simultaneously navigating the risks of misrepresentation in the virtual realm. The uncertainties surrounding the potential consequences of online identity verification serve as a call to action, compelling us to

critically assess the broader and long-term impacts on Indigenous communities in the future.

As we scrutinize the intricate web of challenges inherent in Indigenous identity verification within the digital landscape, it becomes evident that a delicate, and culturally sensitive, approach is imperative. This requires a holistic understanding of the fragile balance between traditional values and the relentless march of technological advancements. Navigating this complex terrain necessitates addressing the immediate concerns surrounding establishing a verification process and contemplating the broader implications for Indigenous communities in an increasingly interconnected and digitized world.

The exploration of Indigenous identity verification within the digital realm extends beyond a mere technical endeavour; it is a journey into the heart of cultural preservation, community autonomy, and the ethical dimensions of technological integration. The dialogue surrounding this issue must transcend immediate solutions and extend to a visionary consideration of how Indigenous communities can authentically thrive in the evolving digital landscape while upholding the richness of their cultural heritage.

Cultural Representation and Allyship

Research on cultural representation and allyship in the digital realm has highlighted the intricate dynamics of navigating Indigenous cultures online. The reluctance of Indigenous individuals to share certain aspects of their culture on digital platforms, driven by respect for cultural practices and the perspectives of Elders, has emerged as a significant finding. This choice raises a critical question regarding the responsible sharing of Indigenous culture in the online space without unintentionally breaching cultural boundaries.

One key avenue explored in addressing this challenge is the role of allies in the digital landscape. Allies, who are individuals outside the Indigenous community, are

recognized for their potential to contribute significantly to the respectful representation and amplification of Indigenous voices online. Encouraging allies to engage in conversations, speak up on important issues, and actively amplify Indigenous perspectives becomes crucial in fostering a more inclusive digital environment.

A cornerstone of allyship in this context involves the commitment of non-Indigenous individuals to educate themselves about Indigenous cultures. Understanding the nuances, histories, and significance of Indigenous practices and traditions is essential for allies to contribute meaningfully to the online discourse. This proactive education enables allies to contextualize and provide informed perspectives when engaging in discussions related to Indigenous topics.

The research findings underscore the importance of respectful online engagement between Indigenous and non-Indigenous individuals. Collaboration is critical to fostering a more informed and empathetic digital discourse. By working together, both communities can contribute to breaking down misconceptions, addressing stereotypes, and cultivating a better understanding of Indigenous cultures in the digital space.

This research study emphasizes the delicate balance required when representing Indigenous cultures online and the critical role that allies can play in supporting this representation. Through informed education, active amplification of Indigenous voices, and respectful collaboration, a more inclusive and culturally sensitive digital environment can be cultivated, fostering a space where diverse perspectives are valued and respected.

Ethical Concerns and Cultural Preservation

Exploring ethical concerns and cultural preservation in the digital age has unveiled many issues related to Indigenous identity and cultural representation. The advent of the digital sphere has given rise to challenges such as cultural appropriation, the proliferation of

fraudulent websites, and misrepresentations of Indigenous culture, prompting a critical examination of the ethical implications surrounding these phenomena.

Cultural appropriation, wherein elements of Indigenous culture are taken and used by individuals or groups outside of that culture without permission, has become a prevalent issue in the digital realm. The ease of sharing information and the internet's global reach have facilitated the widespread dissemination of Indigenous cultural elements, often divorced from their original context and meaning. This appropriation not only threatens the authenticity of Indigenous cultures but also perpetuates harmful stereotypes and misunderstandings.

Fraudulent websites further compound these ethical concerns, as they may exploit Indigenous cultural symbols, practices, or products for economic gain, often without benefiting the Indigenous communities themselves. This raises questions about intellectual property rights, economic justice, and the responsible use of digital platforms to protect Indigenous heritage.

Misrepresentations of Indigenous culture, whether unintentional or deliberate, contribute to the erasure of diverse Indigenous identities and perpetuate harmful stereotypes. Inaccurate depictions can reinforce biases and misunderstandings, hindering cultural appreciation, understanding, and collaboration efforts.

In response to these challenges, advocates emphasize the importance of implementing more robust platform policies, employing stricter content moderation, and establishing transparent processes for reporting violations. Collaborating with Indigenous communities in developing and enforcing these policies is crucial to ensuring cultural sensitivity and respect.

Authenticity is at the forefront of the call for online responsible representation of Indigenous cultures. Preserving cultural integrity requires accurately portraying Indigenous histories, traditions, and practices. This authenticity fosters a greater understanding of Indigenous cultures and serves as a foundation for preserving their rich heritage.

While recognizing the natural evolution of cultures over time, there is a pressing need to balance embracing growth and innovation and preserving the fundamental aspects of Indigenous history and traditions. Navigating this balance requires ongoing dialogue between digital platforms, content creators, and Indigenous communities to ensure that technological advancements contribute positively to safeguarding cultural diversity.

The ethical concerns surrounding Indigenous identity and cultural representation in the digital sphere underscore the need for a multi-faceted approach. Strengthening platform policies, fostering collaboration with Indigenous communities, emphasizing authenticity, and finding a balance between evolution and preservation are crucial in addressing these challenges and promoting a more respectful and inclusive digital landscape.

The Role of Elders and Knowledge Keepers

The research findings underscore the indispensable role of Elders and Knowledge Keepers in shaping the discourse on Indigenous identity and culture within the contemporary digital landscape. Their wisdom and guidance emerge as crucial elements in navigating complex issues such as identity claims, cultural appropriation, and harmful behaviours that threaten the fabric of Indigenous communities. These revered individuals play a pivotal role in providing cultural guidance, reinforcing traditional values, and acting as beacons that illuminate the path toward cultural preservation.

It is noteworthy, however, that the responsibility for addressing harmful practices within Indigenous communities does not rest solely on the shoulders of Elders. Community

members, whether residing in urban or rural areas or on reserves, are urged to actively engage in this collective effort. Participating in education and awareness programs fosters a broader understanding of Indigenous identity. These initiatives are tools for dispelling misconceptions and fostering an inclusive environment that embraces the rich tapestry of Indigenous identities from the lightest to the darkest hues.

In this collaborative endeavour, the irreplaceable role of Elders and Knowledge Keepers becomes evident. Their continued presence is integral to the preservation and promotion of Indigenous culture. As Elders and Knowledge Keepers guide the way, the collective efforts of Indigenous community members and external allies are essential for cultivating a respectful and enlightened society that honours the diverse and resilient Indigenous identities across the spectrum.

8.2.6 Digital Dynamics of Indigenous Identity and Community Building

Diversity of Indigenous Online Communities

The research study delving into the diversity of Indigenous online communities sheds light on the intricate dynamics and contrasting attitudes prevalent within these digital spaces, particularly on platforms like Facebook. One notable finding is the vast spectrum of perspectives that permeate these virtual environments. On one end, Indigenous communities foster an atmosphere of acceptance and inclusivity, emphasizing the importance of solidarity and shared identity. Conversely, the research highlights the existence of Indigenous groups with more exclusionary tendencies. Such communities often implement stringent membership qualifications, creating virtual spaces that are guarded and limited to specific criteria. This exclusivity can manifest in various forms,

including cultural or ancestral prerequisites that are gatekeepers to community participation.

A noteworthy aspect uncovered by the study is the prevalence of negative discussions within some Indigenous online communities. These discussions often target individuals who attempt to offer help or support, creating an atmosphere that discourages outreach and collaboration. The motives behind these negative interactions may stem from historical mistrust, differing ideological perspectives, or a desire to maintain community autonomy. Furthermore, the research emphasizes the nuanced nature of Indigenous digital spaces, highlighting the coexistence of positive and negative interactions within the same community. This duality underscores the complexity of Indigenous online environments, challenging stereotypes and emphasizing the need to understand community members' diverse attitudes and behaviours.

The multifaceted digital landscape observed in Indigenous online communities suggests a need for preeminent approaches that address these spaces' challenges and opportunities. Researchers and community leaders must recognize and respect the diversity of perspectives, adopting strategies that promote dialogue, understanding, and reconciliation. Additionally, the findings emphasize the importance of considering historical and cultural contexts when interpreting online interactions within Indigenous communities, as these factors play a significant role in shaping the dynamics of virtual spaces.

Challenges and Negative Trends

The research study delving into Indigenous online communities has unearthed several challenges and negative trends that pose potential threats to the constructive nature of these digital spaces. One prominent issue revolves around a concerning pattern wherein specific

individuals actively engage in criticism and attempt to shut down those who genuinely aim to contribute positively. This trend not only obstructs the potential for meaningful dialogue but also disrupts the collaborative atmosphere within Indigenous online communities.

