

Research Article

Representations of Inuit Issues on X (Twitter): Who is Framing Inuit Issues and How?

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Abstract: This article documents who speaks about Inuit issues on social media and how these issues are portrayed on social media. By drawing on data from the Twitter (now X) platform, we analyzed the most relayed messages posted about Inuit issues from 1 January 2020 to 31 December 2022. We performed a content analysis in order to explore the tonality (through sentiment analysis) and the topics (through topic modelling) of the posts referring to Inuit issues. Inuit users on X formed a small but dynamic contingent, succeeding in playing a central role in defining Inuit issues on the platform. Their popularity could be partially credited to the positivity of their messages. The rare overlap of topics between Inuit and non-Inuit users on X points to the challenge of Inuit users reaching non-Inuit allies. We conclude that non-Inuit allies could do more to relay Inuit priorities and messages on the platform.

Inuit non-governmental organizations, such as the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC)—which represents the interests of Inuit throughout the Circumpolar North (Canada, Alaska, Chukotka [Russia], and Greenland)—and the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK)—which represents the interests of Inuit throughout Inuit Nunangat in Canada (Nunavut, Nunavik, Nunatsiavut, and Inuvialuit)—have actively defended the interests of Inuit communities for decades. These organizations have raised awareness about Inuit perspectives and have interacted with decision makers from international organizations and governments in southern Canada. The main function of these groups has been to represent Inuit on the national and international stages, and to share their viewpoints with governments and civil society alike. This led to the rise of prominent voices such as Mary Simon and Siila Watt-Cloutier who articulated and championed the Inuit right to self-determination.

However, social media have introduced a new dynamic. Individual Inuit activists can voice their opinions alongside Inuit organizations, and non-Inuit can also weigh in on Inuit issues, priorities, and debates. Hence, it is a more messy and complex communication environment, allowing more voices to participate in framing Inuit issues, and to be heard.

In this sense, social media are a tool of empowerment, providing opportunities for both Inuit organizations and individuals to share their perspectives and voice their priorities in an unfiltered fashion. However, social media can also be venues that reinforce traditional dominant political, economic, and social perspectives, and that reify current power structures. As such, this article assumes that social media could also allow non-Inuit users to influence popular understandings about Inuit issues and to impose their views about Inuit issues. For example, these platforms offer more exposure and visibility for users' messages.

Hence, this research study focused on empirically studying how Inuit issues were described on the social media platform Twitter between January 1, 2020 and December 31, 2022 (Twitter was rebranded to X in July 2023). Our first research question centred on figuring out who tweeted (posted) about Inuit issues. Our second research question was to analyze which themes were the most popular when users posted on Inuit issues. Lastly, the study investigated whether posts on Inuit issues were positive or negative. The authors are non-Inuit and non-Indigenous researchers based in southern Canada, who do not speak or read Inuktitut and have not lived in Inuit Nunangat.

Popular Representations of Inuit Issues

Inuit organizations and individuals have laid down their priorities and shared their perspectives in different ways. On this note, studies have assessed the nature of the political ideas promoted by Inuit organizations. Inuit organizations created as a result of land claims agreements (for example, Nunavut Tunngavik and Makivvik Corporation), and national or international groups (ITK, ICC), are regarded as innovative Inuit governance solutions. For example, Wilson (2007) has argued that the ICC was able to provide collective influence, share best practices, enhance political autonomy, and strengthen connections of Inuit. A similar account is drawn by Abele and Rodon (2007), focusing on Inuit internal and external diplomatic achievements. In this regard, scholars have focused on the nature and utility of these political movements and their stance concerning traditional conceptions of state sovereignty (Shadian, 2010; Gerhardt, 2011).

