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# Common platforms and devices used to access news about Native Americans

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# Common platforms and devices used to access news about Native Americans

Graduate Professional Project

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Prelude

“One day Ictinike, footsore and weary, encountered a buzzard, which he asked to oblige him by carrying him on its back part of the way. The crafty bird immediately consented, and seating Ictinike between its wings, flew off with him.

They had not gone far when they passed above a hollow tree, and Ictinike began to shift uneasily in his seat as he observed the buzzard hovering over it. He requested the bird to fly onward, but for answer it cast him headlong into the tree-trunk, where he found himself a prisoner. For a long time he lay there in want and wretchedness, until at last a large hunting-party struck camp at the spot. Ictinike chanced to be wearing some raccoon skins, and he thrust the tails of these through the cracks in the tree. Three women who were standing near imagined that a number of raccoons had become imprisoned in the hollow trunk, and they made a large hole in it for the purpose of capturing them. Ictinike at once emerged, whereupon the women fled. Ictinike lay on the ground pretending to be dead, and as he was covered with the raccoon-skins the birds of prey, the eagle, the rook, and the magpie, came to devour him. While they pecked at him the buzzard made his appearance for the purpose of joining in the feast, but Ictinike, rising quickly, tore the feathers from its scalp. That is why the buzzard has no feathers in its head.”

-*Myths and Legends of the North American Indians*," by Lewis Spence,  
published by David D. Nickerson & Company.

### Intro

The opening story about Ictinike and the buzzard is a traditional oral story from my Ioway Tribe culture. It represents the way in which Native American people historically shared information and stories. Today, Native stories are shared in multiple ways: oral, written, video, audio, websites, social media, etc.

This research explored the ways in which Native Americans receive their stories today, specifically news stories about Native Americans. This research was done in order to see how news outlets could better serve Native populations in the U.S. In addition, I looked at which platforms and devices are most effective for Natives to access these stories.

The Native population is unique, because they make up about two percent of the U.S. population, according to the Census in 2013. Of that population, about 22 percent of Natives live on reservations, according to the 2010 Census. Many reservations are in isolated locations, so a good portion Natives may not have easy access to news. Understanding how Natives access news is imperative to tribal and mainstream news outlets.

Natives are also unique, because they are not commonly mentioned in mainstream news, according to Mary Hudetz in *Mainstream Media's Spotty Coverage of Native America*. When mainstream media reports on Native Americans and Native issues, it only focuses on a few common themes: culture, crime and poverty.

“Mary Hudetz, a member of the Crow Tribe of Montana, an AP editor in Phoenix and a board member of the Native American Journalists Association, says lack of time and resources at media outlets contribute to fewer stories about Natives,” (Sanders 2012).

The article goes on to show how this issue contributes to misconceptions and stereotyping of Native American people. Because a lack of Native coverage in mainstream is a common issue, I also address it in this research in order to inform news outlets.

### Literature Review

The following list of sources look at how Natives historically received their information and the progression of informational delivery about Native Americans to Native people. It discusses changes leading up to today including what modern websites and devices are popular for consuming Native news.

Before contact with foreigners, Native people used oral tradition to pass along information to future generations about the creation of life, life lessons, why animals look certain ways and more. “As Native Americans explored their land, storytelling became an important tool. It was used to pass down traditions, such as local customs, how to live off the land, and how to survive in the natural environment in which they lived” (Rajotte 2013).

After western influences really began to conquer the U.S., Native people were forced to adapt, and therefore, so did their means of sharing information. Cherokee tribal member Sequoyah developed a written alphabet for his language in 1821; the tribe established the first Native newspaper, called *Cherokee Phoenix*, four years later using both Cherokee and English languages (Chavez 2010).

In other means of adaptation, Native people were forced into assimilation through various institutions, including boarding schools. In *Kill the Indian, Save the Man*, Ward

Churchill describes various ways in which residential schools were not only hurtful to the culture but also genocidal to the Native race. Despite the horrors of boarding schools, it provided tools for Native people to become successful in the then-western society takeover. Churchill said these schools taught everyday life skills such as homemaking, farming, reading and writing. The introduction of these skills to Native people changed the way Natives communicated stories to each other.

In 1887, the Indian boarding school Haskell Institute in Lawrence, KS started publishing *The Indian Leader* student newspaper. It is the oldest student newspaper in the country, according to its website.

Next came radio. The Navajo nation created the first Native radio station in 1972 (Native Media 2016). Radio news about Native Americans was the most prevalent source for Native news in 2011 (Guskin and Mitchell 2012); a good portion of American Indians and Alaska Natives live in rural and isolated locations. The Internet is not always accessible and often times limited to this population.

A limitation of (Guskin and Mitchell 2012) is that it is outdated, but it gives contemporary research some background for reference. Across the U.S., smartphone usage has grown, so the information about youth and mobile device usage to connect with and learn about the world is even more applicable today than it was in 2011.

