

Maple League Executive Director Monthly Report

September 30, 2020



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Executive Director's Note:

September has been a busy month as we begin a new academic year in the midst of a global pandemic. We've been preparing, bracing, and breathing in advance of the Fall semester and now it is upon us.

Are we ready? [A recent *Insider Ed* article](#) indicates that the professoriate has put in the work: in a US study, 80% of university instructors said they had participated in professional development for digital learning to prepare for this fall.

Preparation has been animated by diverse responses to these disruptions; some professors have reported frustration, fatigue, disorientation, hope, excitement (sometimes in the same day!).

How do we respond to these pressures with critical hope?

Hope requires that we become comfortable with the difficulty of *knowing*—in order to move forward, into the future, into the unknown. Hope is fuelled by values—of integrity, of ethical and moral responsibility, of citizenship and engagement. We go into teaching and scholarly work because we believe (even if we haven't articulated it to ourselves fully) that development, improvement, transformation are all possible when we are engaged in nurturing an insatiable intellectual curiosity, in ourselves and in young people.

Teaching is an exercise in hope: you must live in a world where you cannot see the impact you might have in some distant future you might never access—and do it anyway.

Exercising the hope muscle keeps us on that optimistic course, even when we might see plenty of evidence that things don't work or don't work as quickly as we would like. Learners and learning are not metaphors for hope, but, rather, hope embodied, hope on the move, hope as an agent, a method of acting and a way of seeing. In other words, Ira Shor says "*The hopeful challenging the actual in the name of the possible*" (Shor 3).

Arundhati Roy's article in *The Financial Times* (April 3, 2020) gives us the impetus to exercise our critical hope muscles as we imagine a new post-COVID world:

Historically, pandemics have forced humans to break with the past and imagine their world anew. This one is no different. It is a portal, a gateway between one world and the next. We can choose to walk through it, dragging the carcasses of our prejudice and hatred, our avarice, our

data banks and dead ideas, our dead rivers and smoky skies behind us. Or we can walk through lightly, with little luggage, ready to imagine another world. And ready to fight for it

The world we are ready to fight for is one that is more inclusive, just, and equitable. You will note in the September report that we've highlighted recent Maple League programming related to equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging: this complex, messy and difficult work to dismantle systems of oppression and exclusion must propel us through Roy's "pandemic portal."

1. PROGRAMMING: The Maple League's summer programming has been focused on anti-racism in academic spaces. We hosted four webinars with topics that included discussions on anti-Black racism, practicing anti-racism in academic and community spaces, and decolonization. These webinars reached over 250 stakeholders across the four universities.
2. STRATEGIC VISIONING: We engaged in EDI strategic visioning in August with the help and guidance of Tari Ajadi, Maple League Visiting Scholar, and a Ph.D. candidate at Dalhousie University working on Black activism and coalition-building across Canada.
3. BOOK CLUB: In the Fall term we are hosting an inter-institutional book club focusing on anti-racist pedagogy across the four campuses and beyond. The book selected is *So you want to talk about Race?* by Ijeoma Oluo. Over 40 participants are engaging in identity work and sense-making of racism in their own lives and communities.
4. CALLS TO ACTION: The MLTLC co-designed a BLM Statement and calls to action which will be rolled out over the Fall semester. We are also committed to amplifying Lara Hartman's calls to action for decolonizing the consortium.
5. STUDENT PARTNERS & AMPLIFYING STUDENT VOICES: Hiring Student Fellows for anti-racist, decolonizing, and belonging initiatives. Lara Hartman (Acadia University) is a Maple League Indigenous Student Fellow; Tanisha Campbell (Bishop's University) is Maple League Student Fellow for Knowledge Mobilization, working on increasing representation on HIPs for BIPOC; we are currently in the process of hiring a Maple League Student Fellow to support the MLTLC.
6. SHARED EVENTS: The global pandemic has in some ways given us an opportunity to connect in virtual spaces that would not be as easy to connect in person. Two such events will shift into digital platforms to engage our communities in important conversations about EDI: 1.