The emergence of these negative trends can be attributed to various factors, including differing perspectives on cultural issues, power dynamics, and even external influences. The challenge lies in understanding and addressing the root causes of such behaviour to foster a more inclusive and supportive online environment.

Privacy concerns represent another substantial challenge identified in the study. While open discourse is crucial for building understanding and community bonds, a delicate balance must be struck between sharing information and respecting individual boundaries. Indigenous individuals may have unique cultural considerations regarding sharing personal experiences and information, making establishing clear guidelines for engagement within these communities imperative.

The fragile nature of these challenges underscores the importance of implementing robust community guidelines and moderation strategies to maintain a healthy online atmosphere. Administrators and community leaders must actively monitor and address instances of negativity and toxicity within these spaces while simultaneously fostering an environment that encourages positive contributions and constructive discussions. Furthermore, addressing these challenges requires a nuanced approach that considers Indigenous communities' diverse cultural backgrounds and experiences. Developing educational initiatives promoting cultural sensitivity and awareness can mitigate conflicts and foster a greater understanding among community members.

Empowerment and Identity Formation

The research study delves into the intricate dynamics of empowerment and identity formation within Indigenous online communities, shedding light on the pivotal role played by silent observers. Often navigating their identity exploration, these individuals find solace and inspiration in their peers' positive and authentic sharing of experiences. The digital landscape, mainly through social media platforms, emerges as a transformative space where silent observers can witness diverse narratives and perspectives, fostering a sense of empowerment and self-discovery.

The significance of social media platforms lies in providing a secure and inclusive environment for individuals to engage with the rich tapestry of Indigenous stories. As silent observers engage with these narratives, they encounter a mosaic of experiences that resonate with their struggles, triumphs, and aspirations. This exposure encourages them to embrace their unique identity journeys and fosters a deeper understanding of their cultural heritage.

One key aspect of empowerment through digital platforms is the ability for individuals to express their identity on their own terms. In contrast to historical misrepresentation, which often distorts or oversimplifies Indigenous narratives, digital spaces enable individuals to control the narrative surrounding their identities. This agency allows for the authentic representation of diverse Indigenous experiences, challenging stereotypes and breaking down preconceived notions. Furthermore, the empowerment derived from these digital interactions extends beyond the virtual realm, influencing real-world attitudes and perceptions. By embracing and honouring their identities, individuals within Indigenous online communities contribute to a collective narrative that counters historical inaccuracies and misrepresentations. This strengthens the communities' bonds

and is a tool for reclaiming cultural narratives and reinforcing the importance of authentic self-representation.

Cultural Exchange and Education

Research findings indicate that Indigenous online communities play a pivotal role in fostering cultural exchange and education, transcending the challenges and complexities associated with their existence. These digital spaces serve as hubs where meaningful cross-cultural interactions occur, facilitating a deeper understanding and appreciation among diverse groups. Social media platforms, particularly Facebook, have become powerful tools for Indigenous individuals and groups to share their rich cultural heritage, histories, and societal contributions.

The significance of these platforms extends beyond mere cultural preservation. They actively contribute to educating both Indigenous and non-Indigenous individuals about the importance of Indigenous cultures and the enduring impact of Indigenous Peoples on the world stage. Engaging content in these digital spaces promotes awareness of unity and shared history, bridging understanding between different communities.

As this research reaffirms, Indigenous online communities represent a captivating mosaic of diverse attitudes and behaviours, ranging from inclusivity to discrimination. These variations in membership criteria and engagement styles highlight the complexity of these digital spaces. Despite challenges related to negative trends that hinder open dialogue, these communities have a unique opportunity for constructive discussions that promote a balance between openness and respecting individual boundaries. Furthermore, the research findings underscore the empowering opportunities for silent observers within Indigenous online communities. These individuals find inspiration and undergo self-discovery through

positive sharing within the digital space. This aspect emphasizes the potential for personal growth and developing a sense of identity and belonging.

Above all, these digital spaces serve as dynamic platforms for self-expression and cross-cultural dialogue in the digital age. The ability to navigate the delicate balance between openness and boundaries is crucial for maintaining the health of these communities. By doing so, Indigenous online communities continue to contribute significantly to cultural exchange, education, and the promotion of understanding and appreciation across cultures. The research highlights the resilience and adaptability of Indigenous online communities in leveraging digital platforms to strengthen connections and share their narratives with a global audience.

8.2.7 The Intersection of Indigenous Culture and Technology

Bridging Generational Gaps and Embracing Technology

The research study delves into the intricate dynamics of bridging generational gaps in the rapidly evolving digital age, shedding light on the transformative role of younger generations in fostering intergenerational collaboration. The findings emphasize that the need to bridge these gaps has become increasingly vital, with the digital realm serving as a focal point for this convergence.

In the current landscape, younger generations, particularly Millennials and Gen Z, are emerging as catalysts of change, leveraging their technological proficiency to assist older generations in embracing and integrating technology into their daily lives. This collaborative effort extends beyond the superficial adoption of gadgets; it signifies a shift toward using technology as a communication, education, and connection tool. The study underscores the unique position of Millennials and Gen Z as digital natives, possessing an

inherent understanding of the digital landscape. These younger cohorts actively engage with and empower older generations, including Elders and older millennials, in navigating the once-unfamiliar terrain of digital tools. Through patient guidance and skillful mentoring, the older demographic gains confidence in utilizing technology, breaking down barriers that may have hindered their participation in the digital revolution.

The research findings illuminate the positive outcomes of this intergenerational collaboration, highlighting technological empowerment as a critical result. As older generations become more proficient in using digital tools, they enhance their capabilities and contribute to a broader societal shift towards digital inclusion. Furthermore, the study emphasizes that this collaboration extends beyond the pragmatic realm of technology adoption. It serves as a conduit for different generations to connect on a deeper level, fostering mutual understanding and respect. Meaningful conversations unfold across the digital landscape, creating a bridge between diverse age groups. The younger generation, in turn, benefits from the wisdom and experience of their older counterparts, creating a symbiotic relationship that transcends technological advancements.

Cultural Preservation and Integration

The research study findings on cultural preservation and integration underscore the critical role of technology in supporting Indigenous communities against the pressures of modernization and globalization. The study reveals that Indigenous communities actively use digital platforms to document and preserve their languages, addressing the threat of language loss in the face of globalization. Furthermore, technology is crucial in promoting and maintaining Indigenous art forms by providing a global stage for artists. Virtual exhibitions, online galleries, and social media platforms enable artists to share their traditional art globally, fostering cross-cultural appreciation and understanding.

The research also highlights that Indigenous communities leverage technology, mainly social media and digital activism, to advocate for cultural rights and social justice. Digital platforms empower Indigenous groups to raise awareness about cultural appropriation, lobby for policy changes, and mobilize support for environmental protection efforts affecting their ancestral lands. Additionally, Indigenous communities are actively utilizing technology to contribute to and advocate for environmental conservation initiatives. Through digital platforms, they raise awareness about environmental threats to their lands and mobilize support for sustainable practices, emphasizing the interconnectedness of cultural preservation and environmental protection.

The study further emphasizes the role of technology in facilitating cross-cultural dialogues and global exchanges between Indigenous communities and the broader international community. Digital platforms serve as a means for Indigenous voices to contribute to a more inclusive global conversation, fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation for the diversity of human cultures. Notably, technology is recognized as an empowering tool for Indigenous communities, enabling them to assert their identities, rights, and contributions globally. The findings underscore acknowledging and respecting Indigenous knowledge systems, contributing to a more inclusive and enriched global cultural landscape.

Indigenous Values and the Digital Age

The intersection of Indigenous values and the digital age presents a complex landscape where traditional beliefs and modern technology coexist. Several key findings have emerged in a research study exploring this dynamic, shedding light on Indigenous communities' challenges and opportunities.

One prominent concern is that technology could potentially erode the sanctity of sacred practices in the digital realm. Participants expressed genuine apprehensions about the impact of technology on cultural elements, fearing that sharing sacred rituals online might compromise their authenticity. This concern underscores the delicate balance that Indigenous communities must strike between embracing technological advancements and safeguarding the sacredness inherent in their cultural practices.

The study also highlights the intricate relationship between Indigenous cultures and digital spaces, prompting crucial questions about alignment with traditional ways of life and the pursuit of self-determination. Participants grapple with the tension between leveraging digital tools for community development and ensuring that these tools do not inadvertently contribute to cultural dilution or appropriation. This tension highlights the need for thoughtful navigation of the digital landscape to align with Indigenous values and aspirations.