Guskin and Mitchell found that Natives used mobile devices to learn about and connect with the rest of the world. In the article, Loris Taylor, the chief executive of Native Public Media, said the handheld is really the future. Guskin and Mitchell also express concern about poor mobile coverage on tribal lands. However, an article, *State of the News Media 2012: New Devices, Platforms Spur More News Consumption*, clearly

states, “Native American communities are turning to cellphones for news” (PewResearch Center 2012).

According to a 2012 article, Thelma Young, a graduate student at The New School, found that “minorities who can’t afford home Internet access often substitute it with smartphones” (Parker 2013). Young said that minorities, including Native Americans, are relying “heavily on their smartphones to jump over the digital divide” (Parker 2013).

Vi Waln, the editor of *Lakota Country Times*, said that some of the young people don’t have computers. In response, some Native American-owned organizations have created mobile apps and digital content. “They are also developing new partnerships with public broadcasters and universities to pool resources and extend their reach” (Guskin and Mitchell 2012).

“Mark Trahant, a former president of the Native American Journalists Association, described the state of Native media as ‘a narrative of expansion’” (Guskin and Mitchell 2012).

Georgetown University wrote *Working with Native American Media* to inform the public that in 2011, many Native Americans got their news about Natives from radio and tribal newspapers. It also offers tips for Native American outlets moving forward. The topics include creating easily sharable digital content for social media, generating mobile apps and podcasts and connecting with tribal governments to find ways to reach their members.

A limitation of this article is that it’s outdated; for example, as mentioned above, more people are on social media and have smartphones in 2016 compared to 2011.

In 2013, Oneida Nation Rep. Ray Halbritter said that in order to keep up with their audience and the changes in technology, *Indian Country Today* ended its circulation of about 15,000 and switched to an online-only medium, according to (indianz.com 2013). In addition to moving online only, *Indian Country Today Media Network* provides a weekly newsletter that is available through email subscription, according to its

*Frequently Asked Questions:*

“Weekly newsletter is a dedicated subscription-based service offering in-depth coverage of Native American News, world news, politics, business, gaming, finance, economic development, environmental issues, education, arts & entertainment, Native American culture, powwows, health & wellness, travel, genealogy, First Nations of Canada, sports, and veterans’ issues. You will have all the important news at your fingertips, right in your email box.”

A 2013 article uses Rock Your Mocs and Idle No More movements to show how Natives are using social media and the Internet to organize and connect. “Now smartphones and mobile Internet have arrived, and for the first time, Indian Country is speaking with each other—and the rest of the world—in real time. The digital divide is finally disappearing” (Brossy 2013).

This event defends that notion the Native Americans are getting their information from new media platforms in more recent years. “In the past few years blogs, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and other tools have become important mechanisms to communicate indigenous perspectives in North America” (The New School 2014).

The article *State of the News Media 2014: Overview* suggests that the growth in social media and mobile adoption and developments are affecting the way news is



reported and consumed generally in the U.S. In addition, “half (50%) of social network users share or repost news stories, images or videos while nearly as many (46%) discuss news issues or events on social network sites” (PewResearch Center 2014).

Research suggests that smartphones and social media play a huge role in how Native Americans get their news today. In addition, isolated locations of reservations and problems with access to the Internet account for the use of smartphone data to view news.

### *Methodology*

To begin, I completed the IRB process and received a certificate of exemption. I then performed a combination of qualitative and quantitative research for this project. I started with qualitative research by interviewing four Native American leaders about their Native news consumption. I interviewed activist Winona LaDuke and lawyer and activist Walter Echo-Hawk on camera, and I interviewed Kansas State Representative Ponka-We Victors and Native American Journalists Association board member Dalton Walker over the phone. I chose these four leaders, because they frequently represent their people.

All four interviewees said they get their news about Native people primarily from the Internet. LaDuke and Echo-Hawk said their main source was Facebook.

“Mostly, I asked people to post articles that are going to be of interest to me on my wall. And so people post or tag me. So that’s kind of helpful, it’s like having a news service” (LaDuke 2015).

Walker said he uses a combination of Facebook and Twitter.

“If it’s like a trending a story that’s geared towards Twitter, because it’s easier to find key words and real time activity. But if it’s just a story that was published one morning and someone shared it or someone was talking about it, it’s easy enough just to go on Facebook and find it” (Walker 2015).

Victors uses networking with fellow Native leaders through text and word of mouth as well as *Indian Country Today*.

Three of the four said they primarily use their computer or laptop to consume Native news. The fourth—Walker—said he primarily uses his iPhone.

All interviewees felt that the coverage of Native Americans in mainstream media is misrepresented, uninformed and lacking overall.

“The mainstream media is... we are invisible to the mainstream medium. The rare occasions in which our Native issues are reported, they’re usually reported by reporters who are uninformed about the nature of the subject matter” (Echo-Hawk 2015).

After conducting these interviews, the responses drove the quantitative portion of my research by leading me to ask similar questions of the general audience of Native news. I also considered the literature review, which suggests smartphones and social media play a huge role in how Native Americans get their news today.

I looked at the demographics of the audience for Native news within the Native population and how they accessed it and on what devices they used to access news about Natives. I created an online survey through SurveyMonkey to analyze demographics of the audience of Native news, how they got their news and which devices were most desired to get this news.

