Creating a Social Media Campaign for Wolverine Conservation

Another key aspect of any successful conservation effort is telling the story of the animal through campaigns, particularly using social media. Stories open people's hearts and spark action. We, humans, are wired for storytelling and there is no better way to build awareness, empathy and interest in another's point of view and intitate action. In addition to doing scientific research and collaborating with stakeholders, the WCS Rockies team developed a campaign as part of an organized plan to reach the goal of increasing public awareness and support for wolverine conservation. Their broader work elevates the experiences, knowledge, and cultural wisdom of diverse audiences (e.g., athletes, ranchers, Indigenous leaders, youth and scientists) and emphasizes their deep relationships with wild nature to inspire greater engagement. Thanks to their compelling campaign, which uses concise, informal language, and sets an inviting tone, they are building social and political support by connecting key athletes (influencers) who share traits and landscapes with wolverines. Incorporating appealing visuals and infographics has evoked empathy and increased public awareness and widespread support for the wolverines rewilding program in the Rockies region. One major contributor to the success of the campaign is social media. Social Media is an effective platform to quickly and directly reach the general public and call immediate attention to the issue or topic at hand.

In this activity, students will be creating a social media campaign to tell the story about wolverine conservation by creating a digital short or video. The digital short should have a target audience in mind throughout production.

Objectives:

Students will be able to:

- Create a digital short or video to tell the story about wolverine conservation for posting on social media.
    - Apply their knowledge and incorporate their work from the Designing a Wolverine Live Trap and Campaign Messaging for Different Stakeholders activities to create a digital short that informs the public about the conservation problem and encourages them to support conservation efforts.

Materials:

- M56 Wolverine digital short - as part of wolverines rewilding campaign by WCS Rockies team (run time: 3 minutes)
    - Other Digital Shorts (run time: < 1 minute). *These digital shorts are created by videographer Laurie Hedges, who is part of the WCS Rockies team.
        - Social Media Clip 1
        - Social Media Clip 2
        - Social Media Clip 3
        - Social Media Clip 4
        - Social Media Clip 5
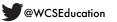   - Instagram post 1
        - Instagram post 2

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- Key Elements of a Persuasive Social Media Campaign
  - PDF version
  - Editable version
- B-roll bank
  - Photographs, graphics, and video clips of wolverines that could be incorporated into digital short

Process:

1. To start the activity, students will watch the introductory video about WCS conservation campaigns: Creating a Social Media Campaign for Wolverine Conservation

2. After watching the video, tell students that they are part of the WCS campaign team for wolverines and were assigned to create a digital short that speaks to both the general public and all of the stakeholders.

   - Teacher Note: If applicable, consider having students create a video for a fourth, more relevant audience that is part of the general public (e.g., NYC residents, school community, outdoor enthusiasts, etc.). If students are unfamiliar with video editing platforms, suggest either iMovie, Windows Video Editor, Flipgrid, or research your own that you think is most appropriate and accessible for your students.

3. As an example, show the M56 Wolverine digital short from the WCS Rockies team. Also show students the other digital shorts linked in the materials section to provide examples of varied messaging and video editing styles. Compare and contrast the digital shorts with students and discuss the similarities and differences in their approach and tone.

4. Remind students to keep their audience in mind while working on their digital shorts and consider the following questions:
   a) What do you think is the most important element involved in wolverine conservation for each audience?
   b) What do you think is the most important commonality involved in wolverine conservation across all the audiences?
   c) What is the key message you are trying to convey?
      - Animal species you are trying to protect
      - Data about the species (based on scientific research)
   d) What feature(s) can you add to make your digital short more appealing - visually, emotionally, cognitively (content)?

5. Review the Key Elements of a Persuasive Social Media Campaign handout and answer questions students may have for clarification. Remind students to refer to this handout to guide their thinking process about their digital shorts.

   - Teacher Note: Depending on your class, consider having students work in groups.

6. Finally, students will create their own catchy phrase, slogan, tagline or hashtag to use for posting on social media. As an option, students can actually post their digital short on social media.

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Extension Activities:

1. Wolverine Conservation Film Festival
   - To strengthen school community and increase student competency and confidence, have a wolverine film festival showcasing students' digital shorts. This could be a classroom or school-wide event inviting students, teachers, administrators, and families.
2. Posting on Social Media
   - Have students post their digital shorts on social media to evaluate the kinds of responses they receive (e.g., viewers, followers, likes, retweets, comments).
      - Another option is to consider having viewers just share their positive feedback.
         - For in-person learning: Complete exit slips that include prompts/questions; post sticky notes on a chart.
         - For remote learning: Consider using online platforms like Jamboard as a way for viewers to share their positive feedback; create a google form that viewers can fill out.
3. Making It Local
   - If you want to make a local connection, have students research struggling local species and create a social media campaign for the selected species.