

## TVO invests in digital video capabilities to give underrepresented Indigenous groups and communities an online voice

TVO is an educational public broadcaster. As a registered charity and a public agency of the Ontario ministry of education, its mandate is to create citizen engagement through current affairs journalism from a local perspective.

### OPPORTUNITY

TVO wanted to bolster its video capabilities so it could report on Indigenous affairs in a personal, educational, and compelling way. The company saw an opportunity to invest in a new digital video team and train them to approach video journalism with a YouTube Creator and social media mindset.

### APPROACH

TVO built up an Indigenous Affairs team and purchased equipment. The team then developed skills and workflows for creating bespoke digital videos.

**Building up the team:** TVO hired two new video experts for the Indigenous Affairs team and also purchased digital video equipment. The team then researched and brainstormed how they would approach the coverage of Indigenous affairs. They learned that only half of one percent of Canadian news coverage was focused on Indigenous issues, and that there was also a lack of lived experience perspective in this reporting. The team explored how they could create content that would resonate with a broad audience, incorporate cultural specificity, and have a defined identity and voice.

**Choosing format, topics, and style:** Much of TVO's previous video content was structured like traditional TV segments, but the team wanted to become more digital-first. To decide on format, they used existing popular YouTube content as reference points, ultimately choosing listicles, explainers, interviews, and commentary/opinion (or hybrids of these). They decided on broad themes for their content (land, identity, politics, and life), then came up with topics to cover, including landmarks, treaties, culture, language, arts, policy, and law. Finally, they crafted the look, feel, and tone of the videos based on YouTube best practices.

**Testing new processes and workflows:** The team created a production schedule and developed new workflows for content creation. They used a pipeline approach, so individuals were always working on multiple projects, with the aim of having a video ready to publish every two weeks. This proved too ambitious, so after some time they changed the schedule to allow for greater research and production time, which gave creators more freedom to explore topics they were passionate about.

“ We strongly believe in creating opportunities for greater representation on YouTube, a platform that has given space to marginalized voices and communities who don't see themselves represented in mainstream, legacy media.

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### RESULTS

TVO successfully built up a new Indigenous Affairs team, and defined formats, topics, and workflows, so the team could publish bespoke digital videos on important and underrepresented Indigenous topics. As a result, TVO created opportunities for greater Indigenous representation on YouTube, giving space to marginalized voices and communities who don't generally see themselves represented in mainstream media.

### LEARNINGS

**Set realistic expectations:** It requires a lot of runway to start a new team with a new mandate and style of content. So, while setting yourself stretch goals is important for growth, creating a timeline of expectations that the team cannot meet will not build confidence — on the contrary, they'll just get deflated. With that in mind, revisit your goals and expectations on a regular basis to ensure that they are going to inspire your team, rather than intimidate them.

**Give your creators the emotional support they need:** The Indigenous Affairs team had to cover some pretty heavy topics, and these took an emotional toll on creators. Learning how to support staff members who were having a tough time was a big piece of TVO's learning curve. They did things like having more frequent check-ins, actively listening to staff, plugging into employee mental health resources, and encouraging networking inside and outside of the organization.

**Centralize YouTube channel efforts:** TVO learned the hard way that maintaining a YouTube channel is extremely challenging when there is no single person/department responsible for it. TVO would recommend having a centralized YouTube team/person, who works across all organizational departments and takes ownership of the day-to-day running of the channel. Then teams can focus on creating innovative content that will engage audiences, rather than figuring out whose job certain administrative tasks are.