I distributed a link to this survey, taken by the adult audience of Native news, through email and Facebook. I emailed leaders in Native communities I am connected to and have the contact information of. Through Facebook, I shared the link on my profile which is available to my 965 friends (a majority of them are Native American) and onto group pages with a majority of Native members, including “University of Nebraska Inter-Tribal Exchange,” “Sober Indianz,” Ioways and Otoe-Missouria on Facebook,” KC’s Traditional Red Road Praying Natives,” ATTENTION ALL NATIVES!,” HEALTHY ACTIVE NATIVES!!!” and “KU & Haskell Women of Color Collective.” I posted multiple times and received 132 survey responses in March 2016.

I chose these questions to provide news outlets with demographics and other important information about the Native news audience. This information could potentially help mainstream news stations and tribal or Native-owned news organizations reach this particular audience.

### *Survey Results*

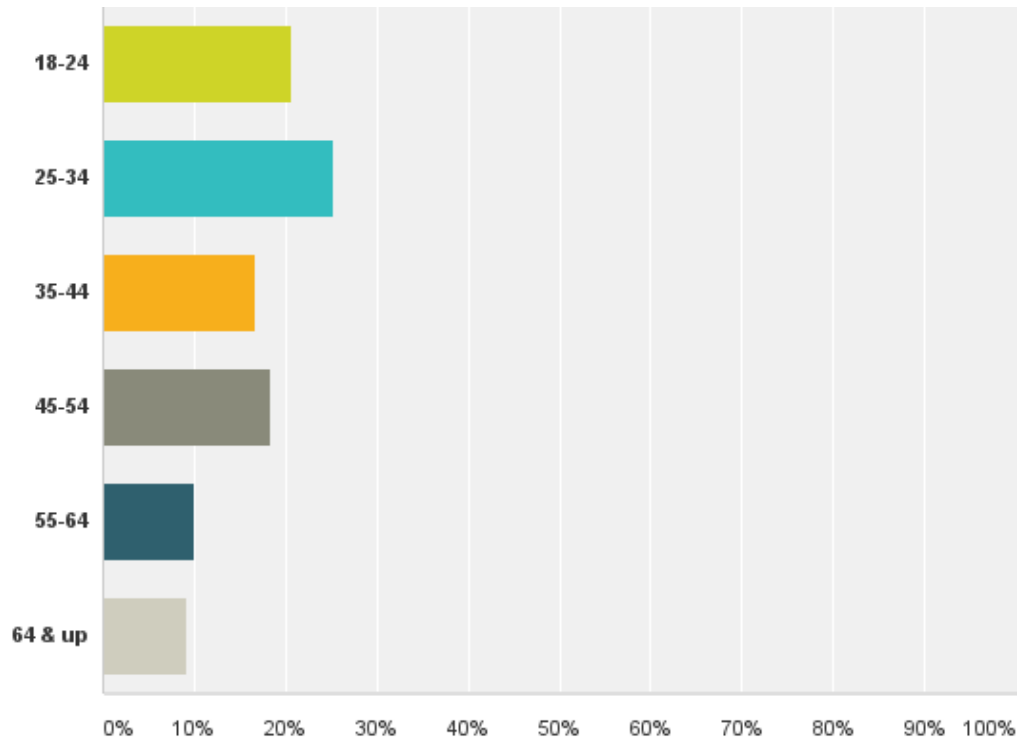
According to the survey, I found that the area where my respondents lived reflected closely the Census statistics on Native Americans. According to the 2010 Census, about 22 percent of Natives live on reservations. About 20 percent of my survey respondents live on reservations or tribally owned land; about 55 percent lived in a city.

Based off of the responses, about 78 percent of my audience receives their news from online sources and about 90 percent get their news about Natives through Facebook. The most use device by respondents to view Native news was on smartphones (86.36 percent) with desktop/laptop computers coming in second at 76.52 percent.

Here are the survey questions, reasons why I chose those specific questions, and the results:

1. What is your age range?

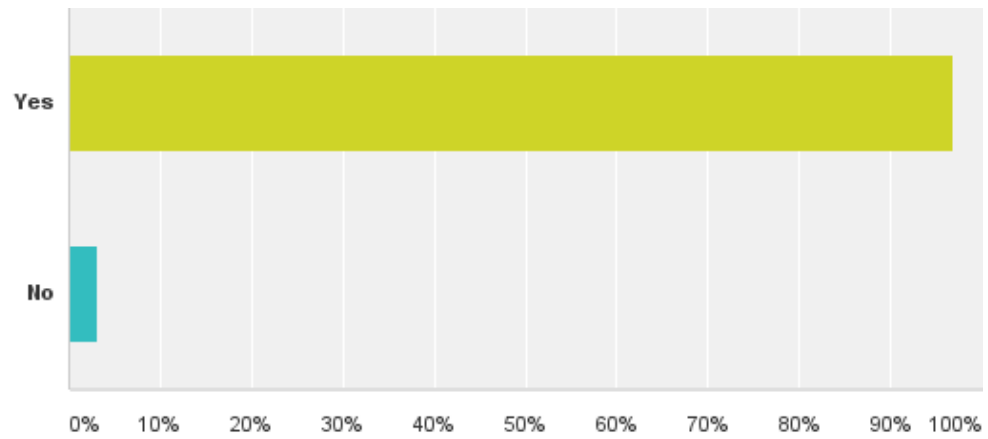
Demographics: this question helps identify which age ranges this survey reached and what the ages are of people who consume Native news.



