



Indigenous Language
Revitalization and New Media:
Implications for Reconciliation
Within Organizational Learning

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Abstract

Organizational learning exists within the Eurocentric corporate construct; as such, its focus is on problem-based educational programming intended to meet the institutional goals and needs of individual businesses and corporations within the Canadian context. Historically, the corporate sector has operated without much regard to Indigenous peoples, their historic lands, cultures, languages and treaties. Through recent proceedings, the rights of Indigenous peoples are being restored, and means of redress, restitution, and reconciliation are being offered on a global level. Corporations are not exempt. Captured within the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, and the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Call to Action*, a clear message to corporate Canada is emergent: participation in reconciliation efforts is imperative. Very little educational research has focused on organizational learning and reconciliation; the incorporation of Indigenous ways of knowing, language, and culture into problem-based organizational learning in non-Aboriginal businesses and corporations in Canada; or on the usage of new media as a means of promoting Indigenous knowledge, language, culture, and reconciliation within the Eurocentric corporate construct.

Research Questions

- How can Indigenous language revitalization, coupled with new media, be used to facilitate reconciliation efforts of Canadian corporations?
- What are the implications for organizational learning in both Canadian Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal business and corporations?





Reconciliation and the Organization

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action (2015)

- Section 92: We call upon the corporate sector in Canada to adopt the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* as a reconciliation framework and to apply its principles, norms, and standards to corporate policy and core operational activities involving Indigenous peoples and their lands and resources (TRC, 2015, p.10).



Section 92(i)

- Commit to meaningful consultation, building respectful relationships, and obtaining the free, prior, and informed consent of Indigenous peoples before proceeding with economic development projects (TRC, 2015, p.10).



Section 92 (ii)

- Ensure that Aboriginal peoples have equitable access to jobs, training, and education opportunities in the corporate sector, and that Aboriginal communities gain long-term sustainable benefits from economic development projects (TRC, 2015, p.10).



Section 92(iii)

- Provide education for management and staff on the history of Aboriginal peoples, including the history and legacy of residential schools, the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, Treaties and Aboriginal Rights, Indigenous law, and Aboriginal-Crown relations. This will require skills based training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism (TRC, 2015, P.10).



What is organizational learning?

- Facilitated, collectivist, collaborative learning that is problem-based; focused on finding and meeting the operational needs of a business or corporation (Raelin, 2008), and the development of human capital (Brown, Doucette & Tulk, 2016).
- Responsibility for problem solving moves from an executive function, to a bottom-up collaborative function.
- Organizational learning is non-formal or informal, team oriented, and often action research driven.