Amid these concerns, the research findings recognize the inherent adaptability of Indigenous cultures throughout history, including their capacity to evolve in response to new circumstances, such as the advent of the digital age. While there is a shared acknowledgment of the need to preserve cultural integrity, there is also an understanding that adaptation and innovation have been integral to Indigenous survival and resilience. This nuanced perspective underscores the complexity of the conversation surrounding technological integration and cultural preservation.

The study reveals a diverse range of opinions within Indigenous communities regarding the role of technology in cultural preservation. Some see digital platforms as powerful tools for revitalizing and sharing traditional knowledge, providing a means for cross-generational communication and global networking. Others, however, approach

technology cautiously, emphasizing the importance of maintaining control over the representation and dissemination of their cultural heritage.

Responsible Sharing and Education

The research study's findings underscore the critical importance of responsible sharing and education regarding the delicate intersection of Indigenous cultures and technology. Central to this discussion is the imperative recognition of the paramount significance of respecting cultural protocols and traditions.

Indigenous communities have long-established guidelines prohibiting the dissemination of some aspects of their ceremonial practices on social media platforms. These guidelines are rooted in a deep commitment to preserving the privacy and sanctity of these cultural practices. Our research underscores the urgency for Indigenous and non-Indigenous individuals to uphold and respect these protocols, recognizing them as essential safeguards for the cultural integrity of these communities.

A critical insight from our study is the potential for misinterpretation, harm, and intra-community conflicts arising from the inappropriate sharing of sensitive cultural information. This underscores the need for responsible sharing practices, highlighting the importance of exercising caution and cultural sensitivity when utilizing technology to engage with Indigenous traditions.

As identified in this research, responsible sharing involves a conscientious approach to disseminating information related to Indigenous cultures. This includes a thorough understanding of the cultural protocols in place, the potential impact of sharing specific content, and an awareness of the broader context in which this information is being presented. Education emerges as a powerful tool in promoting responsible sharing, as it empowers individuals to make informed decisions about what to share, when to share, and

how to share. Moreover, our findings emphasize the role of technology as a potent instrument for cultural preservation within Indigenous communities. However, wielding this tool with sensitivity and respect for traditional values is crucial. Technology, while offering unprecedented opportunities for documentation and dissemination, also carries the risk of diluting the authenticity of cultural practices. Thus, our research underscores the need for a balanced approach that harnesses the power of technology without compromising the sanctity of Indigenous traditions.

8.2.8 Navigating the Complex Digital Landscape for Indigenous Peoples

Online Safety and Authenticity

Research on online safety and authenticity, particularly concerning vulnerable communities like Indigenous individuals, reveals the critical need for heightened awareness and protective measures in the digital age. Indigenous communities face unique challenges, with targeted threats and harassment posing severe risks in the virtual realm. The findings underscore the importance of addressing these issues to foster a secure online environment.

One key aspect highlighted in the study is the insidious nature of threats faced by Indigenous individuals online. These threats often exploit vulnerabilities associated with one's indigeneity, making recognizing and countering such risks imperative. The research emphasizes that online safety measures must be tailored to address the challenges and nuances Indigenous Peoples face in the digital space.

The study underscores the significance of authentic self-presentation as a crucial element in navigating the online landscape. Indigenous Peoples, like any other community, deserve the right to express themselves genuinely without the constant fear of deception or

harm. Creating an online space that encourages authentic self-expression is fundamental to promoting inclusivity and diversity.

The research findings advocate for a three-pronged approach: vigilance, verification, and protection to ensure a safe and authentic online presence. Vigilance involves staying alert to potential threats and proactively identifying and mitigating risks. Verification stresses the need for robust mechanisms to confirm the authenticity of individuals and information online. This is particularly important in combating impersonation and scams targeting Indigenous communities. Protection involves implementing measures that safeguard individuals from harm and harassment, fostering a secure environment that allows for open expression without fear.

Meaningful Connections and Engagement

The research study delves into the significance of meaningful connections and engagement in the digital era, where the online space is inundated with constant information. In a world characterized by digital noise, pursuing meaningful online interactions is highlighted as desirable and crucial for personal and collective well-being.

The findings underscore the transformative potential of curating a positive and supportive online environment. Contrary to the passive act of mere scrolling, the study suggests that fostering meaningful connections and engagement can turn the online platform into a space for personal growth and community building. This transformation is a powerful antidote to the digital landscape's often overwhelming and chaotic nature.

Central to the research is the notion that meaningful interactions are grounded in content that resonates with individuals' values. The study emphasizes the importance of aligning digital experiences with personal beliefs and preferences, creating a sense of

authenticity and relevance in online engagements. Focusing on content that matters to users makes the online environment more meaningful and enriching.

The study advocates for active listening and respectful conversations to cultivate meaningful connections online. It suggests that the deliberate and mindful exchange of ideas, experiences, and perspectives contributes to a more fulfilling digital experience. By prioritizing genuine engagement with others, individuals can move beyond the superficiality that often dominates online interactions, fostering a greater sense of connection and understanding.

In a landscape where superficiality can prevail, the research findings highlight the substantial value of meaningful connections. These connections are portrayed as providing depth and fulfillment in our digital lives, challenging the prevailing trend of fleeting and shallow online engagements. The study suggests that prioritizing and nurturing meaningful interactions can lead to a more positive, constructive, and emotionally satisfying online experience for individuals and communities alike. Ultimately, it calls for a shift in the digital culture towards valuing quality over quantity in online interactions.

Generational Perspectives and Values

The research study sheds light on the nuanced dynamics of generational perspectives and values within Indigenous communities concerning social media and online interactions. Recognizing these differences becomes paramount for effectively navigating the digital landscape, considering the diverse ways different generations engage with and perceive the online world.

The study underscores a common thread beneath these generational divides—the significance of individual values and personal growth. It reveals that Indigenous individuals, much like people from various backgrounds, highly value the ability to define

themselves on their terms. This self-definition is deeply rooted in their unique cultural values and experiences, highlighting the importance of cultural identity in shaping online behaviour.

The findings emphasize that for Indigenous communities, engaging with social media is not merely a technological activity but a means of preserving and expressing their identity. This identity is intricately woven into the fabric of their cultural heritage, contributing to the rich tapestry of voices in the online world. The study suggests that the digital age provides a platform for Indigenous individuals to amplify their unique perspectives, fostering a more inclusive and diverse online environment.

The research further highlights the resilience and vitality of Indigenous cultures in adapting to the digital age. By staying true to their values and embracing the opportunity to define themselves on their terms, Indigenous communities contribute to the broader discourse in the online world. This approach, rooted in cultural authenticity, becomes a powerful tool for fostering understanding and appreciation across generational lines.

Balanced Online Mindfulness

The research study delves into the crucial concept of balanced online mindfulness, acknowledging the whirlwind of social media and the need for equilibrium in our digital interactions. It emphasizes the significance of maintaining a positive mindset and prioritizing well-being when navigating the complexities of the online world. As the findings highlight, responsible social media use involves actively curating content that uplifts and supports personal growth rather than perpetuating negativity or inducing anxiety.

The study advocates for a paradigm shift in perceiving the online world, emphasizing that it is a powerful tool rather than a master. This perspective is deemed

liberating, encouraging individuals to wield the potential of the digital sphere for positive purposes while remaining mindful of its potential pitfalls. This approach aligns with the understanding that Indigenous Peoples, with their unique historical and cultural context, view their contributions to the digital realm with a nuanced perspective.

As the study revealed, Indigenous individuals grasp the broader context of their engagement in the digital sphere. This awareness underscores the importance of recognizing the online world as reflecting diverse identities and values. By approaching the digital landscape with a balanced perspective, individuals can harness its potential for self-expression and community building while safeguarding their mental and emotional well-being.

In the broader context of the research, the study identifies four key themes that encapsulate the experiences of Indigenous individuals in the digital realm. These include online safety and authenticity, meaningful connections and engagement, generational perspectives and values, and the overarching theme of balanced online mindfulness. Each theme addresses challenges and opportunities Indigenous communities face, highlighting the need for a deeper understanding of their digital experiences.