October 4 Sisters in Spirit event hosted by Acadia and shared across the ML; 2. A Maple League Racial Justice Symposium hosted by Mount Allison (Ivan Okello and Adam Christie) in November 2020.

7. AFFINITY GROUPS: As we transition into our Fall programming with a dual focus on faculty/staff and students, we are hosting affinity group meetings (Tatum, 2019; Pour-Khorshid, 2018; Blitz & Kohl, 2012) for first-generation students, Indigenous students, and BIPOC students to meet and build community across our four institutions.

8. CONNECTIONS: We have connected the chairs of the EDI Task Forces on each of the four campuses to explore possible collaborations and share upcoming events like the October 4th Sisters in Spirit event (Acadia) and the Racial Justice Symposium (Mount Allison).

As always, I am inspired, heartened, and humbled by colleagues across the Maple League who are doing the difficult work of critical hope. Learning is embodied hope. It happens *in time*. It happens *in places and spaces to people*.

“We never are what we are,” John D. Caputo writes, “something different is always possible” (Caputo, *Radical Hermeneutics* 35). As we go through this process, making space for the act of becoming, the act of transformation, will be key, so that we might – even in a shaky voice – say, “I am willing to be different in five minutes, or 13 weeks or four years from what I am now.” This is a tremendous act of courage.

~ Dr. Jessica Riddell, Executive Director, Maple League of Universities

I. Inter-Institutional Collaboration

Virtual Maple League Teaching and Learning Centre

Throughout September, we engaged with faculty, staff, and students across the Maple League and supported extraordinary student experiences through teaching and learning in the following ways:

1. Better Together: Thursday 'Faculty Open Office Hours'; for faculty, facilitated by faculty
2. Better Together: Tuesday 'Student Hours'; for students, facilitated by students
3. MLTLC Book Club: *So you want to talk about race*

Better Together: Thursday 'Faculty Open Office Hours'; for faculty, facilitated by faculty

As we transitioned from pedagogical 'design' to 'delivery' we have decided to shift our summer Better Together programming to better suit the needs of facilitators and participants. For the month of September, we have held 'Faculty Open Office Hours' where faculty and teaching staff from across the Maple League were invited to log-in and discuss the topic and how it relates to their teaching.

Thursday, September 3: Discussing Hybrid Delivery facilitated by Dr. Ornella Nzindukiyimana (StFX).

V_MLTLC Faculty Open Office Hours

September 3rd: 'Discussing Hybrid Delivery'



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V_MLTLC Faculty Open Office Hours

September 24th: 'Community Check-In and Reflection'



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Thursday, September 10: Discussion Board Success facilitated by Dr. Rosemary Polegato (Mount Allison).

Thursday, September 17: Faculty Wellness facilitated by Johannah Black (StFX).

Thursday, September 24: Community Check-In and Reflection facilitated by Dr. Erin Mazerolle, Dr. Erin Austen, and Dr. Angie Kolen (StFX).

Better Together: Tuesday ‘Student Hours’; for students, facilitated by students

On Tuesdays in September, all Maple League students were invited to ‘Student Hours!’ These sessions were intended for a student audience and led by student leaders across the Maple League. Topics this month centred around student success and the transition back to university:

V_MLTLC Student Open Office Hours

September 15th: ‘Learning Strategies for Academic Success’



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Tuesday, September 1: **Learning Strategies for Academic Success** facilitated by Georges-Philippe Gadoury-Sansfaçon (Bishop’s) and Charlie Burke (Mount Allison).

Tuesday, September 8: **Student Wellness** facilitated by Addy Strickland (StFX), Emma Kuzmyk (StFX) and Alisha Winter (Bishop’s).

Tuesday, September 15: **Learning Strategies for Academic Success** facilitated by Siobhan Lacey (StFX) and Lydia Houck (Acadia).

Tuesday, September 22: **First-Generation Student Meet & Greet** facilitated by Caitlin O’Connor (Mount Allison) and Ty Kingston (StFX).

Tuesday, September 29: **Student-Athlete Meet & Greet** facilitated by Josh Read (StFX), Claire MacDougall (StFX), Nathaniel Benjamin (Mount Allison), and Guy Harrison-Murray (Acadia).