Inuit individuals and organizations have also used media outlets to present their perspectives and as part of a repertoire for social activism. Hence, traditional media were still seen as dynamic and innovative media, with radio and television still possessing substantial potential (Coelho, 2018). Further, Williams (2012) indicates that Inuit have mobilized the production of cinematic material to challenge the world of “colonial knowledge” and transform the narrative surrounding their identity. As presented by Alia (2009, pp. 95–97), media outlets, such as the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), the Inuit Broadcasting Corporation (IBC), and the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (APTN), were launch pads for several prominent Inuit leaders, including Mary Simon, John Amagoalik, and Rosemarie Kuptana.

Contrary to the demands of producing traditional media content, the relatively inexpensive nature of social media has opened up a space for the emancipation of Indigenous political activism in the Arctic region. Social media allowed, for example, the mobilization of different Indigenous Peoples in Canada in order to launch coordinated action under the Idle No More movement (Wood, 2015). Twitter (X) diffused messages by different Indigenous groups with their distinctive concerns and perspectives. The platform also favoured the dissemination of information towards non-Indigenous users, especially in younger age groups, allowing the Idle No More movement to gain more allies (Raynault et al., 2018).

In the Arctic, social media ultimately allows Indigenous voices to be heard and renews the place of Inuit discourse in the conduct of Arctic affairs (Arruda & Krutkowski, 2017). For the most part, social media have been seen as a tool with the potential to “revitalize Inuit culture” (Pasch, 2010); to provide creative, dialogical, and provocative expressions of Inuit selfhood (Wachowich & Scobie, 2010); or to partake in identity definition of younger generations of Inuit (Castleton, 2018).

These studies have pointed to the potential that social media platforms, such as YouTube and Facebook, possess in enabling a new generation of Inuit to develop their form of storytelling.

Far from looking at social media platforms and the internet as a tool for assimilation or as a challenge, social media are conceptualized as a source of empowerment and a way to establish meaningful connections and cultivate Inuit identity. As Rodgers and Scobie (2015) point out, social media can be a means for Inuit to express resilience and counter the dominant narratives spread in southern societies, such as, in their example, by animal rights activists. In their article on the challenges to the Baker Lake and Pond Inlet mineral extraction projects, Scobie and Rodgers (2013) explain how social media were mobilized by Inuit to change certain socio-political and economic practices. To this end, the aggregation of different exchanges by community members on social networks shows how Inuit have produced a message of resistance to large mining projects (Scobie & Rodgers, 2013). Delaunay (2023) similarly concludes that Facebook and X (Twitter) are the most important social media platforms in northern Canada, and a vital tool for Inuit users to conduct political advocacy and disseminate their priorities.

Media representations of Inuit and Inuit issues have started to receive research attention, although it is still a nascent area of interest. Studies have observed that media portrayals of Inuit and Inuit issues and practices, by southerners in Canada and abroad, have been inaccurate, stereotypical, and grossly simplistic (Yunes, 2016; Glennie, 2018; Lackenbauer, 2018). In other instances, Inuit voices were downplayed in southern media outlets, even on topics directly impacting them. For example, Landriault (2020) documents that opinion texts on Arctic issues were mostly written by non-Inuit authors in southern-based publications, with ideas expressed by Inuit leaders often absent from popular ideas disseminated about northern Canada. However, media based in the North have been able to offer meaningful programming to Inuit communities, with northern media outlets being perceived by Inuit leaders as a necessary component of emerging self-government (Alia, 2009, p. 99).

Overall, the scholarship on the intersection of Inuit and social media has focused on case studies of specific users (YouTube channels or Facebook pages) or events (#sealfie, activism against mining projects). While valuable to generate insights as to how Inuit users occupy these spaces, we argue that a broader view of the social media ecosystem is worth pursuing to understand how Inuit issues are described by both Inuit and non-Inuit users. The research question stemming from this approach is to assess if Inuit users are leading this discussion or if Inuit issues are predominantly defined by non-Inuit users. Analyzing a longer timeline allows

us to capture fluctuations and variations in how different types of Inuit issues are discussed by social media users: which Inuit issues are the most frequently mentioned on social media and how are they talked about?