8.3 Digital Observations

8.3.1 East Quadrant Observations

In the dynamic realm of social media, particularly on the TikTok platform, a vibrant exploration unfolds, spotlighting how individuals, notably from Indigenous communities, actively affirm and celebrate their identities. Focusing specifically on the #IndigenousPride hashtag, this exploration delves into the content creators who use the platform to share their narratives, celebrate their cultures, and foster a sense of community. The engagement

metrics, encompassing likes, comments, saves, and shares, paint a vivid picture of the resonance of Indigenous content within the digital realm. This analysis challenges conventional assumptions about audience interaction and sheds light on the multifaceted ways TikTok serves as a tool for affirming Indigenous identity. Through examining various content creators and their comment sections, we unravel the digital birth and renewal of Indigenous narratives, showcasing how these platforms contribute to cultural resilience, understanding, and pride in the digital age. Furthermore, the cross-cutting themes that emerge from these analyses highlight the transformative potential of digital spaces in fostering a more inclusive and interconnected world where Indigenous voices play a vital role in shaping the narrative landscape.

Relevance to Affirmation of Identity

The TikTok data, specifically focusing on engagement metrics under the #IndigenousPride hashtag, illustrates how social media actively contributes to affirming Indigenous identity. The substantial likes, comments, saves, and shares on various videos testify to Indigenous content's robust engagement and resonance within the digital space. For instance, consider Andrian Makhnachov's (*makhnachov*) 50-second video amassing 21K hearts and Elsie Paul's (*elsiepaul*) 174-second video earning 70.1K hearts. These instances challenge preconceived notions about the assumed correlation between video duration and audience interaction. Furthermore, the follower counts of influential content creators like Sherry McKay (*sherry.mckay*), with 630.4K followers and Luke Capasso (*lukecapasso*), with 579.2K followers, highlight their significant roles in amplifying Indigenous voices. The strategic use of the #IndigenousPride hashtag emerges as a powerful tool, fostering a

unified digital space where Indigenous identity is expressed, collectively affirmed, and celebrated.

A consistent theme across various Indigenous content creators' videos is the affirmation of identity, which is evident in the comment sections. The digital landscape is a dynamic platform for individuals to express, explore, and celebrate their Indigenous identity. For example, in Andrian Makhnachov's (*makhnachov*) Handmade Moccasins video, comments showcase a rich tapestry of Indigenous identities, with individuals proudly declaring their specific nations. This contributes to honouring unique identities within the Indigenous community and highlights positive engagement and offers of handmade items, fostering unity and cultural exchange. This, in turn, deepens the understanding and appreciation of Indigenous cultures in the digital space.

Sherry McKay's (*sherry.mckay*) content resonated with viewers, expressing a connection to their ancestors and shared cultural heritage, emphasizing unity within the Indigenous community. The comment section became a space for individuals to share personal stories, creating a sense of communal experience and support. This plays a pivotal role in affirming individual and collective identities, emphasizing the importance of a supportive digital community.

As seen in the comment section, Aïcha Bastien-N'Diaye's (aichella) exploration of Indigenous identity emphasizes embracing diverse identities. Rejecting the notion that individuals must "choose a side" affirms multifaceted identities within the Indigenous community. Additionally, the comment section serves as a platform for social advocacy, addressing the need for more inclusive representation and respectful discussions about identity.

In Elsie Paul's (*elsiepaul*) Indigenous wisdom videos, comments express gratitude for the opportunity to connect with Indigenous wisdom, contributing to a shared sense of identity and cultural appreciation. The impact of Indigenous teachings on viewers' spiritual growth is evident, reinforcing a connection to their cultural identity.

Tegan Smallwood's (*Xxtegansmallwoodxx*) spoken word poetry video's comment section celebrates Indigenous identity, with viewers expressing admiration for the artist's talent and the cultural richness of the performance. Notably, there is a desire to use the video for educational purposes, showcasing the potential for Indigenous narratives to contribute to identity affirmation and cultural education. In Luke Capasso's (*lukecapasso*) Indigenous history content, the comment section becomes a dynamic space where individuals proudly declare their tribal affiliations, fostering a sense of unity and understanding. The expressed desire to use the content for educational purposes further emphasizes the role of Indigenous storytelling in shaping identity narratives. The comments across these Indigenous content creators' videos collectively contribute to the affirmation of identity by fostering a sense of unity, honouring diversity, and providing a platform for exploring and expressing Indigenous identities.

Relevance to Digital Birth and Renewal

Examining the TikTok data within the context of digital birth and renewal offers insights into how the East Quadrant themes materialize in the digital realm. The engagement metrics indicate an ongoing quest for understanding Indigenous identity. For instance, the 4,638 saves for Tegan Smallwood's (*Xxtegansmallwoodxx*) 128-second video and the 4,643 shares for Elsie Paul's (*elsiepaul*) video highlight the enduring value and widespread resonance of certain #IndigenousPride content, symbolizing a continual birth and renewal of narratives within the digital landscape. Moreover, the diverse engagement strategies of

content creators, reflected in the number of followers, likes, and comments, signify a dynamic and ongoing dialogue. The digital realm, epitomized by platforms like TikTok, becomes a fresh start for Indigenous narratives and expressions. It provides a transformative space where Indigenous individuals can redefine and shape their stories, fostering a sense of continuity and renewal within the digital landscape. The #IndigenousPride hashtag, a digital rallying point, symbolizes the perpetual rebirth of Indigenous narratives, contributing to cultural resilience, understanding, and pride.

Exploring various Indigenous content creators on digital platforms uncovers a rich tapestry of discussions, interactions, and themes contributing to the broader conversation on identity, culture, and community in the digital age. Analyzing comment sections under these creators' videos provides insights into how individuals engage with and celebrate their Indigenous heritage.

Several cross-cutting themes emerge across these analyses, highlighting common threads that define the digital experiences of Indigenous communities. One prevalent theme is the celebration of cultural pride and identity. Viewers express pride in their heritage, share their tribal affiliations, and celebrate the diversity within the Indigenous community. This collective celebration underscores the significance of digital platforms in providing spaces for cultural affirmation and representation.

Another recurring theme is educational interest, which is evident in many comment sections. Viewers desire to accurately represent and understand Indigenous history and culture, indicating a hunger for knowledge-sharing and education. Digital spaces become arenas for cultural celebration and platforms for disseminating valuable educational content that challenges stereotypes and fosters a deeper understanding of Indigenous experiences.

Positive engagement and emotional resonance dominate the comment sections, with expressions of gratitude, emotional connection, and admiration for the content creators. The impact of Indigenous storytelling on a personal and emotional level is evident in viewers' testimonials, highlighting the transformative power of narratives in fostering a sense of belonging and connection among the audience.

The comment sections also play a crucial role in community building and support. Individuals share their stories, experiences, and reflections, creating a supportive atmosphere where viewers uplift and validate each other's identities and narratives. The digital landscape becomes a virtual community, fostering connections that transcend geographical and cultural boundaries. Moreover, there is a notable curiosity about the behind-the-scenes aspects of content creation, such as animation processes and software used. This reflects an interest not only in the stories being told but also in the craft and techniques employed. The comment sections become spaces for learning about the creative processes that bring Indigenous narratives to life in the digital sphere.

The analyses underscore the transformative potential of digital platforms in shaping and amplifying Indigenous voices, fostering a sense of community, and facilitating meaningful discussions around identity and culture. The positive engagement, educational aspirations, and cultural celebrations within these comment sections highlight the potential of digital spaces to contribute to a more inclusive and interconnected world. The exploration of the East quadrant of the Medicine Wheel symbolizes a dawn, shedding light on the boundless potential for growth and renewal within these digital landscapes.

8.3.2 South Quadrant Observations

Exploring TikTok interactions under the #IndigenousArt hashtag reveals a captivating narrative that transcends geographical and cultural boundaries. In this digital realm, Indigenous content creators leverage the power of social media platforms to amplify their voices, showcase cultural heritage, and foster connections on a global scale. This analysis delves into the quantitative and qualitative dimensions of user engagement, emphasizing the principles of Digital Bridge and Connectivity and Synergy Between Tradition and Technology. As we navigate through the South quadrant, each video under scrutiny offers a unique lens through which we witness the preservation, self-expression, and empowerment of Indigenous cultures in the dynamic landscape of the digital age.

Digital Bridge and Connectivity

Examining the TikTok interactions under the #IndigenousArt hashtag provides a nuanced understanding of the Digital Bridge and Connectivity principles. James Jones' (*notoriouscree*) video, boasting 4.2 million followers, is a testament to the expansive reach of digital platforms. The engagement metrics, particularly the impressive 7,559 likes and 398 shares, highlight how Indigenous content creators leverage these platforms to transcend temporal and spatial boundaries, connecting with a global audience. In this context, the digital bridge becomes a powerful conduit connecting contemporary lives and Indigenous cultural heritage.