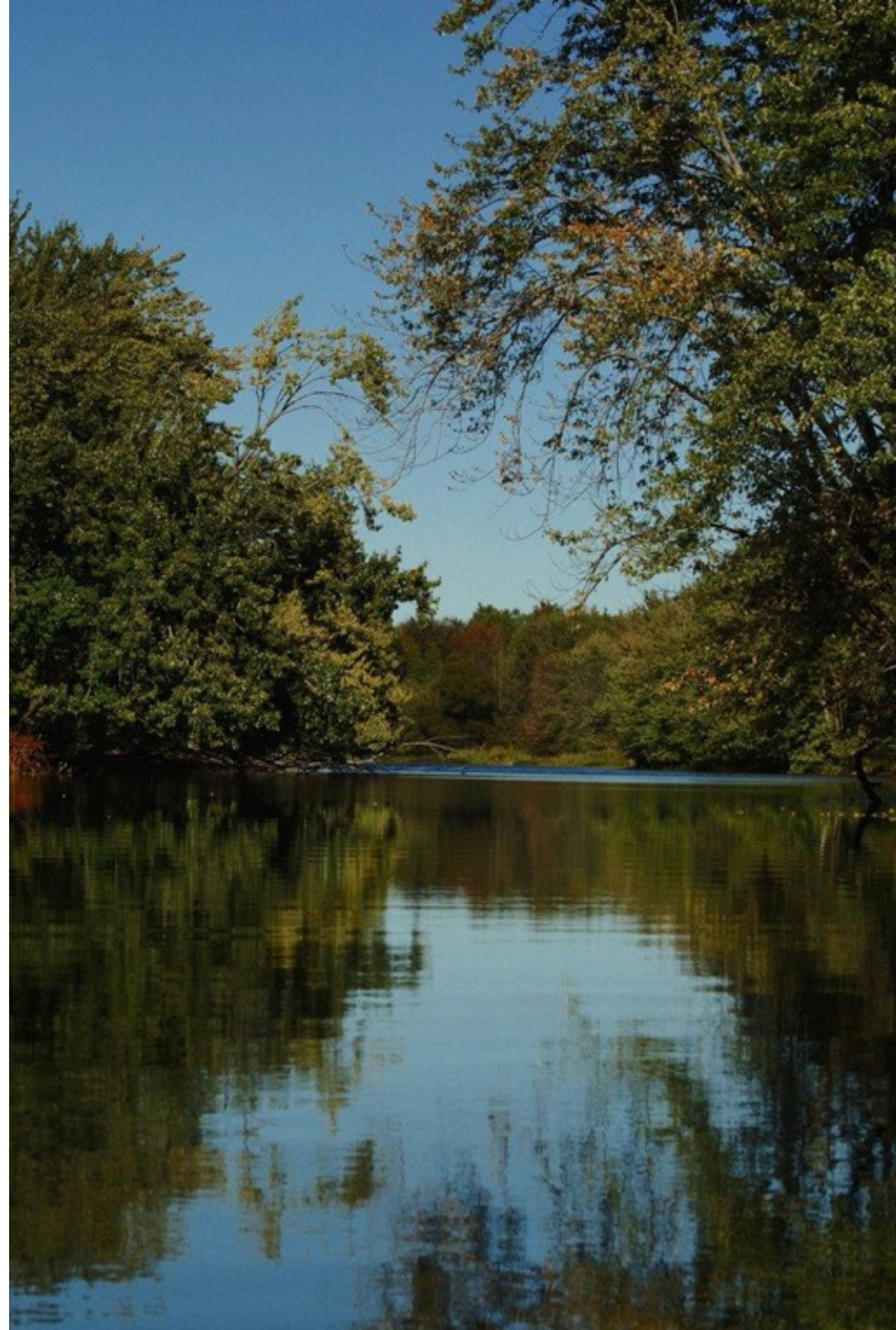
How can reconciliation be addressed in an organizational setting?

- The organization should honour the local Indigenous people, their lands, culture, language, and history (Baloy, 2011; TRC, 2015).
- Indigenous communities should be consulted with throughout the economic development process (TRC, 2015).
- Local Indigenous communities should be invited to share their history with the organization, and become part of the organizational culture.
- To create an inclusive and welcoming organization, local Elders should be consulted to help design organizational learning and work spaces (Orr, 2000).
- Use of Indigenous knowledge, and ways of knowing in collaborative learning activities and daily operations.
- Use of local Indigenous language(s) in greetings (short phrases); consult Elders in appropriate language usage within the organization (Baloy, 2011) to avoid reputation of tokenism and cultural appropriation within the local Indigenous community.
- Appreciate Indigenous self-determination as it relates to the organization. Land usage should be responsible, sustainable, and not violate any treaty agreements.



What is Indigenous self-determination?

- Indigenous self-determination “entails unconditional freedom to live one’s relational, place-based existence, and practice healthy relationships” (Corntassel & Bryce, 2012, p. 152).
- “Indigenous self-determination can be rearticulated as part of a sustainable, community-based process rather than solely as narrowly constructed political or legal entitlements” (Corntassel & Bryce, 2012, p.153).



Indigenous culture and language loss

- Indigenous communities in Canada have faced language loss as a result of forced government assimilation processes.
- Canada's residential school system (1870s to 1996) engaged in a "systematic eradication of the culture of each First Nations student" (White, 2006, p.91).
- Through urbanization, many Indigenous people have lost their connections to their traditional lands, communities, languages and culture (Baloy, 2011).
- Language endangerment leads to "the diminishing of human knowledge" (Eisenlohr, 2004, p.22) and world views, as traditional Indigenous knowledge is rooted in the land and the language.