Methods

To capture long-term trends, we collected data from Twitter (now X) from January 1, 2020 to December 31, 2022, using the *R* package *academictwitteR* (Barrie & Ho, 2021). All tweets containing the keywords Inuit or Inuk were gathered and analyzed. Then, we scrutinized the 500 most retweeted posts every six months to analyze the content of these messages and the identity of the most retweeted users. The objectives were twofold: understanding how Inuit issues were described on Twitter/X and by whom.

Accordingly, 243 accounts were initially coded to account for specific variables. Following an examination of the user's profile information, we were able to sort them into three categories for our analysis: Inuit, Indigenous (non-Inuit), and non-Indigenous. In unclear cases, recent posts were examined for explicit reference to identity markers. Users who self-identified as Inuit were coded as Inuit, while users who self-identified as belonging to another Indigenous Nation or group, or who only used the term "Indigenous" without further specification, were coded as Indigenous (non-Inuit). Thus, in this article, "Indigenous" does not include Inuit users—only the term "Inuit" does. Finally, accounts that self-identified as belonging to a non-Indigenous group or that specified no identity marker were coded as "non-Indigenous."

Accounts were also coded as belonging to an organization if they identified as one. Otherwise, they were coded as belonging to an individual. Identifying the organization accounts (discussed below) proved to be much easier than identifying the type of an individual's account since organizations are typically dedicated to an easy-to-identify cause.

Our analysis was anchored in quantitative textual analysis techniques, known as natural language processing (NLP). This technique allowed us to gather the social media posts and extract information about them. To proceed with our demonstration, we used the *quanteda* package (Benoit et al., 2018). We conducted a sentiment analysis on the messages to determine their overall text polarity. This analysis detects positive and negative terms in a document in order to know if a given document (a post in this case) displays a positive or negative tone. We used a combination of the *Lexicoder Sentiment Dictionary* (LSD) (Young & Soroka, 2012) and the *AFINN* dictionary (Nielsen, 2011) in our analysis—the tweets collected were analyzed with these dictionaries to evaluate if messages were positive or negative. While similar, using both dictionaries allowed us to

measure sentiments through a polarity-based (negative or positive) and valence-based (intensity of negativity or positivity) approach at the same time. These complemented each other and strengthened our results.

Subsequently, we performed topic modelling on the messages based on the latent Dirichlet allocation (LDA) statistical model. This analysis was performed to extract topics from our corpus of topics. Hence, themes emerged from these tweets in order of prevalence, so we could figure out which were discussed the most often.

Analysis

Our analysis is divided into three sections. First, we offer some descriptive statistics concerning the accounts publishing messages about Inuit issues on Twitter/X, in order to uncover who posted on Inuit issues. Second, we describe the sentiment analysis performed on the content of the messages published on Inuit issues by the various identity categories and the type of users (individual or organization). Lastly, we describe the LDA topic modelling we undertook on the content of the messages, to determine if there is a substantial difference in the content of the messages based on the users’ identity, and their reach on the social media platform.

Descriptive Statistics

Our data set was composed of messages on Inuit issues that were posted by 243 unique accounts. As illustrated below (see Table 1), most of the accounts (165 or 67.9%) were operated by non-Indigenous people. Furthermore, there seemed to be an even balance of individual and organization accounts. The organization accounts were mostly owned by news and political entities. Next, we observed that Indigenous people represented the second-largest account holders with 51 (20.99%). For this group, there is a more noticeable difference between the number of individuals (39) compared to organizations (12). Finally, account holders self-identifying as Inuit represented the smallest category of users at 27 accounts (11.11%), corresponding to their smaller demographic weight as there are fewer users who are Inuit on X as a whole. The dynamism of this last group can also be mostly explained by individual users (rather than organizations) who adopted a more grassroots approach than the non-Indigenous users.

Those results allow us to conclude that there were more non-Indigenous individuals and organizations weighing in on Inuit issues on X, compared to Indigenous or Inuit. At first glance, this seems to reflect the larger demographic weight. As such, non-Indigenous or non-Inuit accounts would seem to be the main driving force portraying and defining Inuit issues online.