V_MLTLC Student Open Office Hours

September 29th: ‘Student-Athlete Meet & Greet’



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“It’s great to hear honest, open advice from students. It was great to get in the right headspace and it inspired me to be proactive about this semester”

~ Participant Feedback, September 1: Learning Strategies for Academic Success

Recent Maple League programming related to equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging

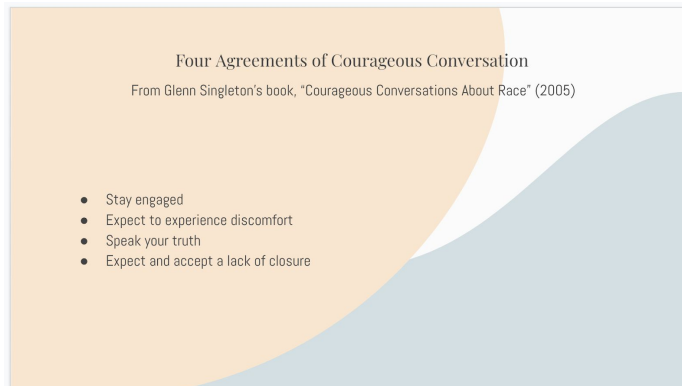
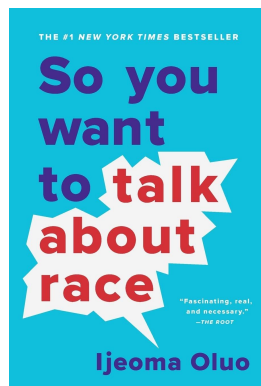
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MLTLC Book Club: *So you want to talk about race*

This Fall semester we are hosting an inter-institutional book club focusing on anti-racist teaching and learning across the four campuses and beyond. The book selected is *So you want to talk about Race?* by Ijeoma Oluo. September 21-25 was the first week of our book club, where over 40 participants worked in small groups (10-15 people per group) and committed to meeting biweekly over the semester. Book club participants are engaging in identity work and sense-making of racism in their own lives and communities.



3M Mentoring Networks

Looking ahead to the 3M Fellowship nomination season, we are strengthening our mentoring networks to bolster the quality and quantity of applications from across our four institutions. We have embedded institutional champions and are preparing to submit both student and faculty dossiers from each university. Applicants will work with embedded champions, as well as 3M recipients from across the Maple League, in order to submit high-quality and competitive dossiers.

Save the Dates!***October 1 & 2: National Dialogues and Action for Inclusive Higher Education and Communities***

Members of the V_MLTLC will be attending the National Dialogues and Action for Inclusive Higher Education and Communities hosted by the University of Toronto.

The National Dialogues are a series of national forums focused on addressing equity and inclusion in Canadian post-secondary education. The first in the series is a National Dialogue that will focus on anti-Black racism and Black inclusion in Canadian higher education and will take place on Thursday, October 1 and Friday, October 2, 12 p.m. – 4 p.m. (ET).

NATIONAL DIALOGUES AND ACTION FOR INCLUSIVE HIGHER EDUCATION AND COMMUNITIES OCTOBER 1 & 2, 2020

This year's Dialogues and Action will focus on sharing experiences and ideas, exploring and learning best practices, and contributing to the formulation and implementation of concrete actions that resolutely reject anti-Black racism and drive meaningful, enduring Black inclusion within individual universities and colleges; the higher education sector, in general; and our communities.

These events are open to all, you can [register here](#)

October 4: Sisters in Spirit organized by Acadia University & Maple League Indigenous Student Fellow Lara Hartman

October 4th is a day when we honour the lives of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Gender Diverse People, and look for opportunities to heal from this national tragedy. COVID-19 has not stopped that we are just holding a different type of event on October 4, 2020. Please join us virtually on this important day to honour those we have lost and demand action so that this tragedy does not take any more Indigenous women, girls, or gender diverse people. There will be speakers with different stories and information to share and different suggestions for moving forward to a better future for all.