The high follower count of 4.2 million for James Jones (*notoriouscree*) reflects a substantial and dedicated fan base, showcasing the global reach of Indigenous narratives. The impressive engagement metrics, including 7,559 likes and 398 shares, emphasize the platform's role in connecting with a worldwide audience. The digital bridge acts as a

facilitator for the dissemination of Indigenous cultural content, contributing to a sense of interconnectedness on a global scale.

Self-Expression and Preservation

Delving into the realm of self-expression and preservation, the high engagement metrics across the board underline the role of hashtags like #IndigenousArt as potent digital tools. Isabella Segalovich's (*interstellar_isabellar*) video, with 8,357 likes and 1,007 saves, exemplifies the platform's capacity to facilitate creative expression and actively contribute to preserving Indigenous traditions. The depth of user engagement is palpable, with Dey's (*kunaxik*) video garnering an astonishing 2,198 saves. This indicates a collective effort among users to archive and share content related to Indigenous traditions, transforming the digital space into an evolving repository of cultural heritage.

High engagement metrics, including likes and saves, signify the platform's role in facilitating self-expression and preserving Indigenous cultural heritage. Using hashtags like #IndigenousArt creates a digital repository for Indigenous traditions, fostering a sense of continuity and cultural pride. The impressive number of saves (2,198) for Dey's (*kunaxik*) video indicates a collective interest in preserving and sharing content related to Indigenous heritage.

Belonging and Revitalization

In the comments section, a virtual space emerges that fosters a sense of belonging. The engagement metrics, particularly in James Jones' (*notoriouscree*) case with 89 comments, reveal an active dialogue around the content. This digital community formed around #IndigenousArt extends beyond geographical boundaries, contributing to revitalizing Indigenous languages and values. The data demonstrates that the global nature of the

engagement metrics fosters a sense of belonging and cultural connection among users engaging with Indigenous content on TikTok.

The high number of comments (89) on James Jones' (*notoriouscree*) video signifies an active and engaged community, fostering a sense of belonging among users. The virtual space created by the comments section transcends geographical boundaries, contributing to revitalizing Indigenous languages and values. The data showcases the role of digital platforms in building a global community that actively participates in discussions around Indigenous content, fostering a sense of cultural connection.

Synergy Between Tradition and Technology

The video durations and engagement metrics data underscore a resilience, adaptation, and empowerment narrative within the Synergy Between Tradition and Technology. The varying durations, such as Dey's (*kunaxik*) at 304s, suggest a thoughtful adaptation of traditional forms of expression to the digital medium. Not only do Indigenous creators adapt, but they also empower themselves through digital platforms. The high engagement metrics, particularly in James Jones's (*notoriouscree*) case with 7,559 likes and 398 shares, signify the platform's role in empowering Indigenous voices to challenge stereotypes and amplify cultural narratives.

Varied video durations indicate a thoughtful adaptation of traditional forms of expression to the digital medium, showcasing resilience and creativity among Indigenous creators. The engagement metrics, including likes and shares, signify the platform's role in empowering Indigenous voices, challenging stereotypes, and amplifying cultural narratives. The digital bridge becomes a platform for Indigenous empowerment, allowing creators to shape their narratives and challenge preconceptions through engagement metrics.

Preservation of Indigenous Traditions

The data aligns with the synergy between tradition and technology principles in preserving Indigenous traditions. Dey's (*kunaxik*) video, with 2,198 saves, illustrates how users actively participate in archiving content related to Indigenous heritage. Additionally, hashtags like #NativeTikTok further emphasize the role of digital tools in creating a space for Indigenous voices, actively contributing to preserving and honouring cultural heritage. As depicted by the data, the digital landscape becomes a dynamic and evolving canvas for the enduring legacy of Indigenous traditions.

The impressive number of saves (2,198) for Dey's (*kunaxik*) video indicates a collective effort in archiving and preserving content related to Indigenous heritage. Hashtags like #NativeTikTok actively contribute to both preserving and honouring cultural heritage, creating a dynamic and evolving canvas in the digital landscape. The digital platform becomes a space where Indigenous voices actively preserve their traditions, contributing to the broader narrative of cultural continuity.

TikTok interactions under the #IndigenousArt hashtag exemplify the principles of Digital Bridge and Connectivity and Synergy Between Tradition and Technology and underscore the impact of digital platforms on the preservation, expression, and empowerment of Indigenous cultures. The data provides a rich tapestry of user engagement, showcasing the transformative potential of these platforms in fostering connections, preserving traditions, and amplifying Indigenous voices on a global scale.

As we traversed the South quadrant, this exploration unfolded the myriad dimensions of growth, creativity, and relationships in the digital realm. These themes are intricately woven into Indigenous Peoples' experiences as they navigate the dynamic

landscape of social media, shaping their identities, building connections, and honouring their enduring cultures.

8.3.3 West Quadrant Observations

Exploring Indigenous digital spaces within the #Decolonize movement unveils a nuanced tapestry of challenges, opportunities, and the delicate interplay between technology and tradition. This analysis delves into the features and metrics of TikTok videos in the West Quadrant, focusing on the multifaceted issues Indigenous Peoples face in the digital realm. Through quantitative data and qualitative insights, we examine the engagement dynamics, shedding light on the complexities of navigating digital challenges and striking a balance between technology and tradition. The observations underscore the digital frontier's positive facets, exemplified by influential creators like *Indigenous Insights* (*indigenousinsights*), and emphasize the responsibilities and considerations inherent in leveraging technology for cultural expression. As we unravel the layers of online identity, empowerment, and activism, this analysis aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of Indigenous narratives in the digital age, advocating for a future characterized by respect, empowerment, and healing within the digital landscape.

Navigating Digital Challenges

Analyzing TikTok video metrics within the #Decolonize context provides crucial insights into the challenges and opportunities that Indigenous Peoples navigate in the digital age. The substantial engagement metrics, particularly evident in the impressive numbers associated with Indigenous Insights' (*indigenousinsights*) videos, underscore the positive facets of the digital frontier. Social media platforms, like TikTok, serve as powerful tools for education, empowerment, and activism within Indigenous communities. The varying

levels of engagement also shed light on the nuanced landscape of online identity, where specific content creators face both positive attention and potential challenges. For instance, Vanessa Brousseau (*resilientinuk*) consistently receives many hearts, indicating a stable and engaged community. However, Indigenous Insights' (*indigenousinsights*) videos stand out and have remarkably high engagement across all metrics. The fourth video, in particular, amassed 173.4K hearts, 1919 comments, 21.9K saves, and 1707 shares, suggesting a deep resonance with the audience. This level of engagement implies that Indigenous individuals should be equipped with strategies to navigate the potential risks associated with increased visibility while leveraging digital spaces for advocacy.

The data underscores the need for Indigenous individuals to balance their digital presence, recognizing that heightened visibility comes with both opportunities for positive impact and potential challenges. Strategies for navigating the digital landscape should foster positive engagement while addressing potential risks associated with increased visibility, ensuring a holistic approach to online identity.

One notable aspect of Indigenous engagement in the digital space is the dual nature of positive and challenging attention that Indigenous content creators might experience. While the data indicates strong support and resonance, there is an inherent responsibility to navigate potential pitfalls with increased visibility. This observation emphasizes the importance of equipping Indigenous individuals with the tools and strategies to manage the complexities of digital engagement while preserving the authenticity and intent of their narratives.

Balancing Technology and Tradition

The data illustrates the transformative power of social media platforms in education, empowerment, and activism and raises questions about the delicate balance between

technology and tradition. The positive engagement metrics showcase the impact of Indigenous social media engagement as a means of expression and a tool for fostering community and positive change. However, it is crucial to recognize that this digital engagement occurs within the context of historical injustices.

In exploring the transformative power of technology, it is essential to remain aware of the need to preserve and respect Indigenous cultural practices and traditions. The analyzed data emphasizes how technology, especially on platforms like TikTok, serves as a form of cultural expression, offering a space for Indigenous voices to thrive and advocate. The positive engagement metrics highlight that technology can be leveraged for advancement while respecting and preserving traditions.

By recognizing Indigenous social media engagement as a dynamic force for cultural expression, the data underscores the importance of balancing leveraging technology for positive change and remaining rooted in historical and cultural contexts. Indigenous individuals navigating the digital age are amplifying their voices and actively contributing to the ongoing dialogue about how technology can empower them while respecting their traditions. The specific engagement metrics from the chart, such as likes, comments, saves, and shares, further illustrate the depth and impact of this delicate balance in the digital realm.