Table 1. Characteristics of accounts posting about Inuit issues on X (Twitter) between 1 January 2020 and 31 December 2022.

Identity Marker	Type of User	Number of Accounts	Total
Inuit	Individual	22	27 (11.11%)
	Organization	5	
Indigenous (non-Inuit)	Individual	39	51 (20.99%)
	Organization	12	
Non-Indigenous	Individual	85	165 (67.90%)
	Organization	80	

However, while it is interesting to know who contributes to the public debates on X/Twitter regarding Inuit issues, we also needed to turn our attention to the number of posts made by those account holders. As shown below (see Table 2), most of the messages concerning Inuit issues (63.57 %) came from Inuit users. In other words, only a few Inuit accounts were on the list that posted most on Inuit issues, but the ones that did were prolific. They are followed by non-Indigenous people (24.61%) and Indigenous people (11.82%). Here again, we see that individual messages outweigh organizational messages for Inuit and Indigenous communities. As for the non-Indigenous accounts, while individual accounts addressed Inuit issues more frequently than their organizational counterparts, they were roughly balanced in terms of posts. In this case, Government of Canada accounts and traditional media accounts represented most of the messages posted by non-Indigenous and non-Inuit accounts, pointing to online interest that does not emanate from grassroots interests, but rather institutional.

Even though Inuit have the lowest number of account holders, they are the most invested in discussions about Inuit issues on X (Twitter). Moreover, we observed more engagement by non-Indigenous people than Indigenous on discussions relating to Inuit issues. It is also worth mentioning that non-Indigenous organizational accounts posted more messages about Inuit issues than Inuit organizations. Nonetheless, if we consider each group’s demographic weight relative to the others, we are able to conclude that, proportionally, Inuit and Indigenous individuals and organizations are more active in the discussion taking place around Inuit issues than non-Indigenous individuals and organizations on the social media platform X.

Now that we have established a detailed description of our data set, we can focus our attention on the content of the messages that were posted on Inuit issues.

Table 2. Characteristics of posts (tweets) about Inuit issues on X (Twitter) between 1 January 2020 and 31 December 2022.

Identity Marker	Type of User	Number of Posts	Total
Inuit	Individual	9,510	11,240 (63.57 %)
	Organization	1,730	
Indigenous (non-Inuit)	Individual	1,467	2,089 (11.82 %)
	Organization	622	
Non-Indigenous	Individual	2,489	4,351 (24.61 %)
	Organization	1,862	

Sentiment Analysis

As one of our research questions centred around observing the tonality of posts on Inuit issues, we proceeded with the sentiment analysis of the messages through the combination of a polarity-based and valence-based sentiment approach. The polarity-based approach measures terms as either positive or negative, while the valence-based approach places words on a continuum of intensity, from very negative to very positive—for example, more acute negativity was registered for a term coded as very negative (“war”) than moderately negative (“dispute”). As demonstrated below (see Table 3), our results indicated that individuals had a more negative average tonality in their posts than their organizational counterparts in the same ethnic group. Notably, Indigenous individuals had the most negative average tonality (polarity of 0.17 and valence of 0.18).¹ They are followed by non-Indigenous individuals (polarity of 0.30 and valence of 0.27) and Inuit individuals (polarity of 0.35 and valence of 0.60). In other words, messages from Inuit users seemed to be, overall, more positive than posts from non-Indigenous accounts and Indigenous individual users, but slightly less positive than messages from Indigenous organizational accounts.

It is interesting to observe that, in general, organizations’ messages tended to have a more positive tonality outlook than posts made by individuals on Inuit issues. Organizations are less susceptible to negativity bias and they want to be perceived as vectors of change with a positive impact on society. Risk-avoidance behaviours are also at play on this point, especially for governmental accounts. As already pointed out by Wukich and Mergel (2016), employees working for governmental departments are afraid of making mistakes or stirring controversies: this cautious approach can also partially explain our findings.