Reconciliation as framework for human capital development

- In 2011 Canada's Indigenous population was 1,400,685; the Indigenous population grew 20.1% compared to non-Indigenous population growth rate of 5.2% (Roness, 2016), "Aboriginal people are in the midst of a baby boom and could help fill Canada's anticipated labour shortage" (p.189).
- Educational attainment for Indigenous people is lower than non-Indigenous; 48.4% of Indigenous people aged between 25 and 64 had postsecondary education in comparison with 64.7% of same non-Indigenous population (Roness, 2016).
- "Critical to supporting literacy is understanding that Aboriginal learners face challenges due to the intergenerational effects of residential schools and schools' historic failure to acknowledge and reflect Aboriginal identity (Ing, 2002)" (McKeough, Bird, Tourigny, Romaine, Graham, Ottman & Jeary, 2008, pp.148-149).



Indigenous language revitalization rights

- The *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* guarantees the following right:
- Article 13(1.): Indigenous peoples have the right to revitalize, use, develop and transmit to future generations their histories, languages, oral traditions, philosophies, writing systems and literatures, and to designate and retain their own names for communities, places and persons (UN, 2008, p.7).



Urban Indigenous language revitalization

- Urban Indigenous communities are often diverse, with many of its members having little to no contact with their home communities, nor exposure to their heritage language, ceremonies, and traditions (Baloy, 2011).
- While most of the language revitalization initiatives are immersion based and found on-reserve, there is a growing number of urban Indigenous people reconnecting with their Indigeneity, and seeking language learning opportunities within the urban context (Baloy, 2011).
- Elders and native language speakers in urban communities often have no means (outside family communication) to use their heritage language.
- The urban environment promotes language modernization, “the development of new vocabulary and genres of speech that are part of our everyday living” (Hinton, 2011).



Pedagogy for Indigenous language revitalization in the organization

- Language revitalization in an organizational context supports the master-apprentice approach to target language learning, where a native language speaker in the organization can engage a language learner in the target language while completing employment or other daily tasks. (Baloy, 2011; Hinton, 2011).
- Making a ‘place’ for language learning in the organization can be, but not necessarily physical. It “means creating and sustaining a place in an individual’s life to learn, speak, hear, or use aboriginal language” (Baloy, 2011, p. 527).
- Engaging the local Indigenous community, its Elders, native language speakers and wisdom keepers to share their languages, stories, and traditions as appropriate.



How does new media influence language revitalization?

- There is evidence to suggest that a relationship exists “between digital engagement in rural [Indigenous] communities and individual and community resilience” (Roberts, Farrington & Skerratt, 2015, p.262); new media has the ability to promote reconciliation.
- New media provides avenues for communication between rural Indigenous communities (on-reserve) and the urbanized Indigenous population where culture, language, and Indigenous knowledge may be shared between friends and family on and off-reserve.
- Social media is a medium for engagement in social justice initiatives; raising awareness of Indigenous decolonization and reconciliation issues on a global level.
- The younger population has grown up with access to digital technologies.
- Language applications have the ability to deliver language programming on a large scale.
- Corporations use digital language applications and language translation services to disseminate information to a large scale, diverse audience (Romero, 2016).
- New media is non-discriminatory in that it has become accessible to all persons with digital connectivity (Roberts, et al., 2015).



Indigenous rights to media access

- The *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* guarantees the following rights:
- Article 16(1.): Indigenous peoples have the right to establish their own media in their own languages and to have access to all forms of non-Indigenous media without discrimination (UN, 2008, p.7).