The data indicates that the positive impact of technology on Indigenous engagement is intertwined with a responsibility to preserve and respect cultural traditions. As Indigenous voices amplify through digital platforms, there is a simultaneous acknowledgment of the historical context that shapes their narratives. Striking a balance between technological advancement and cultural preservation is essential for ensuring a harmonious and respectful representation of Indigenous identity in the digital age.

Furthermore, the data highlights the multifaceted nature of Indigenous engagement with technology, showcasing how it is a powerful tool for cultural expression. The positive engagement metrics demonstrate that the digital realm serves as a dynamic space for Indigenous voices to thrive and advocate for positive change while maintaining a solid connection to their cultural heritage.

The West quadrant invited us to candidly discourse about the complexities of Indigenous digital presence, acknowledging historical challenges while advocating for a future imbued with understanding, transformation, and healing.

These observations highlight the dynamic interplay between technology and tradition within the #Decolonize movement, emphasizing the need for a careful approach that fosters empowerment while preserving and respecting Indigenous cultural heritage. Indigenous individuals navigating the digital age are not merely amplifying their voices but actively contributing to the ongoing dialogue about how technology can be a force for positive change while remaining rooted in historical and cultural contexts. The delicate balance observed in engagement metrics underscores the importance of recognizing the Indigenous digital presence's multifaceted challenges and opportunities, paving the way for a more informed and inclusive digital landscape.

8.3.4 North Quadrant Observations

The data from TikTok videos under the #IndigenousPeoplesDay hashtag offers insights into engagement, advocacy, and the empowerment of Indigenous voices. It not only unveils the delicate interplay between online engagement and personal life but also highlights the pivotal role of social media in cultural involvement and activism. Additionally, the ethical

use of technology emerges as a central theme, emphasizing the responsibility of content creators to align their practices with Indigenous values and ethics.

Fostering Indigenous Online Community Engagement and Advocacy

Delving into the engagement metrics, such as comment counts and follower interactions, reveals critical indicators of how effectively creators nurture online community engagement within Indigenous contexts. The vibrant online conversations observed in videos by Brett Mooswa (*brettstoise*), Nana Tuckit (*Nanatuckit*), and Selena (*taino_indigenous*), mainly through high comment counts, suggest a thriving digital space centered around Indigenous issues, culture, and identity. This engagement fosters a sense of community and provides a vital platform for individuals to share experiences, perspectives, and advocacy efforts related to Indigenous Peoples' Day. Notably, creators with substantial followings, such as The Daily Show, possess the potential to amplify advocacy messages to a broader audience. For instance, Brett Mooswa's (*brettstoise*) videos generate lively discussions, creating a digital community dedicated to Indigenous topics. Nana Tuckit's (*Nanatuckit*), active comment section indicates a space for sharing diverse experiences and perspectives. Selena's (*taino_indigenous*) engagement reflects a platform for focused advocacy efforts and discussions on Indigenous identity.

Social Media's Role: Identity, Activism, Ethics

The high heart, save, and share count unveils the resonance of content with the audience, indicating the significance of social media in cultural involvement and identity expression within Indigenous communities. Videos garnering substantial engagement contribute to a broader narrative of Indigenous identity in the digital era. Moreover, the data underscores the instrumental role of hashtags like #IndigenousPeoplesDay as tools for shaping and amplifying Indigenous narratives. Ethical considerations emerge as creators utilize

technology to share cultural expression and advocate for social causes, emphasizing the importance of respectful and responsible digital practices.

High heart counts and shares signify positive resonance and contribute to a rich and multifaceted narrative of Indigenous identity. The strategic use of hashtags, especially #IndigenousPeoplesDay, plays a pivotal role in shaping and amplifying Indigenous narratives.

Empowerment of Indigenous Voices

The data becomes a celebration of the significance of Indigenous cultural expression and solidarity in the digital age. Through the engagement and reach of videos under #IndigenousPeoplesDay, figures like Nana Tuckit's (*Nanatuckit*) with a high heart count and Brett Mooswa (*brettstoise*), with extensive sharing exemplify the empowerment of Indigenous voices in the digital space. This empowerment transcends boundaries, fostering cross-cultural learning and connection. The hashtag emerges as a powerful tool, allowing Indigenous voices to be heard, recognized, and celebrated in the broader digital landscape.

Nana Tuckit's (*Nanatuckit*), high heart count is a testament to the empowerment of Indigenous voices, contributing significantly to cross-cultural learning and connection. Brett Mooswa's (*brettstoise*) extensive sharing indicates both reach and the substantial impact of content, further amplifying Indigenous narratives.

Highlighting the Importance of Ethical Technology Use

The analysis distinctly emphasizes the ethical use of technology within Indigenous contexts. It showcases content creators who actively consider their impact regarding engagement metrics and contribute to a positive narrative. The data underscores the responsibility of content creators to use social media platforms ethically, respect cultural

sensitivities, and advocate for Indigenous issues in a manner aligned with Indigenous values and ethics.

Content creators actively shape a positive narrative, highlighting the importance of ethical technology use. The creators' responsibility extends to respecting cultural sensitivities and advocating for Indigenous issues in a manner that upholds Indigenous values and ethics. The dataset derived from TikTok videos under the #IndigenousPeoplesDay hashtag provides insights into online engagement, advocacy efforts, and the empowerment of Indigenous voices in the digital space. It stands as a testament to the transformative power of social media in fostering community, shaping narratives, and contributing to the ongoing dialogue surrounding Indigenous identity, culture, and activism in the digital age.

These observations reveal that the North quadrant beckons us to explore the nuances of nurturing online community engagement and advocacy. Here, Indigenous voices are amplified and contribute to cross-cultural learning and connection. The ethical use of technology emerges as a cornerstone, championing responsible practices that align with Indigenous values. This quadrant, therefore, underscores the significance of Indigenous cultural expression and solidarity, making it an integral part of wisdom-sharing and healing within Indigenous communities.

8.4 Conclusion and Final Reflections

In the expansive realm of digital platforms, Indigenous communities embark on a multifaceted journey, navigating a complex terrain where cultural preservation, advocacy, and identity exploration intertwine. These virtual spaces serve as dynamic forums where tradition and modernity intersect, fostering a vibrant exchange of ideas and practices.

However, tensions, challenges, and promises to emerge within this digital landscape, shaping Indigenous Peoples' experiences in many ways.

One of the foremost challenges Indigenous communities faces in digital environments is the tension between preserving cultural authenticity and adapting to Western-centric platforms. For instance, social media platforms offer unprecedented cultural expression and celebration opportunities. However, there is a risk of misrepresentation and appropriation, where Indigenous cultures may be inaccurately portrayed or exploited for profit. This tension underscores the delicate balance Indigenous individuals must strike between sharing culture authentically and safeguarding it from exploitation.

Despite these challenges, digital spaces promise empowerment for Indigenous communities. Social media platforms, for example, serve as catalysts for cultural resurgence, agency, and solidarity. Many participants in this research have highlighted how these platforms empower Indigenous individuals by amplifying their voices and instilling confidence. Movements such as the "Standoff" in North Dakota demonstrate how digital platforms mobilize Indigenous communities for causes like environmental protection and Indigenous rights, showcasing the potential for collective action and advocacy in the digital age.

Amidst the promises of digital empowerment, ethical considerations loom large, demanding careful attention and conscientious action. As emphasized in our discussions, ethical storytelling and cultural sensitivity are paramount, necessitating collaboration between platforms and Indigenous communities. By fostering an environment where Indigenous identities are honoured and respected, online platforms can become agents of positive change, ushering in an era of mutual understanding and cultural appreciation.

Initiatives prioritizing Indigenous representation and collaboration with Indigenous leaders can contribute to a more inclusive digital landscape, addressing concerns about misrepresentation and exploitation while promoting cultural authenticity and respect.

Ultimately, digital spaces emerge as vital ecosystems for nurturing Indigenous identity, offering fertile ground for cultural preservation, advocacy, and empowerment. As Indigenous communities navigate the complexities of digital environments, they shape the trajectory of the future while reclaiming their past. Through ongoing dialogue, collaboration, and engagement, digital platforms become vehicles for Indigenous resurgence and cultural revitalization in the digital age, enriching the global discourse with Indigenous Peoples' diverse perspectives and experiences.

My Personal Reflections

As a researcher, immersing myself in the intricate dynamics of Indigenous communities in the digital age has transformed my understanding of individual and collective identities.