October 24: AAU Teaching Showcase hosted by St. Francis Xavier University

Organized by the StFX Teaching and Learning Centre under the direction of MLTLC Member Dr. Angie Kolen, this year's AAU Teaching Showcase will be a virtual professional development opportunity open to all members of the Maple League. Save the date: Saturday, October 24, 2020, for a celebration of teaching and learning excellence across the Atlantic provinces.



November: Racial Justice Symposium

The [Racial Justice Symposium at Mount Allison](#), originally scheduled for the 2020 Winter Semester, is being rescheduled for this Fall. While the original March 2020 symposium focussed on student groups across the four universities, plans are underway for making this event open to students, faculty, staff, and administrators from all Maple League Universities. The event is being organized by Ivan Okello (Black Student Advisor and Diversity Educator) and Adam Christie (Director of Student Life & International Services) at Mount Allison.

Research Webinars

Dr. David Bruce, Director of Research Grants at St. Francis Xavier, held the first Fall webinar on the Canadian Common CV (CCV) September 16th and will be hosting additional CCV sessions later in the Fall. These webinars covered all aspects of how the CCV is set-up and used, with particular attention paid to how best to maximize each part of the CCV as part of a grant application.

RSC Fellows

With support from the Maple League Vice Presidents Academic, the Maple League Research Committee is pursuing a joint letter from the Maple League to the RSC for a consortium discount on the membership fee of \$5,000. This is a very extensive application process and the Maple League could benefit from the support.

Maple League Book Launch

Dr. Lauren Beck, a Canadian Research Chair (CRC) at Mount Allison, is taking the lead on a virtual Maple League book launch featuring Maple League colleagues who have books coming out in 2020. Dr. Beck and Dr. Ailén Cruz are creating a website where book descriptions, sample chapters, and possibly “meet the author” interviews could be found. If successful, this may become an annual event. The call may also be broadened to articles that have come out in 2020 in order to do features on authors whose work will resonate, for instance in work about racial equality.

NSERC Discovery Grant Workshop for Maple League

Dr. Richard Isnor gathered a group of seven researchers across the Maple League to be panellists at a Maple League NSERC Discovery Grant workshop that occurred on Wednesday, September 9th. The feedback from the workshop was overwhelmingly positive.

“I wanted to thank all of you again for your participation and thoughtful suggestions at this morning’s session. The quality of the advice for the participants was excellent and also very useful for the research office participants in the session!”

~ Dr. Richard Isnor, Associate VP, Research & Graduate Studies, St. FX University

“The session was excellent and the recorded webinar will be a great information resource for all those who could not attend.”

*~ Dr. Anna Redden, Professor & Dean, Research & Graduate Studies, Acadia University
Chair of Maple League Research Committee*

Maple League Funding Extensions

Initially, in order to receive funding for a project through a designated Maple League fund, applicants must have planned to spend the requested funding within one calendar year of fund distribution. Due to the restrictions the COVID-19 pandemic has placed on travel and research capabilities, the eight Maple League funded projects have received a deadline extension one year. New calls for funding for 2020 - 2021 will be issued later in the Fall semester.

Communities of Practice

The acceleration of the activities undertaken by the Maple League in the past few months has highlighted the appetite for collaboration amongst the four schools. Logistically that means our three Committees - the Maple League Teaching and Learning Committee (MLTLC), the Maple League Academic Committee and the Maple League Research Committee - and nine of our stakeholder groups are now meeting monthly or bi-weekly to engage in strategic planning, resource sharing, evidence gathering, and benchmarking.

Standing monthly meetings have now been booked with the following groups:

- Presidents Council
- Union Presidents
- VP Academics
- Student Affairs
- Academic Deans
- Registrars
- IT Directors
- Athletics
- Communications Directors

Of particular note is the collaboration between the IT Directors and the Registrars as they work together to create a central hub where student information is securely stored and shared amongst the four Registrars. The goal is to create a Microsoft Teams hub for workflow management on SharePoint that will make for a more efficient and streamlined process for students taking one of the Maple League Shared Courses.