Table 3. The tonality of messages posting about Inuit issues on X (Twitter) between 1 January 2020 and 31 December 2022, based on sentiment analysis.

Identity Marker	Types of Account	
	Individual	Organization
Inuit	Polarity = 0.35	Polarity = 0.69
	Valence = 0.60	Valence = 0.71
Indigenous (non-Inuit)	Polarity = 0.17	Polarity = 0.75
	Valence = 0.18	Valence = 0.65
Non-Indigenous	Polarity = 0.30	Polarity = 0.55
	Valence = 0.27	Valence = 0.55

Note: Values closer to 0 had more negative messages, while values closer to 1 had more positive messages..

Topic Modelling

The second research question involved identifying the popular themes within messages on Inuit issues. We drew 5,000 random samples to detect which words were associated with one another, and which of these associations of words occurred the most often in our sample. We opted to use the *sentopics* package to perform a latent Dirichlet allocation topic modelling approach. This allowed us to garner a better insight into the content of the posts in our data set.² Although studies demonstrate methods on how to select the optimal number of topics (Gan & Qi, 2021), we chose to only retain five topics per category to remain parsimonious in our findings. While we acknowledge that LDA performs optimally with larger samples, as it is based on the occurrence of words throughout documents, we performed 5,000 model iterations using Gibbs sampling to partially alleviate this problem induced by the low sample size (622 to 9,510 tweets) that could potentially skew the distribution of words in our messages.

To gather better insight into the themes and topics of the posts about Inuit issues on X/Twitter, we opted to divide our topic modelling according to ethnic groups and types of users. Such an endeavour allowed us to determine if there was an alignment or some form of disconnection between the topics discussed by Inuit, Indigenous people, and non-Indigenous people, or between individuals and organizations representing those ethnic groups (see Table 4–9).

Regarding posts made by Indigenous (non-Inuit) individuals (see Table 6), we observed discussions revolving around racism and slur terms used online, such as on X (Twitter). Another recurring theme in the content of the tweets analyzed was the Government of Canada’s reconciliation policies. Additionally, content analysis also reveals the importance of women, children, and families across Canada consistent with previously identified issues.

Indigenous organizations (see Table 7) posted messages about the importance of booking appointments to get vaccinated, and avoiding the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic amongst Indigenous communities. Also, posts discussed the importance of celebrating and learning the history of Indigenous Peoples on National Indigenous Peoples Day. This was pushed forward by the mentions and pride expressed by Indigenous Peoples’ communities about the July 2021 appointment of Mary Simon, an Inuk from Nunavik, as the thirtieth Governor General of Canada.

In general, both Indigenous individuals and organizations approached Inuit issues from a more generic perspective, often encompassing them into the broad umbrella of “First Nations, Inuit, and Métis” issues. The topics 2, 3, and 5 for Indigenous individual accounts (Table 6) and topics 2 and 5 for organizational users (Table 7) point in this direction: Inuit issues are promoted and discussed in the broader category of Indigenous issues. While this might raise awareness and attract attention to Inuit issues, the specificity of Inuit communities disappears.

Moreover, non-Indigenous individuals (see Table 8) advocated, through the content of their messages, for the Government of Canada to keep supporting and working with Indigenous communities. This stance was closely linked to issues such as helping Nunavut’s children and families fight poverty, advocating for better housing and promoting women’s health in the Northwest Territories, Nunavut, and Nunavik. Another common topic was climate change. Posts from this group were also strongly focused on art and culture, most notably the work of Kenojuak Ashevak.

Non-Indigenous organizations (see Table 9) focused the content of their posts on the importance of addressing climate change, the protection of wildlife, and the impact of oil dependence. Another topic that came forward was the importance of offering health services related to the COVID-19 pandemic for Indigenous Peoples in Canada.

Art and culture were also pushed to the forefront through the development of programs or support groups for artists with Indigenous heritage. Likewise, messages were directed in connection with the celebration of the history and culture of Indigenous Peoples, through National Indigenous Peoples Day, and the activism of Mary Simon (before her appointment as Governor General of Canada) and the Arctic Children and Youth Foundation, for which she was the founding Chair.