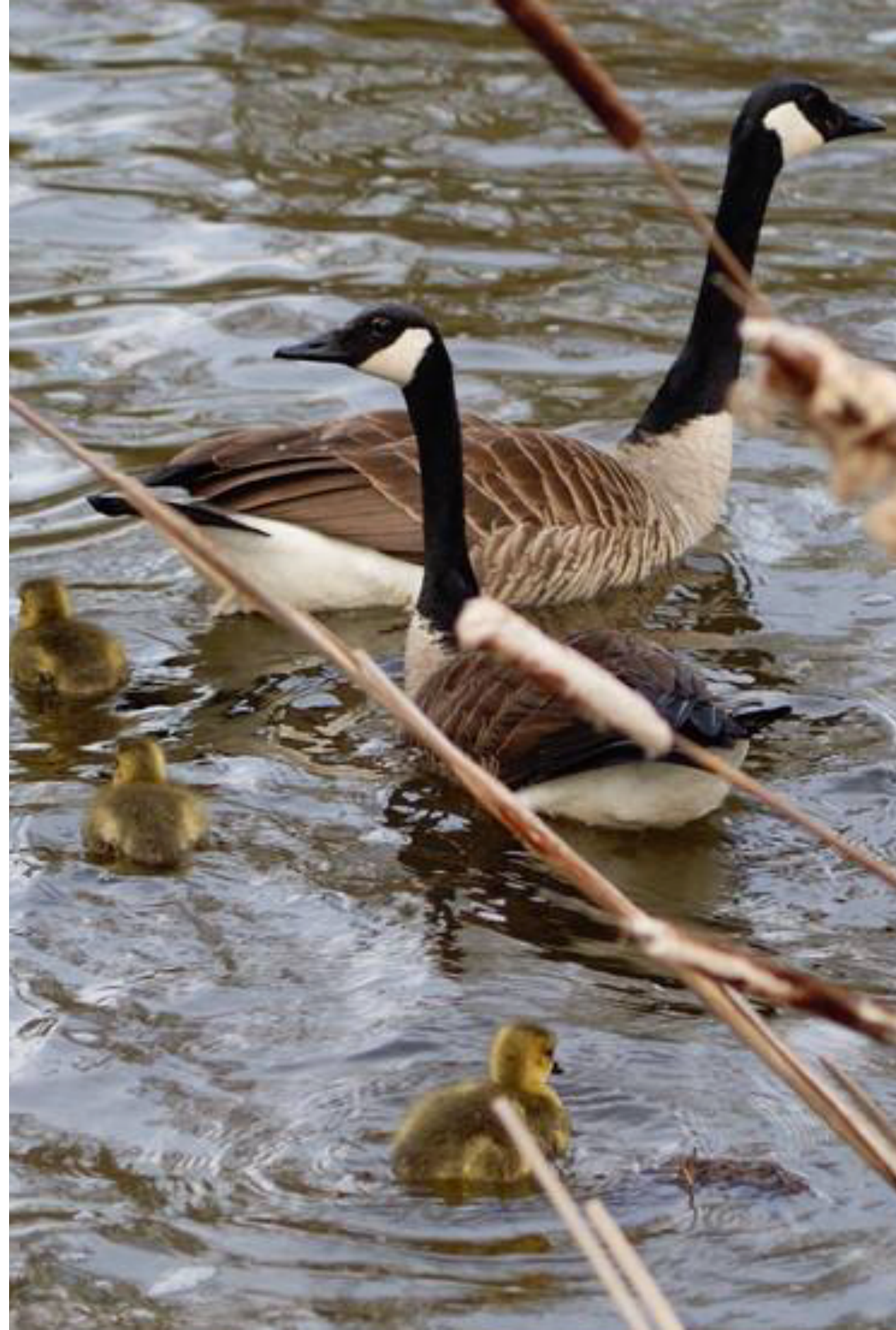
How is new media used in organizations?

- Information gathering and dissemination.
- Recruiting new employees, partnerships, and customer base.
- Websites designed to promote a specific organization, its ethos, structure, and products or services provided.
- Social media to promote organization, leadership, stakeholders, products, services, or community involvement.
- Social media as a communication tool for customers, stakeholders and the general public.
- Public relations and crisis communications (Schultz, Utz & Goritz, 2011).
- Social media through translation services to reach diverse, globalized clientele (Romero, 2016).



Preventing Indigenous cultural, environmental and intellectual property appropriation or exploitation

- Non-Indigenous organizations should consult local Indigenous communities, Elders, native language speakers, and wisdom keepers for the following:
- Prior to engaging in economic development projects on or in proximity to Indigenous communities.
- Prior to using Indigenous knowledge, language, or cultural items in organizational culture.
- When utilizing Indigenous languages, or securing translation services in organizational communications, or promotional materials.
- In any and all land usage matters involving traditional sustainable or non-renewable resources in the local area.



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