II. External Engagement

Maple League Hosts Speaker Series



On September 16, our “Maple League Hosts” series featured 3M Fellows: Dr. Lisa Dickson, Dr. Shannon Murray, and Maple League Executive Director Dr. Jessica Riddell. The panellists explored the strategy of Naming, Claiming and Aiming our Teaching Discomforts. We were joined by participants across the Maple League, as well as external participants from Mount Saint Vincent University, Dalhousie University and Northern Illinois University. Keep an eye on the [Maple League of Universities](#) Youtube Channel for a recording of this session.

UNSW Connection Seminars

Connections is a series of seminars at the University of New South Wales in Australia, facilitated by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Education Portfolio, that explore different aspects of learning and teaching. Dr. Jessica Riddell, as a special guest and subject matter expert, will discuss on October 6th from 8:00-9:00 pm (Eastern Time), how Bishop's University Online Learning and Technology Consultants project to support the COVID-19 transition to online learning, and the measured benefits. Register for the event [here](#).



HSBC Social Innovation Academy Partnership

The Maple League has been approached by the coordinator of this program to encourage Maple League students to apply for their fellowship that is geared toward youth interested in the intersections of impact with research, finance, design. Significantly, the Maple League has also been asked to partner with them as a Social Purpose Organization (SPO) with a design challenge in Winter 2021.



Maple League Mentions

The Maple League has organically shown up in the news a few times this quarter. [A story in the Toronto Star](#) written by a Halifax correspondent had a Maple League angle about the return to school during COVID-19. This article was also [featured in Caledon Enterprise](#), an Ontario local subsidiary of Torstar Corporation.

Additionally, due to the level of care taken in return to school protocols, Mount Allison was mentioned in Academics Top Ten and [CBC](#) as a Maple League school in New Brunswick welcoming students back to campus this Fall.

External Funding

Dr. Jessica Riddell, with the assistance of Heather Carroll, Lauren Boulton and Tiffany MacLennan, submitted a proposal to Business + Higher Education Roundtable (BHER) for \$100,000 for **building a suite of Maple League Online Courses with Students as Partners in WIL** (Work-Integrated Learning). The Student Partners Program aims to provide 40 students with work-integrated learning opportunities and will be trained in educational technology such as Moodle, Microsoft Teams, etc., as well as empathetic pedagogy which brings students' needs to the centre of teaching and learning practices. Following training, students will work directly with professors to help build online courses that are of the highest possible quality.

Led by Charlene Marion at Bishop's University, the Maple League submitted an application on September 18 for \$100,000 of funding through Business + Higher Education Roundtable (BHER) for a pilot project to give Bishop's and Acadia students, staff and faculty access to **LinkedIn Learning** and courses for all Maple League students with an applied project and focus on competency development.



Renewal of RIIPEN

On September 18, Dr. Jessica Riddell, Heather Carroll and Tiffany MacLennan met with Jennifer Lussier, (Relationship Manager at Riipen) to benchmark our progress and plan to bring more stakeholders across the Maple League to the RIIPEN platform. Jennifer Lussier reported that the Maple League has surpassed the goal of 200 experiential learning challenges completed by students in 2020.

III. The Maple League Team

Tiffany MacLennan named a Fellow in the SPARC Open Education Leadership Program

Tiffany MacLennan has been selected as a fellow in the [SPARC Open Education Leadership Program](#), an intensive professional development program to empower academic professionals with the knowledge, skills, and community connections to lead successful open education initiatives that benefit students. The two-semester program blends online, peer-to-peer, and project-based learning to build a comprehensive understanding of the open education field coupled with practical know-how to take action on campus and beyond. Tiffany is one of 21 fellows selected from a competitive application pool for the program's [2020-2021 cohort](#). Tiffany will report to the Maple League of Universities on content, opportunities, and potential collaborations learned within SPARC's Open Education Leadership Program and complete a capstone project for SPARC's Open Education Leadership Program with the Maple League of Universities. Tiffany will also develop and manage Open Educational Resource Awareness Campaigns for the Maple League of Universities. As a component of Tiffany's fellowship, she will provide Open Educational Resources consulting to the Maple League of Universities for two years (up to fifty hours per year) and Open Educational Resources consulting to the Students' Associations of the Maple League of Universities for five years, at no charge, up to fifty hours per year.