18-24 (20.61%), 25-34 (25.19%), 35-44 (16.79%), 45-54 (18.32%), 55-64 (9.92%), 64 & up (9.16%)

## 2. Are you Native American or Alaskan Native?

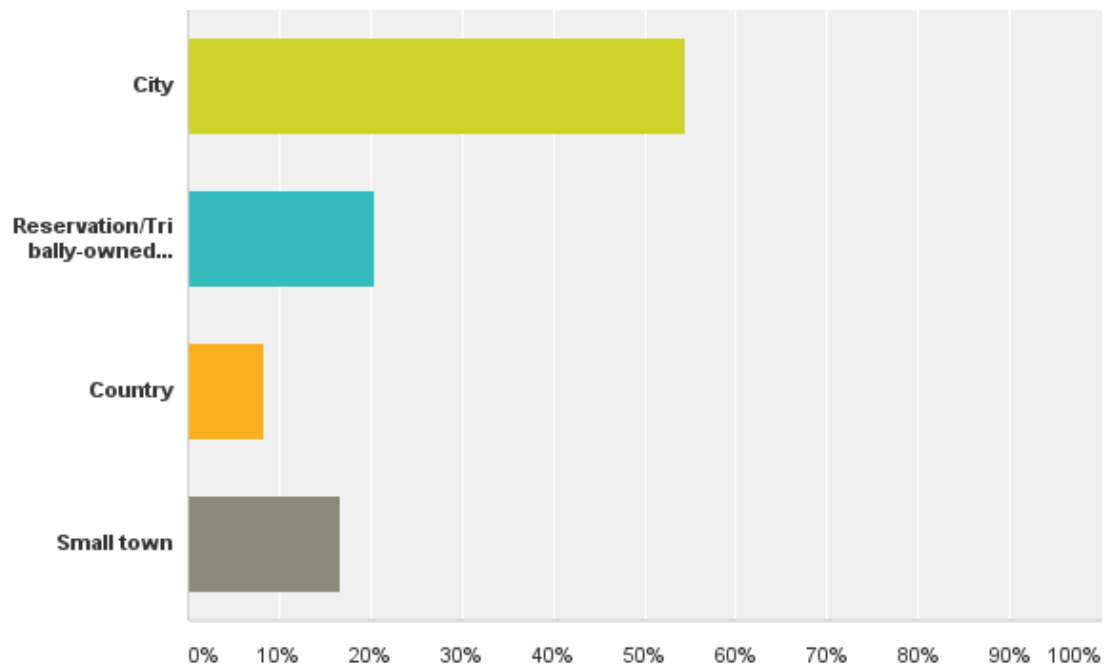
Demographics: the reason for this question was to see how many Native people responded. Four respondents were non-Native.



Yes (96.97 %), No (3.03%)

### 3. Where do you live?

Demographics: as the literature review showed, isolation on tribal lands might affect how Natives receive their Native news. It is evident that location is a factor in how Natives get their news.



City (54.55%), Reservation/Tribally-owned land (20.45%), Country (8.33%), Small town (16.67%)

4. What source do you get most of your Native American news from?

Interviews suggested a variety of possibilities.

Showing 17 words and phrases

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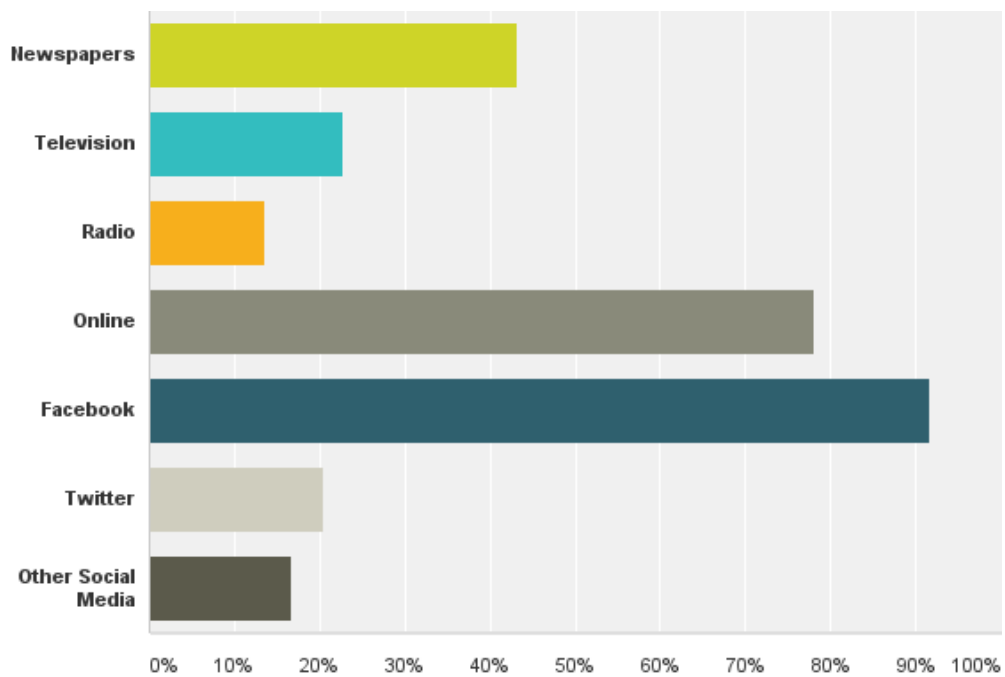
Social Media Winnebago Tribal Mouth Native NPR  
 Indian Country Prairie Band Potawatomi  
 Facebook Local Newspaper News Mail  
 Internet Haskell Tribe Center  
 Country today Media Network