On a cognitive level, this research has deepened my appreciation for the multifaceted nature of identities within Indigenous contexts. Through meticulous data analysis and qualitative insights, I can now better recognize Indigenous identities' fluidity, complexity, and richness as they intersect with digital technologies. Exploring how Indigenous individuals navigate and negotiate their identities online has broadened my understanding of identity formation, representation, and expression in the digital realm. It has challenged me to move beyond simplistic notions of identity and embrace the nuanced ways in which culture, history, language, and community shape individual and collective identities in Indigenous communities.

Physically, this research journey has demanded intellectual rigour, discipline, and resilience. Engaging with diverse datasets, conducting rigorous analyses, and synthesizing

complex information have honed my analytical skills and expanded my research toolkit. Yet, it has also required me to be physically present and emotionally engaged in the research process – whether through fieldwork, interviews, or immersive data analysis. This embodied engagement has deepened my connection to the research subject and fostered a sense of empathy and solidarity with Indigenous Peoples.

This research has stirred an emotional response within me, evoking empathy, compassion, and humility. Witnessing Indigenous communities' struggles, triumphs, and resilience in digital spaces has touched me and ignited a passion for social justice and cultural preservation. It has challenged me to confront my biases, assumptions, and privileges, prompting me to approach my research with diffidence, sensitivity, and cultural humility. This emotional engagement has fueled my commitment to ethical research practices and community-centred approaches, guiding me to focus on Indigenous voices and experiences in my work.

Spiritually, this research has been a journey of introspection, introspection, and transformation. It has prompted me to reflect on the interconnectedness of all living beings and the sacredness of Indigenous knowledge systems. Engaging with Indigenous perspectives on technology, tradition, and community has deepened my veneration for Indigenous ways of knowing and being, inspiring me to approach my research with reverence, reciprocity, and respect. This spiritual awakening has imbued my research journey with a sense of purpose and alignment with my values, guiding me to walk the research path with integrity, authenticity, and approbation for Indigenous wisdom.

As a researcher deeply immersed in exploring Indigenous communities within digital realms, I see this research as a beacon guiding us toward a future where Indigenous voices are heard, valued, and respected in digital spaces. The impact of this research

extends far beyond academia; it resonates with the essence of societal transformation and cultural revitalization.

Looking ahead, I foresee this research fostering shifts in how we perceive and interact with digital platforms, particularly concerning Indigenous representation and participation. It can catalyze a paradigm shift, where Indigenous knowledge systems, languages, and cultural practices are preserved, celebrated, and integrated into the fabric of the digital landscape. Moreover, I anticipate this research igniting broader conversations about identity within Indigenous communities and across diverse cultural contexts. By delving into the complexities of digital identities and the interplay between tradition and technology, this research invites us to reconsider our understanding of identity in the digital age, challenging us to embrace a more inclusive and nuanced perspective.

At its core, this research inculcates reconciliation, empowerment, and healing. It invites us to confront historical injustices, acknowledge the ongoing impacts of colonization, and work toward a future characterized by mutual respect, understanding, and solidarity. Through collaborative efforts and meaningful engagement with Indigenous communities, this research has the potential to lay the groundwork for a more equitable and just society, both online and offline.

In essence, the trajectory of this research is marked by its unwavering commitment to amplifying Indigenous voices, preserving cultural heritage, and advocating for Indigenous rights. As we journey forward, guided by the insights gleaned from this research, we can co-create a digital landscape that reflects the diversity, resilience, and beauty of Indigenous cultures, paving the way for a brighter, more inclusive future for future generations. Furthermore, while online communities may differ in their dynamics and structures from their offline counterparts, there is a striking sense of shared

circumstances and issues mirrored in both instances. This recognition underscores the importance of addressing common challenges Indigenous communities face, whether in digital spaces or in-person gatherings, fostering a holistic approach to community building and empowerment.

As I continue this research journey, my dedication to fostering reciprocity within Indigenous communities and digital spaces remains unwavering. The ongoing evolution of the conversations this research sparked mirrors my evolving involvement. My commitment to addressing the pressing issues Indigenous Peoples face in digital environments drives my continued research and interest in this work. Moreover, I am steadfast in my dedication to sharing the findings and insights gleaned from this research with Indigenous communities, ensuring that the voices and experiences of participants are honoured and respected. By engaging in ongoing dialogue and collaboration, I aim to contribute to the collective efforts towards promoting cultural preservation, advocacy, and empowerment within Indigenous communities online and offline.

The generous contributions of participants have enriched this study with diverse perspectives, insights, and experiences. Moving forward, I remain committed to upholding the principles of reciprocity by ensuring that the findings of this research are shared back with the communities that have graciously shared their knowledge. This involves disseminating research outcomes through accessible channels, such as community presentations, reports, and publications while maintaining ongoing dialogue to ensure the research remains relevant and beneficial to Indigenous communities. Furthermore, I recognize that our connection extends beyond this research project; it is a bond forged through mutual respect and shared goals. As we continue on our respective paths, I am grateful for the connections made during this research journey. I eagerly anticipate

nurturing these relationships as we work together toward mutual empowerment and advancement.

This research has expanded my academic understanding of identities and impacted me personally, embodied, emotionally, and spiritually. It has challenged me to rethink my assumptions, interrogate my privileges, and cultivate empathy and solidarity with Indigenous Peoples. Moving forward, I am committed to continuing this journey with humility, empathy, and a deep respect for the complexities and nuances of Indigenous identities in the digital age.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: List of Interview Questions

Interview Information

Questions

General Questions

1. Why did you become involved with social media?
2. What Indigenous groups are you part of?
3. How often do you use social media (i.e., Instagram, TikTok, Facebook)?

Social Media

1. In what ways do you think social media has created opportunities for sharing and preserving Indigenous knowledge and practices?
2. Reflecting on your own experiences and observations, how has social media impacted the sharing and passing down of Indigenous cultural practices and traditions?
3. Reflecting on your own experiences and observations, describe how social media has affected the visibility and representation of Indigenous Peoples and issues, and what impact do you think this has had?
4. In your opinion, what are some practical or effective ways that social media can be used to promote and preserve Indigenous languages and traditions?
5. Reflecting on your experiences, how does social media influence Indigenous communities' interactions with broader society and other cultures?
6. Based on your experiences, what ethical and cultural considerations should Indigenous communities consider when creating and using social media?
7. Reflecting on your own experiences, how has the online representation of Indigenous Peoples, cultures, and issues influenced your thoughts and perceptions?

Online Communities

1. How would you define an online community?
2. How does your understanding of an ‘online community’ impact how you see yourself and others?
3. Can you share an example of a positive experience within a digital community and how it impacted you?
4. If you follow someone on TikTok, what does this mean?
5. Have any virtual groups changed to in-person community meetings, hangouts, etc.?
6. What advice would you give to someone new to social media who may want to start building meaningful connections?

Appendix B: List of Questionnaire Questions

Questionnaire Information

Questions

General Information

1. Why did you become involved with social media?
2. What Indigenous groups are you part of?
3. What social media platforms do you use most frequently for Indigenous purposes (e.g., connecting with other Indigenous Peoples, learning about Indigenous culture and issues, etc.), and why?
4. How frequently do you use social media platforms for Indigenous purposes?
5. How do you use social media to connect with other Indigenous Peoples and communities?
6. How important is social media in shaping your understanding of Indigenous issues and experiences?
7. Have you experienced online harassment or discrimination as an Indigenous person on social media?

Identity Focused

1. Do you believe social media shape and influence Indigenous identity?
2. Has access to social media impacted your understanding of your Indigenous identity?
3. Do you feel that your Indigenous identity is represented accurately on social media?
4. Have you discovered or reconnected with your Indigenous community through social media?
5. Do you think social media has impacted the visibility and representation of Indigenous Peoples and issues?
6. Have you encountered any challenges related to your Indigenous identity on social media?
7. How do you perceive the role of social media in shaping and influencing Indigenous identity?

Community Focused

8. Have you participated in digital ceremonies, rituals, or cultural events in an Indigenous digital community?
9. Are social media useful in sharing and learning about Indigenous history and cultural heritage?
10. Do you believe social media have facilitated the resurgence of Indigenous cultural practices and traditions?
11. Do you believe social media positively or negatively impacted Indigenous community connections and relationships?
12. Do social media affect the transmission of Indigenous knowledge, values, and culture to future generations?
13. Do social media influence how Indigenous communities engage with the broader society and other cultures?