Lara Hartman takes the Lead on Sisters in Spirit at Acadia University

Our Maple League Indigenous Student Fellow, Lara Hartman, and the Indigenous Student Coordinator Zabrina Whitman at Acadia are sharing the programming (hosted by Acadia University and partners from coast to coast to coast) with the Maple League community. Lara sent along this invitation:

"October 4th is a day when we honour the lives of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Gender Diverse People, and look for opportunities to heal from this national tragedy. COVID-19 has not stopped that we are just holding a different type of event on October 4, 2020. Please join us virtually on this important day to honour those we have lost and demand action so that this tragedy does not take any more Indigenous women, girls, or gender diverse people. There will be speakers with different stories and information to share and different suggestions for moving forward to a better future for all."

Tanisha Campell rolls out a Knowledge Mobilization Project on High Impact Practices

Tanisha Campbell expands her role this Fall to include Knowledge Mobilization on High Impact Practices, as well as community engagement. In her role, Tanisha extracts and organizes information provided by fellow students to create appropriate mediums to disseminate knowledge (i.e. infographics, blogs, posters). She participates in strategic planning for project-related events and networking opportunities, and is learning how to pitch, plan, budget, implement, evaluate and report on a socially-innovative project.

Brendan MacNeil builds a mentor network for the Social Innovation Incubator

Brendan MacNeil continues to work closely with Dr. Michael Sheppard in developing The PATH's mentorship engagement plan as well as a branding and marketing strategy. He is coordinating with other campuses to launch a social media campaign and the PATH website in the coming weeks. This year, he is focused on empowering and engaging student groups to provide events and activities that help students advance outside of the classroom in their niche, and connecting these student groups to abundant alumni mentors, local industry leaders, and employers to advance their careers. He is working with the alumni departments to build a Mentor Network that will serve as the bridge between students and the real world of business, providing coaching through the various stages of startup development and creating connections.

Frédérique Larouche continues to build high quality “on-demand” digital resources for the VMLTLC

Frédérique Larouche continues to play a key role in turning the team's initiatives and visions into words and images. Through graphic design, website creation, video production or her many other talents, she ensures that everything we do is presented with a touch of creativity. Frédérique's unique skill set has been an invaluable asset to the Maple League this summer and will continue to grow as she continues her work throughout the Fall. Frédérique works closely with the Director of the V_MLTLC to edit and post videos to the Maple League YouTube page for high quality, branded asynchronous resources that have been accessed by higher education professionals from the Maple League, across Canada, and internationally.

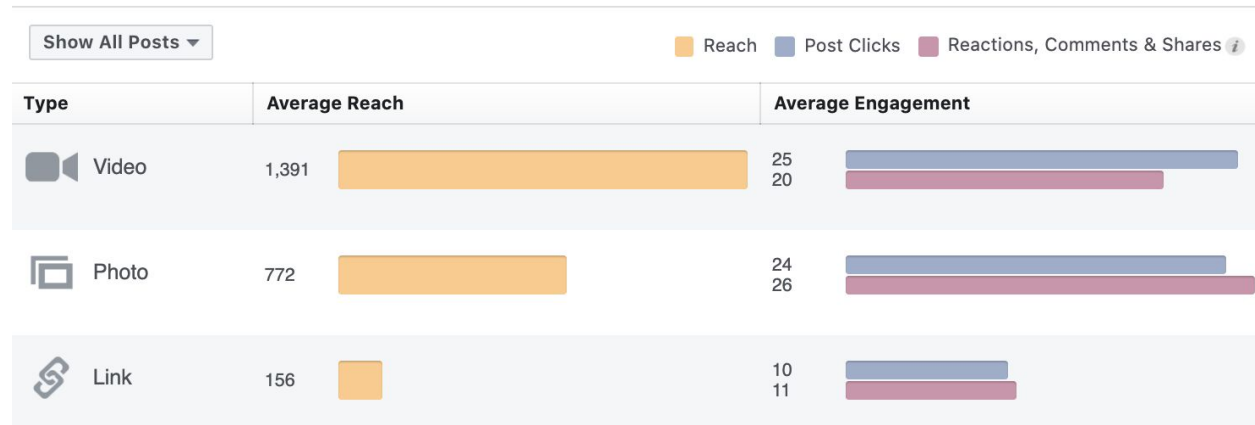
Appendix A: Communications

Social Media Insights

Facebook

Our average reach and engagement based on the type of post we share (video, photo, link, status) can be seen in the graphic below. Of particular note, this month is the average engagement of the photos and videos we have been sharing. This demonstrates that our audience is consistently engaged with our programming and are interested in finding out more and participating, which is promising for the growth of the Maple League. **Maple League followers are committed to the services we provide.**

The success of different post types based on average reach and engagement.