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Facebook, Indian Country Today Media Network, Social Media, tribal, local  
 newspaper

### 5. How do you get news about Native Americans?

Research and interviews suggested online and Facebook is a big hit here.



Newspapers (43.18%), television (22.73%), radio (13.64%), online (78.03%), Facebook (91.67%), Twitter (20.45%), other social media (16.67%)



6. Which of those sources do you use most often?

This open-ended question let the respondents be more specific on their top favorite method.

Showing 6 words and phrases

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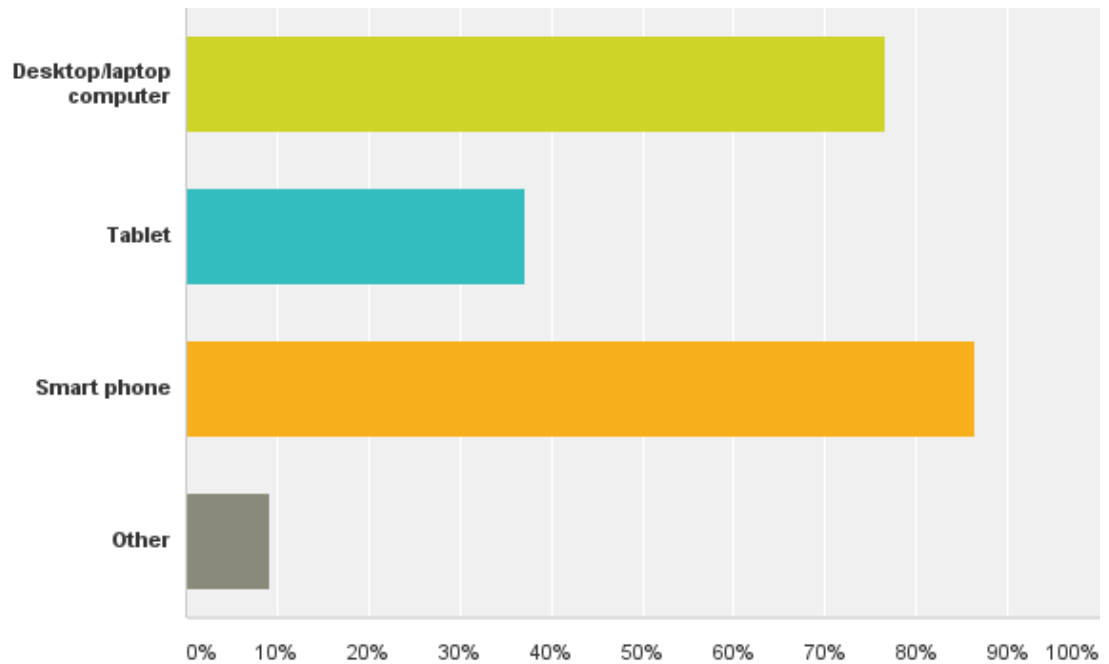
Internet Television **Social Media** Radio **Twitter**  
Indian Country

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Social Media, Twitter, Indian Country, Internet

7. On what devices do you use to look at news?

The literature review suggested smartphones are a big hit.



Desktop/laptop computer (76.52 %), tablet (37.12%), smartphone (86.36%), other (9.09%)

8. Of those devices, which are most effective?

This open-ended question let the respondents be more specific on their top favorite method.

Answer Choices	Responses
Desktop/laptop computer	<b>76.52%</b> 101
Tablet	<b>37.12%</b> 49
Smart phone	<b>86.36%</b> 114
Other	<b>9.09%</b> 12
<b>Total Respondents: 132</b>	

Smartphone, Desktop, Laptop

### Findings

Facebook, social media, online, smartphones and computers are all subjects I consistently came across during the various aspects of my research. I took these important elements into consideration and created a prototype news service based on my thoughts on the results. Through a literature review, four interviews with Native leaders and a survey with 132 Native news audience members, it is evident that Native Americans are using primarily Facebook and secondarily online, and mobile devices to get information about Indian Country. It is important for news outlets to try to reach the U.S. Native American population and knowing this information can help to better reach them. For Natives to gain access to news about their people, the news must be shared on Facebook and/or other social media. It must be mobile friendly as well.

