

EXPLORE Online storytelling

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DIFFÉRENCIATION



Visionary voices: Indigenous TikTok creators talk community & storytelling

Led by Indigenous Box¹ founder Mallory Yawngghwe, the [TikTok's Visionary Voices panel] featured Nēhiyaw (Cree) activist, performer, and speaker James Jones, Anishinaabe-kwe author Melissa Blair, and Wendat-Guinean multidisciplinary artist Aïcha Bastien-N'Diaye. Their personal narratives—from entrepreneurship to dance education—were as diverse as their careers. Still, each story proved that TikTok is more than a social network: it's a way to build community. [...]

TikTok has decidedly embraced the 'influencer-economy.' [...] In this system, a large audience means sustainable² income.

The publicity³ doesn't come without strings, however. "Being on this platform, sometimes people have these narratives of who we should be, and the types of stories that they want us to tell," said Mallory Yawngghwe. "[They have] expectations that they want us to meet as Indigenous creators. We're so much more than buffalos and moccasins. We're so multidimensional." [...]

TikTok is the most social of social media platforms: for sustainable success, creators need to build an active relationship with their followers. Yawngghwe said that fellow Indigenous creators were especially receptive: "Since we started taking back the mic, telling our own stories in our own way, and creating the space for ourselves, [the space] that we need to thrive—suddenly, we found community in that," she said.

For Yawngghwe, though, communities on TikTok aren't just about getting likes. Instead, the creator sees potential to turn digital relationships into meaningful social change. "I think it's really important to recognize the places we come from, and the people that we come from. I know that everybody in this room shares this greater community, but [we're] reclaiming space and trying to do something that will create space for the next generation."

Cormac NEWMAN, *Sharp Magazine*, 2023

▲ TikTok Indigenous creators at the TikTok Visionary Voices Panel, 2025

1. company promoting Indigenous culture
2. long-term 3. visibility

WAY 1

1. a. Look at the picture and read the title. Guess what "Visionary Voices" refer to.

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b. Read the text and tick the right answer.

This text is: ☐ an interview ☐ an article ☐ a story

2. Identify the TikTok creators mentioned.

Name: Origins: Job:
 Name: Origins: Job:
 Name: Origins: Job:

3. Pay attention to nouns and **identify** the reasons why TikTok is an attractive platform. **Circle** the right answers.

bring people together
 promote education make a living
 become famous
 reach a large audience
 demonstrators

4. Read the text again and **pick out** the opportunities and limits of using TikTok.

community support • cultural storytelling • reduced to clichés • pressure from the audience • stereotypes and expectations • visibility

Opportunities	Limits
.....	
.....	
.....	

5. Rephrase the following quote in your own words: “[we’re] reclaiming space and trying to do something that will create space for the next generation.” (l.24-25)

.....

6. Explain the following quote: “the creator sees potential to turn digital relationships into meaningful social change” (l.21-22). You can **use** the following words.

share • encourage • identity • raise awareness • knowledge

.....

WAY 2

1. a Look at the picture and **read** the title of the document. **Explain** the term “Visionary Voices”.

.....

b. Read the text and **identify** its nature.

.....

2. Pick out information about the members of the panel.

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3. Identify three reasons why TikTok is an attractive social media platform for Indigenous creators.

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4. According to Mallory Yawngghwe, what are the opportunities and limits of using TikTok?

Complete the sentences with your own words.

For Mallory Yawngghwe, TikTok is a good platform because it helps Indigenous creators share
....., find support and gain However, it also has limits
because users often expect them to fit into and tell only the stories people want to
hear.

5. **Sum up** what you understood focusing on how TikTok is used by Indigenous people to promote social
change.

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