Twitter

The Maple League Twitter is a platform where there is consistently continued growth. Not only is our following a very **loyal and engaged** one, but we organically gained **42 new followers** this month. We had **56.1K impressions** (times our tweets are seen) this month which translates to great exposure for the Maple League. We also had **56 link clicks** this month. This not only means again an increase in exposure but confirms the loyalty and engagement of our followers.

Tweet impressions

56.1K ↑ 20.6%



Profile visits

356 ↑ 17.9%



Mentions

147 ↑ 9.7%



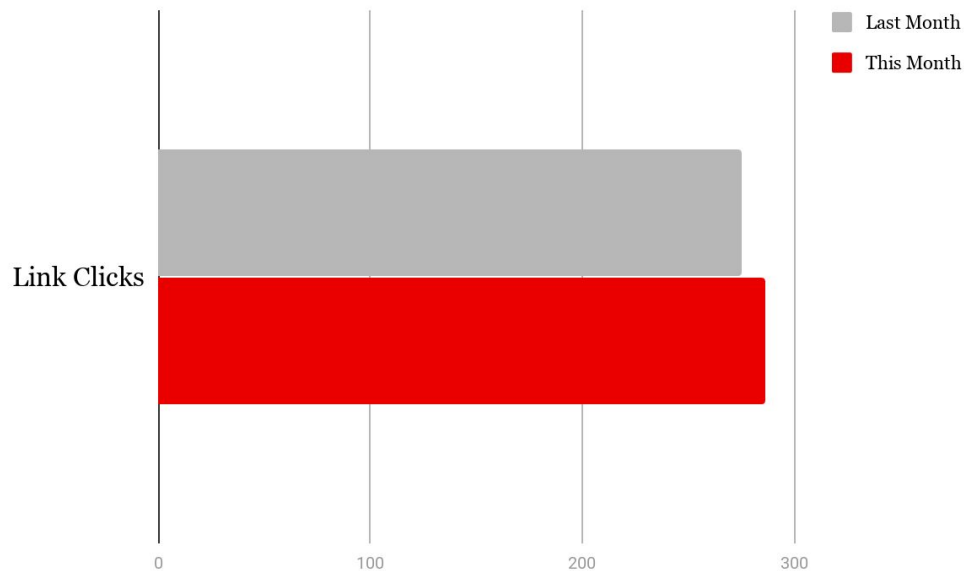
Followers

1,234 ↑ 53



Instagram

Instagram has been a consistent channel with an **average reach per post of 375 people**. Followers often repost content to their story (which allows it to be seen by all of their friends for 24 hours). During these occurrences more traffic is driven to the Maple League account, increasing the number of followers.



We are seeing consistent growth across this social media platform, which is notable because it is usually difficult for organizations to see **continual growth across all platforms**. One of the most significant data points is the growth in link clicks (shown above). Link views have grown significantly this month from **275 to 286**. This is significant because it confirms that we have a very loyal and engaged following; **followers are taking an interest** in Maple League content and making the effort to visit our profile, click on the link, and engage with our story.

LinkedIn

Since focusing efforts on this platform (**April 24th, 2020 - present**) we have seen significant follower growth, engagements and impressions. LinkedIn is a channel that can often be very difficult to see organic (unpaid) growth. Not only have we accomplished significant organic growth, our **engagement rate spiked to 166.67% in September**, which is **extremely high**, as anything over 2% for LinkedIn is considered very good. Another noteworthy metric this month is the increase in **26 new followers for a total of 173**.

LinkedIn Analytics

