

How Content Creators Talk About Climate Change

Climate Communications Case Story



PROJECT AT-A-GLANCE

Project Title: How Content Creators Talk About Climate Change

Location: Canada

Project Partners: Individual Content Creators, ICLEI Canada, CBC

Date: Published in August, 2024

Climate Issue: Various

Action Area: Climate change awareness and various actions

Behavioural Theme(s): Cognitive Dissonance, Intrinsic Value Framing, Positive Framing, Social Norms and Prompts, Social Influence, Visual Storytelling, Timing and Tipping Point

Audience: Generation Z, millennials

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It's all about, how can I shift the cultural zeitgeist of the conversation—whatever it is—to climate? How can I shove climate into this conversation?

— Karishma Porwal, CBC interview¹⁸

IMPACT STORY

An increasing number of Canadian social media influencers and content creators are leveraging popular culture and current events to foster climate awareness and inspire action. A CBC article and podcast featuring interviews with content creators Karishma Porwal (@karishmaclimategirl on TikTok), Hazel Thayer (@hazelisonline on TikTok and Instagram), and Aaron Hagey-MacKay (@the_goose_media on Instagram), explores how these influencers use a range of tactics to engage their audiences with climate issues. ICLEI Canada's Ewa Jackson also weighed in on the topic of climate communications and the need to understand audiences when talking about climate change to make messaging more engaging.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES INCLUDE...

- Integrating the climate conversation into daily conversations;
- Inspiring climate action among social media audiences; and
- Challenging consumer culture norms.

COMMUNICATION & ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

- **Short-Form Social Media Content:** Using platforms like TikTok, YouTube, and Instagram, content creators produce short, engaging videos that tie climate issues to current events, popular shows, and cultural trends.
- **Hashtags and Leveraging the Algorithm:** Content creators use trending topics, hashtags, and viral moments that are picked up by social media algorithms as hooks to introduce climate messages before shifting conversations from popular culture to environmental awareness.

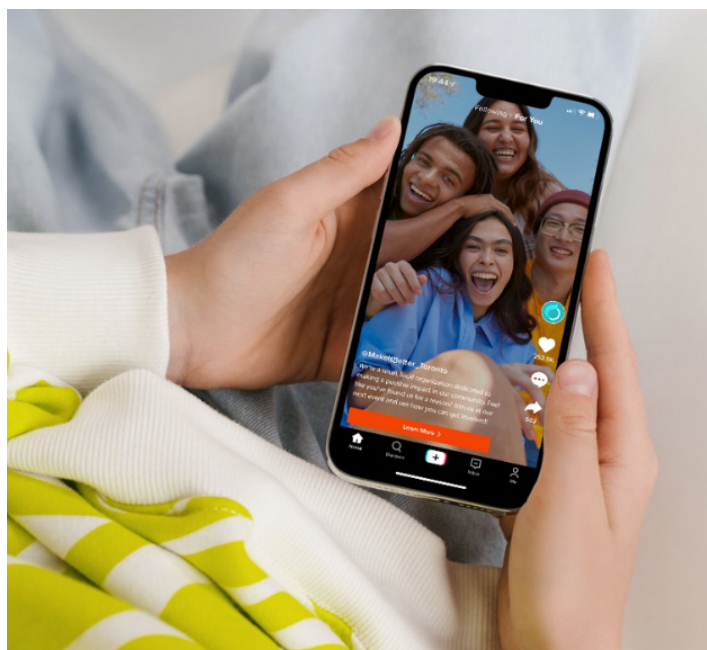
BEHAVIOURAL STRATEGIES & TAKEAWAYS

- **Cognitive Dissonance:** Content creators use personal narratives and relatable pop culture references to make climate science more accessible while leveraging cognitive dissonance to challenge viewers' beliefs around consumption and lifestyle choices, prompting them to reconsider their daily habits.
- **Intrinsic Value Framing:** By linking climate change to everyday political issues like housing and affordability, content creators make the climate topic locally relevant and relatable to personal values, experiences and beliefs.
- **Social Influence:** With tens of thousands of combined followers, social media influencers have great reach on platforms like TikTok, YouTube, and Instagram where the messages they share with followers is likely to inspire action.
- **Social Norms and Prompts:** By weaving climate messaging into popular, widely discussed content, content creators normalize climate awareness and foster a collective sense of responsibility, prompting followers to change their behaviours and take action.
- **Positive Framing:** Avoiding the typical doom-and-gloom narratives and opting instead to use lighthearted content and pop culture references that require little emotional investment, content creators make climate messaging engaging and uplifting, empowering viewers rather than overwhelming them.
- **Visual Storytelling:** Using visually appealing, dynamic content and interactive formats popular on social media platforms, content creators maintain audience engagement and convey their climate messages effectively.

- **Timing and Tipping Point:** In a fast-paced social media landscape, consistently reinforcing core climate messages in varied contexts and piggy-backing on the moment's latest trends helps maintain engagement and ensures the message resonates with diverse audiences.

CONCLUSION

By creatively weaving climate messaging into popular culture and current events, Canadian content creators are transforming public perceptions of climate change from a distant, abstract issue to a personal, immediate concern. Through the use of dynamic videos on social media platforms, these creators leverage trending topics, debunk misinformation, and highlight the links between climate change and everyday issues. This approach makes climate discussions more accessible and engaging, particularly for youth. Partnering with influencers and noticing online trends is a great way to amplify climate messages thoughtfully and effectively.



SOURCES

Chhabra, S. (2024, August 25). How do you get people to care about climate change? Start with the new fad dating show. *CBC News*. <https://www.cbc.ca/radio/whatonearth/climate-change-content-creation-1.7299546>

Lynch, L. (2024, August 11). The creators trying to 'shove climate change' into your feed (Episode title). In *What on Earth with Laura Lynch*. *CBC Radio*. <https://www.cbc.ca/listen/live-radio/1-429-what-on-earth/clip/16086914-the-creators-trying-shove-climate-change-feed>

MORE CASE STUDIES AND RESOURCES ONLINE

This case story was developed by ICLEI Canada through the Ontario Resource Centre for Climate Adaptation (ORCCA) as part of a Climate Communications Toolkit. Find more case stories and additional climate communications resources online at icleicanada.org/project/climate-communications-toolkit

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CLIMATE COMMUNICATIONS TOOLKIT