I concluded that an aggregate page on Facebook for Native news is beneficial and a great way to get news to Native people. Facebook is a popular way Natives are getting their news about Natives, and it's easily accessible on smartphones and computers. Thus, I created a Facebook page and Twitter account, named "Tribal News Today," to aggregate timely and Native-related news for my audience.

On March 14, 2016, I created the "Tribal News Today" Facebook page. As of April 12, 2016, the account has 240 likes. I chose the name by coming up with my top five favorites and creating three polls on Facebook to survey my audience to find which name they liked best. "Tribal News Today" won. Because I lack graphic design skills, I used photography and Instagram filters to capture a logo that my audience would associate with news about Native Americans.

Here's the Native news-themed logo for the Facebook and Twitter accounts:



I published a few interviews I filmed of local Native people talking about who they would like to see as president in 2016 for their people. I published a news story I wrote called “Omaha Tribe wins Supreme Court Case, what’s next?”

I scheduled the posts for high-traffic times based off a training I’ve gone through for social media marketing at Vision Maker Media. I shared news stories daily on this page. To find the news I shared on this page, I looked at the top news stories on [Nativenewsonline.com](http://Nativenewsonline.com) and [Indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com](http://Indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com).

In addition, I Googled “Native American,” using Google search tools to narrow it to news within the past 24 hours to keep it timely. By doing this, I have found that almost every day, a mainstream outlet reports a story about Native Americans; some outlets include local news stations, *Fox*, *PBS*, *ABC NEWS*, *People* and *National Geographic*.

Based off of my interviews and findings in the literature review, many Native believe Natives do not get much mainstream coverage. If they do, it’s about powwows or culture. By searching through Google daily, I have found that many mainstream outlets

cover stories on Native American social and political issues including the following few articles: “How to improve Native American children’s education” by *Newsweek*, “Native American nations unite to ride against proposed North Dakota pipeline” by *Raw Story*, “One Nation Film Festival in Colorado Springs focuses on Native American and global indigenous issues” by *Gazette* and “Native American Tribe Assists 53 Stranded Iditarod Dogs in Washington State” by ABC News. These findings call for more research to be done in this area.

On March 20, 2016, I created the “Tribal News Today” Twitter account. I retweeted and shared news every other day or so that I found on Twitter by searching #NativeAmerican in the news category. I also used some of the same stories that are shared on the “Tribal News Today” Facebook page. As of April 12, 2016, the Twitter account has 15 followers. I did not dedicate as much time to Twitter as I did to Facebook. I promoted the Twitter page through the Facebook page.

After completing this project, I found a few topics that call for more research, for instance, a lack of Native-related coverage in mainstream news is a common perception held by Native Americans based off of my literature and interviews. Through my project, I have found that many mainstream outlets include a variety of stories on Native Americans. This finding shows that more research needs to be done on the progress of mainstream outlets and their coverage of Native issues and themes.

Through my Facebook page project, I found that although it had a lot of likes, the posts didn’t have much engagement. For example, one post reached 56 people, but only two people liked it. No one commented. This observation calls for research to be done on how often Natives react to posts about Native news. Also, are they likely to respond if

they read the article? Another element to discover is which topics Natives are most interested in. What topics will get this audience engaged, responding and creating dialogue? What are some ways to get more tribes involved? All of these pieces of information are helpful in teaching Native and non-Native news outlets how to reach the Native American population with stories about their people.

Appendix

Interview with Winona LaDuke, 55, on May 15, 2015

*Can you tell me where you get your Native news?*

I get my news largely on the Internet, and that is first because the majority of the news is on the Internet. There's a couple of written publications in my area, *The Circle* out of Minneapolis, the tribal paper, and news from Indian Country that are still a print medium. And when I get those, I read them. I like to read a real newspaper. I do like to read mainstream newspapers, but I live in a remote area, and so there's not really a consistent delivery. If I don't want timely news, I can read anything that is sent to me, and I get a lot of things sent to me. By and large, I look on the internet, I read my newsfeeds on Facebook, because I get a lot of people who post news stories that they know are going to interest me, and a lot of friends I have on Facebook have are doing work that's frontline work.

*What websites do you typically go to?*

Native News? Indianz.com I think is where I do most of my work. *Last Real Indians*, sometimes. Really, I actually don't... that's the only two I'll look at, and I'm not very consistent.

*And what about Facebook, do you use that every day?*

Yeah. I check it twice a day, I check the feeds, but I don't spend a lot of time on that. Mostly, I asked people to post articles that are going to be of interest to me on my wall. And so people post or tag me. So that's kind of helpful, it's like having a news service. Or a couple of my friends might be super involved in issues, and I'll follow up with them.

*So you don't spend time actually going to the news Facebook pages?*

I do not.

*You wait for news to come to you, right?*

Which is not a very scientific method, but yes, that is right.