Table 6. Themes in individual Indigenous (non-Inuit) accounts on X/Twitter between 1 January 2020 and 31 December 2022, in order of frequency (with Topic 1 the most frequent).

Topic 1	Topic 2	Topic 3	Topic 4	Topic 5
Indigenous	First	Nations	Land	Help
Native	Nations	First	Arctic	Photo
Folx	Indigenous	Métis	News	Crisis
Culture	Metis	Indigenous	Nunavut	Indian
White	Children	Metis	Rights	Canada
Twitter	Métis	Policy	Work	Hotline
Live	Canada	Trudeau	Research	First
Slur	Communities	Canada	May	Native
Term	Women	Reconciliation	Mine	Kids
Racist	Canadian	Land	Title	Family

Table 7. Themes in organizational Indigenous (non-Inuit) accounts on X (Twitter) between 1 January 2020 and 31 December 2022, in order of frequency (with Topic 1 the most frequent).

Topic 1	Topic 2	Topic 3	Topic 4	Topic 5
Book	Art	First	Aptn	First
First	Nunavut	Nations	News	Nations
Appointment	Women	Métis	National	Métis
Métis	Face	Indigenous	Home	Indigenous
#indigenous	Centre	History	Community	Aptn
Members	Water	Celebrate	Ottawa	Communities
Covid-19	@kentdriscoll	Learn	Governor	Live
Vaccine	Iqaluit	Metis	Watch	Canada
Community	World	Children	Arctic	News
#Ottawa	News	National	Nunavik	Services

Table 8. Themes in individual non-Indigenous accounts on X/Twitter between 1 January 2020 and 31 December 2022, in order of frequency (with Topic 1 the most frequent).

Topic 1	Topic 2	Topic 3	Topic 4	Topic 5
First Nations	Poverty	Nunavut	Arctic	Artist
Indigenous	Indigenous	Women	Continue	#womensart
Métis	Nunavut	News	Ice	Polar
Canada	Snow	Nunatsiaq	Sea	Ashevak
Communities	Kids	Housing	Climate	Bears
#cdnpoli	Family	Canada	Greenland	Culture
Work	Canada	Communities	#arctic	Kenojuak
Support	Live	#nunavut	Warming	Asian
Continue	First	Health	Continued	Owl
	Posted	#nunavik	Change	White

Table 9. Themes in individual non-Indigenous accounts on X (Twitter) between 1 January 2020 and 31 December 2022, in order of frequency (with Topic 1 the most frequent).

Topic 1	Topic 2	Topic 3	Topic 4	Topic 5
Arctic	First	First	Nunavut	#firstnations
Continue	Métis	Nations	First	Métis
Ice	Nations	Indigenous	Children	Program
Climate	Indigenous	Métis	Child	Apply
Sea	National	Communities	Canada	Artists
Land	Learn	Health	Help	Art
Oil	Canada	Covid-19	Indigenous	Funding
Wildlife	History	Services	Initiative	Groups
Protect	Celebrate	#covid19	Government	Support
Snow	Contributions	Territorial	Simon	Artist

In summary, we observed only one recurring theme in all accounts studied: the health care of women, children, and families. Art and culture discussions were also present in most of the categories, except for Indigenous individuals. Moreover, reconciliation policies and National Indigenous Peoples Day were only identified as core topics in half of our categories. Interestingly, climate change was an important topic of discussion only for non-Indigenous accounts. Lastly, topic modelling seems to demonstrate that individuals, regardless of their identity, tend to include day-to-day perceived realities in the content of their posts, while organizations tend to contextualize those realities within a wider and more inclusive range of issues in the content of their posts. Overall, very few topics and stories posted by Inuit individuals and organizations were present on the other type of accounts, pointing to giving priority to other conversations than the ones privileged by Inuit users.

