



**Has social media
strengthened or
weakened
2SLGBTQIA+
communities?**

Beading #NativeTwitter

(Ansloos et al., 2022)



Fig. 3. *Tweet.* Note. Feminist and queer beading representing social movement signifiers.



Fig. 4. *Tweet.* Note. Feminist and queer beading example of Louis Riel who was the first president of the Métis Nation.

“Has social media strengthened or weakened 2SLGBTQIA+ communities?”

Rather than try to answer that question, what I'd like to do is share a couple examples of how people are using online spaces and digital material that illuminates both the strengths and weaknesses in them.

My first example – **Beading #NativeTwitter** – was research by Jeffrey Ansloos, from the University of Toronto, and colleagues. Their core knowledge was that Indigenous beading was a therapeutic and healing practice and they wanted to consider the opportunities and challenges of bring beading onto the Internet (and into twitter specifically) by searching and analyzing tweets from an archive called #decolonizingdigital.

What's on slide two are a couple of examples of tweets that they found. One from **@BeadsAgainstFacism** was an example of how traditional beading could also incorporate queer social movement signifiers, such as non-binary, trans, and rainbow flags. The other one by **@beadedchickadee** is an example of how beaders are reclaiming historical figures in Indigenous history as queer icons.

Both of these tweets are examples of beading as a Feminist and Queer expression. The lists on page four consider how digital spaces can support beading as an Indigenous therapeutic practice, as well as the tensions that arise at the intersections of beading and healing online.

Check out the full article here:

Ansloos, J., Morford, A. C., Dunn, N. S., DuPré, L., & Kucheran, R. (2022). Beading Native Twitter: Indigenous arts-based approaches to healing and resurgence. *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, 79(NA), Article 101914. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.aip.2022.101914>

Beading was seen as a Feminist and Queer expression, that when brought into digital spaces it also fostered:

- cultural resurgence
- accessibility
- positive economic impact
- communal support

and was an act of political resistance

Ethical tensions persist online and contribute to:

- cultural appropriation
- lack of accountability
- digital power imbalances (popularity)
- banning or suspension for calling out violence experienced on a platform

memes

- a piece of media that is repurposed to deliver a cultural, social or political expression
- a self-replicating chunk of information
- digital folklore – or "Netlore"



My second example is memes. One definition of a meme is: any piece of media that is repurposed to deliver a cultural, social or political expression that has the ability to capture insight in a way that is in complete alignment with the zeitgeist (spirit of the times). Others describe memes as happening before the internet in terms of communication and connection, and liken them to inside jokes or popular jingles – any self-replicating chunk of information that is shareable and repeatable.

In any case, **Memes are a big part of what is called digital folklore – or "Netlore"**.

The strengths of Memes are that they can facilitate communication, feelings of belonging, and digital activism. However, the reason I've chosen to feature Pepe the Frog on this page – is that memes can also be very harmful.

Pepe – also known as the sad frog meme – was first a cartoon with a popular catchphrase "*feels good man*". Pepe began as a laid-back frog in college in the comic series called Boy's Club created by artist Matt Furie in 2005. But on platforms such as 4chan, and Reddit, Pepe quickly became used to spread racism and white supremacy by people behind screens. Because of this Pepe is now a recognized symbol of hate by the anti-defamation league. It's important to note that not all uses of Pepe on the internet are hateful.

If you're interested, there is a documentary of the evolution of Pepe on PBS: [Feels Good Man](#)

Another example of the power of memes is **"the horrors persist, but so do I"**

This meme began as a phrase on tumbler in January 2023, then re-appeared on twitter for Tran Day of Visibility on March 31. The cultural context of the meme has remained intact and important in its relation to responding against attacks on trans people and its use online more generally to acknowledge both the hard experiences people face as well as how we endure them and keep showing up.

The power of memes

Began on tumblr.

First appearing in 2023, peaking in popularity in Spring 2023.

The cultural context of the meme was its relation to attacks on trans people and its use online on Trans Day of Visibility.