I should do the Minneapolis Star... I should do some of these things right off, and I don't do those.

*What device do you mostly use to consume news?*

My computer. If I was in a city, I do like to read the newspaper, but I don't live anywhere near a newspaper, so when I travel, I pick up *The New York Times*. I usually read *The New York Times* when I'm in an airport and the local newspaper, because I'm interested in what is going on in the community that I'm visiting.

*What do you think that main stream media is lacking with Native news?*

There's not much of it. I think that they lack depth, understanding, historical perspective... I think that generally, a lot of the news in this day and age is no longer

Pulitzer Prize-winning news. Most of the news that we see and hear now is news that is very, you know, quickly written, lacks a lot of understanding, is quite superficial.

Interview with Walter Eco-Hawk, 67, October 7, 2015

*Where do you typically get your news?*

I get my news on Facebook, from Facebook people. Once in a blue moon, I'll watch CNN or some of the cable T.V. news and usually my main focus is weather in Oklahoma, because we have tornados all the time coming through, and so I have a little tornado radio that I listen to when the storms coming up. But I'm also a-news; I don't watch a lot of news, I haven't in the last few years. I follow the legal developments and that kind of thing, but I leave the politics to the politicians in D.C. and the world events to the world leaders, by and large. My wife watches news more than I.

*So you get your news from Facebook?*

Well yea and different things.

*What other things do you use? What would be your secondary source? The T.V.?*

Yeah. And I live way out in the country in Oklahoma and we don't get access to newspapers out there, so it's basically, you know, T.V. I guess I would have to say.

*Where do you get news about Native Americans?*

I get a lot of it in *Indian Country Today*. Again, I would honestly say Facebook. People post things and put links to different newspaper articles of interest. I do honestly get a lot of info that way.

*When you're getting on Facebook, what device do you typically use?*

I have a computer and I also have a tablet.

*Do you use your tablet often for Facebook?*

When I'm traveling on the road in lieu of a portable computer, a laptop computer.

*What about your cellphone? Do you ever use that?*

No. It's a flip phone. I'm not smartphone material yet.

*What is one that that you see is lacking coverage of Native Americans?*

Everything. The mainstream media is... we are invisible to the mainstream medium. The rare occasions in which our Native issues are reported, they're usually reported by reporters who are uninformed about the nature of the subject matter. So that's a great failure in our big media. The failure to report and the failure to report accurately on Native media, and I think that, as I mentioned, that's our number one issues- is the lack of reliable information by mainstream Americans about Native people. Because I've found that once the larger society is informed about Native issues, with reliable information, that they most often act to do the right thing. But it's this paucity of public information that, and ignorance, that is our principle problem in many of our social,



economic, political problems that we do have. The shortcoming in our public media sector and coverage of Native America.

Interview with Dalton Walker, 33, on November 23, 2015

*Where do you get your news about Native Americans?*

Any news I see, whether it's national, world, local, Native American, sports, is through my social media like Facebook and Twitter. It's rare for me to go to a specific website like Indianz.com or *Indian Country Today*. And if I do it's because I go to a link or were referred through my social media. I don't pick up many newspapers any more. I do if I see a daily paper out there, a metro, but for Native news, I don't subscribe to any newspapers.

*Do you use Facebook or Twitter mostly to find this news?*

Most of it? It depends. If it's something I may have heard of, maybe I got a text message or some type of message from a friend on a certain topic or something, I'll look it up online and go to that specific story. If it's like a trending a story that's geared towards Twitter, because it's easier to find key words and real time activity. But if it's just a story that was published one morning and someone shared it or someone was talking about it, it's easy enough just to go on Facebook and find it. Those are really the only two I use. Google Plus doesn't really do it for me. I don't mess around with Pinterest all that much. Snapchat, I don't think it has that, it's veering off to news but it definitely doesn't have that Native news.

*What device do you usually use when you're looking at Native news through social media?*

It's usually my phone. Like most people, my phone is right by my side, a smartphone. I have an iPhone, so I'd get notifications if I wanted. I don't get notifications, but I have the Facebook app on my phone that I scroll through. I also subscribe to certain newsletters, like *Indian Country Today*, that go to my email, but nine out of ten times, I usually wouldn't look it up on my phone, I'm on a laptop or a desktop. That's usually when I do look at them.

*What topics of Native Americans are you interested in reading about?*

I'm interested in everything. There's very little I wouldn't be interested in. Of course I like the sports aspect, because that's always been the most personally appealing hobbies-wise, playing high school sports and still watching sports still to this day, so I'm always curious about that. But anything related to tribal people, whether it's a feature story, controversial story, politics, tribal gaming, marijuana, it doesn't take much for me to take a look at it and see what it's about. Probably because not many of these stories are being told. So if it's a story by a nontraditional Native news source, then it's probably, more than likely, interesting to that point. And even then a part of me is looking at it to see how they covered it. Far too often, Native people are covered and reported on in a way that automatically paints a dark picture of who we are when that's not even half the story. That's kind of why, for example, I think the Guardian posted a story this weekend on something related to poverty. I didn't read it, but I opened to look and see what they

did. I read their subhead and kind of what their theme was, and I just didn't care to read it because I know that story and that's all the story that is always told.

