

FACE-TO-FACES WORK: AUDIENCE RESPONSE TO FIRST NATIONS SOCIAL MOVEMENT VIDEOS

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Research and partners



- The First Nations Innovation research: <http://fn-innovation-pn.com>

- Four partners, also partners in the First Mile project: <http://firstmile.ca>
 - Keewaytinook Okimakanak (KO) in Ontario
 - First Nations Education Council (FNEC) in Quebec
 - Atlantic Canada's First Nation Help Desk
 - University of New Brunswick

- Research since 2006 on broadband networks and ICT in rural and remote First Nations

- Latest phase, First Nations Innovation, to 2017: <http://fn-innovation-pn.com>

First Nations and Alternative Media



- First Nations in Canada have consistently organized themselves and built communities and networks for survival and resistance.
- When possible, they have made use of newspaper, radio, television, and the internet, to help spread “alternative messages” about First Nations and Aboriginal life in Canada to contrast with representations found in pervasive Canadian media.
- Lately, calls to understand the impact of online communications by social movements which seek to challenge these dominant images.

Reception?

- While alternative media may be being produced, questions remain as to how influential those media are to the people who consume the messages.
- Little research on how new online applications can help support First Nations social movements
 - Perley (2009) explores how online videos have been used to represent First Nations women; how these women use this technology to challenge dominant representations.
 - Hancock and O'Donnell (2009) examine the potential for these tools to provide remote and rural First Nations an avenue to challenge dominant representations of First Nation Identity.
- No research found regarding the impact of videos about First Nations that are available online.
- Our work intends to fill this current gap through an exploratory study of reactions to First Nations videos on language preservation.

Theoretical Framework



- Melucci (1996) – alternative media supports community, relations, and collective values within a social movements while also challenging dominate discourse.
- Meyrowitz (1985) – dramaturgy/how new ways in which we transmit and receive information are changing how people must present their ‘selves’ for an audience.
- Hall (1999) – encoding/decoding of visual media messages.

Study Methodology



- Exploratory study regarding the impact of First Nations produced videos
- Analysis of data gathered during a study conducted in Fredericton, NB in 2009 re: how people use video communications in their everyday lives.
- Six videos, shown in a random order, covering three themes: Health information; Information about Fredericton, NB; and First Nations Languages (this analysis concentrates on reactions to videos on First Nations languages).
- 62 participants recruited (50% male; 50% female). Ages 18-34 (43%); 35-54 (31%); 55+ (26%). Higher-than-average level of formal education.
- All were required to have seen online videos in the past.

Methodology con't

- Phases:
 - Survey scored on a 5-point Likert scale before viewing videos regarding levels of interest in and knowledge about the themes of the study.
 - Of 62 participants, 74% reported interest in First Nations issues; 40% considered themselves knowledgeable about Native languages as an issue for First Nations; and 29% had strong opinions on Native languages.
 - Participants viewed the six randomly ordered short videos on the three themes.
 - 30 of the survey participants also participated in structured interviews, which included questions regarding the videos they had just watched.
- This present study presents some common themes which emerged from the survey and interview phases.

Nova Scotia Mi'qmaq Elder: how ICT can both support and erode First Nations languages.

- Video is a taping of an interview conducted by a graduate student with a Mi'qmaq Elder. The only significant edits were to highlight key moments of the interview.
- Excerpt: “... *using technology to preserve the language, there's a positive in that, because you can record that and preserve it in packages and you know it's always there, it's not lost until such time as it deteriorates into nothingness which I hope never happens... I think at the same time I want to point my finger at technology and say 'hey you, because of you I am losing my language.'* I think technology, the way it is today, you've got television and it's all in English. You turn on your computer and everything in the computer is in the English language and if you try to put in a few things in the Mi'qmaq language, it won't go anywhere, so it's of no use. So if I want to use the computer I have to use the English language, if I watch television, it's all in the English language, if I go to my school it's all in the English language. But I think basically, technology is not helping me to preserve my language and promote my language. It's, as a matter of fact, it is hindering my language.”
- Participant responses: two-thirds found the video interesting (62%); less than half felt a connection to the person in the video (46%), that the video influenced their opinion (40%), or felt they learned something from the video (40%); less than a third would recommend the video to others (32%).
- Interview response ranged widely: e.g., one cited significant interest in the Elder's case, while another said “...too bad.”

“Sharing Native Language Resources by Videoconferencing in Remote Communities.”

- This video documents how videoconferencing technology enabled a workshop held by an Oji-Cree language center in Northern Ontario, as well as how people are working together to preserve the Oji-Cree language with ICTs. Edited by Cal Kenny.
- Excerpt: *“Language is the core of our culture. Our language enables us to express who we are as a people. Our language is a vehicle for passing on our culture to our children. [Cut to interview] ‘We are losing our language and we need to research and be able to sit down with the old people and say ‘how do we say this,’ and ‘why do we say that.’ And ‘where did it come from.’ And be able to document and record what the old people have to say about that.”*
- Overwhelmingly positive response: 90% thought the Oji-Cree video was interesting (62% for the Elder video); 66% felt a sense of connection to the people in the video (46% for the Elder video); 71% said the video influenced their opinion (40% for the Elder video); 89% said they learned something from the video (40% for the Elder video); and 85% would recommend the videos to others (32% for the Elder video).
- One participant enjoyed that the video provided a snapshot of the issues regarding language preservation. Another who reported interest noted he wanted to “learn more about the writing system used for aboriginal languages in Canada.”
- Regarding connection: “Images of Aboriginal people make them relatable – esp. the range of ages from elderly women to the children singing at the end.”

Impact and effectiveness

- Elder video – more influence on those who already held strong interest in First Nations issues; less on those who were not already interested.

- Oji-Cree video – similar response: more influence on those already interested; less on those not as interested.

- During interviews, participants noted that presence online is not enough to raise awareness of these issues.
 - ▣ Many noted that while they were interested in the topics, they would not necessarily go out and search for videos on Native language issues. Videos were useful information tools, but need to be spread as part of a campaign.

Discussion



- Based on our exploratory study, we contribute the following observations:
- Videos are a way of solidifying a social movement amongst allies. Allies can share information/messages with each other which help solidify values/codes.
- Speculation that because professionally-made videos were received more positively, quality of production (and thus the amount of resources available to the producers) may have an impact on the reception.
- Participants responses indicated that the videos would raise awareness among those who already cared about the issues, but perhaps not for people who were not already interested. Continuing challenge as to how to draw people to these videos.
- Role of ideology: Mi'qmaq Elder video more critical/ideologically dense in comparison to the Oji-Cree video. May have contributed to the “lack of connection” response. Participants may not have been prepared for such a critique.

Application – Idle No More and Alternative Media

- Future studies may wish to consider some of our discussion when examining the Idle No More media campaign.

- 1) Connection to videos – how do the presentation and ideology play roles in whether participants recommend INM video to others?

- 2) Connection between dominant and alternative streams – is there a connection between when the dominant media stops its coverage and the lack of alternative media production?

- 3) Similar issues – will INM movements face similar challenges in reaching non-interested audiences? Further, how does the INM media serve to solidify collective values, support the movement, and challenge dominant codes?

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- Questions, Comments, Insights?