

Protecting Hockey While the Climate Changes

Climate Communications Case Story



Intrinsic Value Framing



Social Influence



Social Norms and Prompts



Visual Storytelling

PROJECT AT-A-GLANCE

Project Title: Adaptive Strategies Raising Awareness of Climate Change, NHL Green

Location: Canada

Project Partners: National Hockey League (NHL), Canadian Centre for Climate Services (CCCS), ClimateData.ca, Mike Richter

Date: Launched in 2024

Climate Issue: Warmer winters, impacts on outdoor hockey play

Action Area: Climate change awareness, protecting the game of hockey in the face of climate change

Behavioural Theme(s): Intrinsic Value Framing, Social Influence, Social Norms and Prompts, Visual Storytelling

Audience: Hockey fans, sports communities

“

Substitute the word sustainable for BETTER... If you want to get people's attention, talk about social, economic and health benefits of these improvements and the downside of not getting it right.”

— Mike Richter, former NHL goalie ²⁵

IMPACT STORY

The April 2024 NHL Green initiative featured a series of articles celebrating Earth Month. Building on the momentum of the NHL Green Campaign, established in 2010, this initiative worked to bolster environmental advocacy within sports culture. Leveraging the broad appeal of hockey in Canada, NHL Green amplifies climate change awareness, encouraging fans and the broader public to change their behaviour to both reduce adverse impacts on climate and adapt to the realities of climate change. By intertwining climate messages with the love of the sport, the NHL Green initiative effectively drives engagement and action within the hockey community.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES INCLUDE...

- Raising awareness about climate change and its impacts through the NHL's extensive fan base; and
- Engaging fans in climate action through interactive and relatable content.

COMMUNICATION & ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

- **NHL Green Campaign:** The NHL Green campaign, as outlined on its website, is a comprehensive educational campaign designed to deepen fans' understanding of climate issues and highlight the NHL's environmental efforts. The NHL Green

webpage features resources and articles on topics such as the league's sustainability goals, the environmental impact of hockey, and the steps being taken to mitigate this impact.

- **Educational Articles:** The April 2024 initiative includes educational articles written in partnership with climate experts, directly connecting climate issues with hockey-related activities, such as outdoor rinks. For example, articles like "Outdoor Skating Rinks in Canada: How Climate Change Affects Winter Sports" and "The Future of Outdoor Skating Rinks" highlight the direct impact of climate change on hockey infrastructure in communities.
- **Social Media Campaign:** Social media platforms such as X (formerly Twitter) are used to maximize reach and engagement. Posts have highlighted the NHL's commitment to sustainability and connected the impacts of climate change to Canada's beloved sport. The engaging content, including striking visuals and interactive elements, has helped drive traffic to the campaign's main platform, fostering a broader conversation about climate action within the hockey community.
- **Visuals and Videos:** High-quality visuals are central to the campaign, with eye-catching photos, graphics, and video content illustrating both the environmental impact of hockey and the positive changes being made. Short video segments also highlight how players are integrating eco-friendly practices into their daily lives while encouraging fans to do the same.

- **Celebrity Partners:** By placing recognizable athletes in the role of environmental advocates, the April 2024 initiative and the larger NHL Green campaign tap into the emotional connection fans have with their heroes, making the message more impactful. In particular, the NHL Green initiative has been significantly boosted by the advocacy of former NHL star Mike Richter. Richter, a prominent environmental advocate, has actively supported the campaign through various platforms. His involvement includes writing op-eds and blog posts, emphasizing the importance of sustainability in sports and highlighting the NHL's efforts to address climate change. Other high-profile players have shared their personal commitments to environmental sustainability.



BEHAVIOURAL STRATEGIES & TAKEAWAYS

- **Intrinsic Value Framing:** In Canada, many people have a deep connection to hockey. By aligning climate messaging with this sport (often referred to as a national pastime), this initiative speaks to the personal identity and values of many Canadians, increasing the likelihood of engagement and action.
- **Social Influence:** The advocacy of influential figures like Mike Richter and other high-profile players effectively amplifies the campaign's reach, provides credibility, and mobilizes fans, while social media interactions engage a broader audience and encourage grassroots participation.
- **Social Norms and Prompts:** Showcasing environmental actions as the new norm within the sports community popularizes environmental responsibility and inspires fans to follow suit. Testimonials and endorsements from high-profile players and influential figures like Mike Richter clearly signal that climate action is valued and expected within the hockey community.
- **Visual Storytelling:** High-quality visuals remain central to the campaign, with eye-catching photos, graphics, and video content illustrating both the environmental impact of hockey and the positive changes being made. Infographics, interactive rink simulations, player testimonials, and behind-the-scenes footage of green initiatives within the league help make the complex issue of climate change more tangible and accessible to a broad audience.

CONCLUSION

The NHL Green initiative effectively harnesses the power of sports culture to drive climate action and awareness. By approaching climate change from the perspective of hockey fans, the initiative succeeds in making climate advocacy engaging, relevant, and relatable. Through personalized and interactive elements, the campaign has not only raised awareness but also fostered a sense of collective responsibility, demonstrating the potential for sports organizations to influence and inspire meaningful climate action.

SOURCES

National Hockey League. (n.d.). NHL Green. <https://www.nhl.com/community/nhl-green/>

Delaney, F. (2024, April 1). Adaptive strategies raising awareness of climate change, NHL Green Advocacy. NHL. <https://www.nhl.com/news/topic/nhl-green/climate-change-awareness-nhl-green-advocacy>

MORE CASE STORIES 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