*What do you think about mainstream news coverage about Native Americans? Do you have anything else to add?*

Yeah, that's possibly because I have a journalism degree from the great University of Nebraska-Lincoln Journalism College. That's why I got into journalism, was to tell stories about Native people. Of course things that I've seen, how I grew up, things I learned that just weren't being told. And I did some of that. At the same time, I knew I had to go beyond tribal newspaper, tribal journalism, which I have tons of respect for, but I wanted my audience to be everyone, to see these stories that are out there in more than a stereotype. So I started as a reporter, went up and did multimedia journalism to the point where I was feeding their social media teams and web content, deciding which works for best for our website and our readers, so that's kind of what my mentality blends with, the end game of hopefully one day being an editor or key decision maker for that newsroom where I could decide on writing practices and story making decision on what story goes where, and that's my goal because my perspective is not shared by a lot of people in mainstream newsrooms, specifically in the editors and decision-makers side. It's just not the way it is. There's very few Native Americans that high up. We have a decent amount of reporters, but those are all the beginner, kind of lower jobs, which are fine, but the decision making, that's why I tried to get in there, so I can be a voice. With that said, there always has to be some type of news peg to cover Indian Country it seems like. And half the time there was but at the same time, these were stories that haven't been told at all, but they still asked well what's news about it, why is it different? As soon as I start hitting the mainstream, that's when, 2007ish, 2008, that's kind of when the newsrooms and larger newspapers and everyone starts to cut back, so there's a lot of cuts in a lot of staffing. Even the stories that were barely being told were probably more than likely not going to be told with all the cutbacks across the industry, which is unfortunate. So you have that, you have less reporters, less publications, trying to survive. Unfortunately, survival means page visits, controversy, proctors, keeping people engaged, which is ok and it works, but that's hard with Native stories. A majority of your audience doesn't know (about Natives).

*You said that you mostly get your news from Facebook and Twitter about Native Americans, and I have seen this trend. Do you think for a majority of Native people that's true?*

I don't know about the majority. I would say definitely with the younger generation. The main people who read these stories, who care for these types of stories, are older generations who still don't mind reading the newspaper or subscribing to tribal newspapers or even their local newspaper. They're the ones reading the stories. The younger generation is getting introduced to that because of social media, which is good because you have *Indian Country Today*, *Native Peoples* magazine, all these great publications that focus on Native people have thousands if not hundreds of thousands of likes on Facebook. In turn, Facebook is the most popular social media right now. The way their algorithm works is that the more likes you have, the bigger reach to get to people. So it's pretty good that you have these tribal news pages using their Facebook to

promote work to a generation that probably wouldn't see this content anywhere else, so that's pretty cool that someone can be on Facebook who hasn't liked *Indian Country Today* or a number of other tribal publications fan pages, but because they're friends with someone else, and they're talking about it, more than likely they'll see it, so they can become engaged. One thing to consider too is that there are a lot of tribal people who don't have a smartphone or have limited Internet or computer access, but there's some out there who do.

Interview with Ponka-We Victors, 34, on January 20, 2016

*Can you tell me where you get your news about Native Americans?*

I work closely with the four tribes here in Kansas, and so we all try to have communication when I'm up here during the session. In case something should come up, I can always rely on them. Also, I keep in contact with other Native American legislators throughout the country, that I've met at different conferences or sat on different boards with. We keep in contact with each other and we kind of communicate with what's going on in our own individual states. And of course there's the *Indian Country Today*. I keep in contact, not only with the chairmen here in Kansas, but Oklahoma, Nebraska, Arizona as well.

*Do you have some outlets that you typically go to if you're looking for Native news? You had mentioned Indian Country Today, so you go online a lot, or do you happen to get any of your information from social media?*

Yeah, I do. *Indian Country Today* is a good source as well as some others online, and I can't think of them right now. Just different news articles, and like I said, me and my colleagues text a lot, because we can't always be on the phone, because there is always a thousand things we're doing. So we sometimes text each other 'hey watch out, this came through our state, it might come through yours next' kind of thing.

*As for social media, do you use that at all for news?*

Yes.

*How often would you say? Is that a pretty common one?*

No, it's very... I would say maybe once every week.

*What site?*

*Indian Country Today*

*What device are you typically using when you access news?*

Probably my laptop

*What do you think mainstream media is lacking with Native news?*

I always see a problem with different tribes knowing who represents their area, so I guess it would be important to match the different tribes with their state, whether it's their state representative, their senators, or the U.S. congressmen or congresswoman. I

think that's very important, so when they do vote, they know who they're voting for and how they feel about different issues.

*Do you think that just mentioning, in these stories about the government, do you think that they should mention Native tribes as well?*

Yes, they should definitely include everybody. That's very important, and often times we get left out.

*What type of news about Natives are you typically interested in?*

I like to know what's going on in the state legislature and how I can help or how I can help stop it from coming to our state or encourage it to come to our state.

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