Discussion

A few observations emerge from the data presented in our study. For one, Inuit organizations and individuals are numerically fewer than other accounts mentioning Inuit issues, but they are quite active and dynamic, publishing at a greater pace than other users. In this sense, the conversation about Inuit issues on X/Twitter is dominated by Inuit accounts rather than non-Inuit accounts. These Inuit users have built themselves sizeable followings that steadily retweeted their messages about their daily lives, in the case of Inuit individuals, and about announcements and activities, in the case of Inuit organizations. This was accomplished by posting positive messages rather than negative: promotion of the Inuktitut language, and the celebration of Inuit artistic production and cultural practices accounted for this outcome.

These themes and topics allowed for an inclusive messaging that exposed non-Inuit users to the richness of Inuit culture, including tattoos, the harvesting of country food, and sculptures and drawings, among others. This positive messaging was also present when tackling issues that were more political or social. Rather than engaging in confrontational or antagonistic communication, Inuit organizations strived to underline their distinctiveness without engaging in hostile engagement: agreements and progress were also highlighted while mentioning the immense work ahead on issues such as missing and murdered Inuit women and girls or access to quality health services.

However, the issues mentioned most often by Inuit users were not tackled by non-Inuit accounts, pointing to the distinct voices of Inuit on the platform. Indigenous accounts (non-Inuit) would only mention Inuit issues when these overlapped with broader Indigenous issues, such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. Hence, Inuit issues were rarely discussed in their

own right, highlighting their distinctiveness. The same can be said about non-Indigenous users. Inuit issues were usually subsumed under the umbrella of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit issues. Several messages tweeted by these accounts were also at a specific point in time, pointing to a rather perfunctory attention given to Inuit issues. For example, National Indigenous Peoples Day (June 21) generated a high number of tweets on June 21, but without consistent attention from non-Indigenous accounts the rest of the year. Very few non-Indigenous accounts mentioned or tagged Inuit users to draw connections and share visibility.

These observations highlight the potential for non-Inuit allies to better support Inuit causes and online voices, and to help put the spotlight on issues that Inuit users flag as important. This approach can help promote Inuit priorities and offer more visibility, helping Inuit priorities to be heard and be a part of the public policy discussion, as called for by Inuit organizations in recent policy documents (see for example Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, 2018).

Conclusion

Overall, we found that a numerically small community of highly active Inuit users was able to lead the discussion of Inuit issues on Twitter/X. Positive messages allowed these accounts to assemble a community of followers interested in Inuit culture and communities. Inuit individuals were particularly skillful in establishing relations with other users and promoting Inuit culture and customs. They were able to present Inuit practices in a relatable way and drew on their personal experiences. This community existed alongside well-organized accounts (such as from the Government of Canada and national and international news organizations) led by non-Inuit individuals and organizations. These accounts generally posted generic messages about Inuit communities.

Of course, this study is exploratory: several questions arise and there are multiple avenues for future research. One clear direction for future research is a closer examination of what frequent posters about broadly Inuit issues are posting about, and a comparison with posts made by Inuit users, who may use different hashtags to discuss more specific issues. A similar analysis can be performed based on location, which may identify geographic differences between groups. While we used general keywords (Inuit and Inuk), searching with more refined keywords could inform on more niche content focusing on specialized interests (country food for example).

Another content analysis approach might also examine the differences between what organizational (and especially non-Indigenous) accounts post, and who those posts are aimed at: are they aimed specifically at Inuit users and, if so, what information is being communicated?

A third possible direction is the audience composition of followers. Some of the people posting about Indigenous issues communicate with each other, and further investigation into the audiences for these accounts may indicate not only who speaks about Inuit issues, but also who listens, and how they interact.

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Notes

1. Tonality is measured on a range from 0 to 1. The higher the number, the more positive the messages.
2. We used a default alpha value of 0.1 and combined it with model iterations using Gibbs sampling (Delmarcelle, 2022).
3. Inuktitut words were not part of the sentiment analysis as the dictionaries did not cover the language.

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