Appendix C: Informed Consent Information

Informed Consent

Title of Research: The Resurgence of Urban Indigenous Identities & Contemporary Understandings of Community in Digital Spaces

Primary Researcher:
Shane Young, BSW, MSW (he/him)
PhD Candidate, Chanie Wenjack School of Indigenous Studies, Trent University
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Researcher's Supervisor:
David Newhouse
Director & Professor Indigenous Studies, Chanie Wenjack School for Indigenous Studies, Trent University
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Purpose of the Research
In contemporary realities, digital spaces have influenced our ability to explore the world around us. Digital space refers to the virtual environments and online platforms within the digital realm, such as the internet, social media, and mobile applications. For a mutual understanding, digital spaces in this research study will refer specifically to social media. These spaces can be used for various purposes: communication, commerce, entertainment, and information sharing. They allow individuals and organizations to connect, collaborate, and share information and resources in previously impossible ways.

Through digital spaces, mainly social media, there has been an increase in the exploration of personhood and the complexities of their identities (including intersectionality and relation to place). These efforts have led to the resurgence of Indigenous identities, which is undoubtedly a political act of decolonization, concrete actions in which peoples (and communities) exercise their self-determination by reclaiming their voice and presentation of self.

In this respect, this research will explore how digital spaces (TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook) conceptualize and impact Indigenous individual and collective identity production, maintenance, and resurgence. Exploring and assessing the role of such digital spaces will offer insight into current practices in Indigenous identity revitalization projects and new perspectives on how to best support Indigenous futures.

Please note that this research is expected to be the PhD dissertation of the researcher, Shane Young. The research may also lead to additional scholarly publications, presentations at academic conferences, or other related products. However, the main output of this research will be the dissertation, which will be based on the data collected from the study participants.

What You Will Be Asked to Do in the Research
Participants can participate in this study through a 1-on-1 interview, a questionnaire, or both. The decision to participate in one or both ways is up to the participant and depends on their availability and preferences. Participants must refer to the "Form of Participation" section below to indicate their preference.

If participating in a 1-on-1 interview, participants will be asked to participate in one virtual 1-on-1 interview with the primary researcher for 60-90 minutes (scheduling will be based on participant availability). The interview questions will outline a nuanced capture of the participant's engagement with social media (TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook) and how it influences their understanding of self, identity, and community.

If participating in a questionnaire, the time commitment for participants will vary but is estimated to take 30-40 minutes. The questionnaire will consist of 20-25 multi-choice and short-answer questions, outlining a general sense of participant engagement with social media and how it influences their understanding of self, identity, and community. The questionnaire will be completed online, and participants can complete it according to their schedules.

Compensation
Participants will receive a $50 gift card for an interview or a $20 gift card for a questionnaire. Compensation will be issued electronically to the participant's email address (provided below) within 48 hours following the interview or questionnaire.

Once the consent form is completed and the questionnaire or interview has started, the participant will be eligible for compensation. All participants will be issued full compensation for their time, regardless of if they choose to withdraw from the study at any time.

Potential Conflicts of Interest
The researcher conducting this study declares that they have no known conflicts of interest that could impact their ability to conduct this research objectively and impartially. This includes any financial, personal, or professional relationships that may influence the outcome of this study.

Use of Data
The data collected in this study will only be used for the specific research purposes to which participants have consented. Any new analyses, comparisons, or questions that arise after the data has been collected will require additional consent from the participants. Participants have the right to decline the use of their data for new purposes, and their wishes will be respected. The researcher is committed to ensuring that the data collected is used only for the intended purposes and with the explicit consent of the participants. Additionally, all data will be stored on a Google Drive (encrypted with password-protected and two-factor authentication).

Participants can gain access to their research data by making a request to the researcher via email at syoung@trentu.ca, who will provide them with a copy of their own data. Moreover, participants can review the data that has been collected about them and ensure that it is accurate and complete. This also allows participants to gain a better understanding of how their data has been used and how their contributions have helped advance knowledge in the field, if desired.

Commercialization of Research
The researcher and participants will jointly own any results from this study. Neither party will receive any financial benefit that might come from the data of this study. The purpose of this research is to generate knowledge and insights that will contribute to a better

understanding of the experiences of individuals in relation to social media and identity formation.

Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal
Participation in the study is entirely voluntary, and you may stop participating at any time. Your decision to stop participating or to refuse to answer questions will not influence your relationship with the researcher or with Trent University now or in the future.

If you wish to withdraw your consent and have your data removed, please do so through one of these methods:

1. Verbally communicating their withdrawal to the researcher during a scheduled interview.
2. Submitting a written request for withdrawal through email at syoung@trentu.ca

The date for the analysis to be complete is estimated to be August 31, 2023. This timeline may change based on the availability of resources and unforeseen circumstances, but the researcher will strive to complete the analysis as efficiently and effectively as possible.

If you withdraw before August 31, 2023, your data will be deleted and, therefore, not used in the analysis of this research study. All data collected from the participants who wish to withdraw before this date will be removed from the dissertation and destroyed from any storage medium.

If you withdraw after August 31, 2023, your data may still be used in anonymous and aggregated form in this research study.

Confidentiality
All information you supply during the research will be held in confidence. Any identifying material will not appear in any research report or publication (unless consent is provided, see below). The researcher will use their student Google Drive (password-protected) to store all research data. Additionally, Google Drive provides encryption to protect your data in transit and at rest. While Google Drive provides strong encryption, the researcher will still take appropriate measures to protect all data by enabling two-factor authentication.

For questionnaires, the researcher acknowledges that the host of the online questionnaire is Qualtrics. Web Application Firewalls protect Qualtrics servers, and Qualtrics employs an Intrusion Detection System (IDS) to monitor system access for unauthorized uses. All communications to and from the Qualtrics servers are encrypted using Transport Layer Security (TLS). Data at rest is also encrypted. For additional security, questionnaires may be password-protected. All responses in Qualtrics will be received via 'anonymized responses,' an option provided by Qualtrics which does not collect any identifying information (such as IP addresses). Moreover, all questions in the questionnaire will seek general information and not request personal or sensitive information such as name, signature, physical address, phone number or date of birth.

Risks and Discomforts
Risk for this study is minimal; however, there may be foreseeable risks or discomforts for participants who agree to participate. The possible risks are psychological with verbalizing one's experiences regarding their Indigeneity and lived/living experiences. Possible discomforts include becoming upset, emotionally overwhelmed, or experiencing anxiety from the process. There may also be other risks that we cannot predict. At times of

discomfort or distress, participants can cease the interview; avail of free support services, such as free counselling services (noted at the end of this form).

Questions About the Research? If you have questions about the research or your role in the study, please contact Shane Young by e-mail (syoung@trentu.ca). This research, REB file number (28313), has received ethics review and approval from Trent University's Research Ethics Board and conforms to the Canadian Tri-Council Research Ethics guidelines. If you have any questions about this process or your rights as a participant in the study, please contact Anna Kisiala, Coordinator, Research Conduct and Reporting, Trent University (telephone 705-748-1011 ext. 7866 or email annakisiala@trentu.ca).

Consent

I have read and fully understand the provided information and have had the opportunity to ask questions. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw at any time without giving a reason. I understand that I will be given a copy of this consent form. I voluntarily hereby consent to participate in this research under the following conditions:

Signature: _____ _____ **Date:** _____

_____
Participant Name (Print):

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

_____
Shane N. Young

Additional Consent

Recording of Interview *(For Interviews Only)*

I consent to the interview being recorded (via Zoom). *Yes* *No*

Please note that if participants choose not to have their interview recorded, the interviewer will take detailed notes during the interview to capture the information discussed. The content of these notes will be kept confidential and only accessed by the primary researcher.

Form of Participation

☐ I consent to participate in a 30-minute questionnaire to be completed online and independently.

AND / OR

☐ I consent to participate in a 60-90 minute virtual 1-on-1 interview with the researcher.

Contact Information for Compensation

Preferred email to receive compensation:

_____

Signature: _____ _____ **Date:** _____

National Crisis Lines
If you are experiencing emotional distress and want to talk, contact the toll-free Hope for Wellness Help Line at 1-855-242-3310 or the online chat at hopeforwellness.ca open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
Talk Suicide Canada: If you are having thoughts of suicide or are worried about someone else, Talk Suicide is here to listen. Connect to a crisis responder for help in English or French without judgment. Call 1-833-456-4566 toll-free, any time – or text 45645 from 4 p.m. to midnight ET.
Canadian Indian Residential Schools Crisis Line - 1 (866) 925 4419 A National Indian Residential School Crisis Line has been set up to provide support for former Residential School students. You can access emotional and crisis referral services by calling 24-Hour National Crisis Line.