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## **Telling Canada's story in numbers – Orchestrating a Successful Communication Campaign through Strategic Integration**

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### **I. SETTING THE STAGE FOR A SUCCESSFUL PERFORMANCE**

All statistical organizations communicate with the public. They use social media, they publish information on their websites, and they organize workshops and events on specific topics. They do all of these things as part of their mandate. However, the real challenge is recognizing opportunities to raise their communications activities to a new level, that of strategic integration.

In 2017 and 2018, Statistics Canada is celebrating two important milestones. In 2017, Statistics Canada joined other government institutions to mark the 150th anniversary of Canada's confederation in a nationwide initiative called Canada 150. Then, in 2018, Statistics Canada will celebrate its own centennial anniversary. These important celebrations represent a unique opportunity to showcase the wealth of Statistics Canada's expertise and information. Canada 150 is a chance to engage the broader Canadian public, while the Statistics Canada Centennial will be mainly an internal event, focusing on celebrating and inspiring employees.

This paper will show how, from a strategic communications perspective, a national statistical agency can leverage national and institutional celebrations to promote the relevance and impact of statistics, while fostering innovation and engagement among its staff. This paper will focus on four strategies: branding and positioning, consultations and leveraging strategic partnerships, connecting and engaging with the public, and inspiring employees to embrace modernization and innovation.

If executed well, these strategies will work together to create a momentum that resonates deeply with Canadians and with Statistics Canada employees, leaving a message that reverberates well beyond the end of the celebrations.

## II. OPEN THE FLOOR TO THE MAESTRO : STRATEGIC PLANNING

Strategic planning is crucial to the success of any communications initiative, especially for national or institutional celebrations. The work has to start by establishing the guiding principles that will drive the communications strategy.

For the two celebrations, Canada 150 and Statistics Canada's Centennial, the three guiding principles for communications activities are:

**Being proactive:** Reaching out, initiating discussions and engaging key players, including employees, government stakeholders and data users.

**Using multiple channels:** Using our existing channels and creating new ones to build momentum and increase visibility, reach and impact. The channels that we are using for Canada 150 and the Centennial include events, social media platforms, blogs, videos and a contest for youth.

**Being consistent:** Ensuring that all communications activities are designed to fit together for a harmonious communications campaign.

## III. INTRODUCING THE THEME AND MELODY: BRANDING AND POSITIONING

Many Canadian federal departments and agencies are celebrating Canada 150. If Statistics Canada intends to make a difference during this anniversary, our first step is positioning. We need to ask ourselves, what is Statistics Canada's value-proposition? What expertise is the organization bringing? How can we make a relevant contribution to this celebration?

As a national statistical agency, Statistics Canada provides a comprehensive portrait and a unique historical perspective of the country. We are using the anniversary to demonstrate the depth and wealth of our expertise and information. We are aiming to maximize the use and visibility of our Canada 150 slogan—*Telling Canada's story in numbers*—and its associated branding: it is featured across the organization in a wide range of communications channels and products, including on our website, social media platforms, blog and corporate banners at events, as well as in printed material, such as the *Daily* official release, and in internal and external presentations.

#### **IV. CREATING HARMONY: CONSULTATIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS**

Working with key stakeholders such as genealogical associations, historical societies, academics, Library Archives Canada, Heritage Canada and Canadian museums, Statistics Canada developed the Canada 150 Speaker Event. The series feature four events where stakeholders and data partners present their views on how statistics (and Statistics Canada) tell Canada's story. Each event focuses on one of the Canada 150 themes, which are diversity and inclusiveness, reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, youth and the environment.

During these events, the testimonials of guest speakers and panelists are recorded and later incorporated into a thematic blog that will continue the conversation on social media.

#### **V. CONNECTING WITH THE AUDIENCE: ENGAGING THE PUBLIC ONLINE**

Statistics Canada is making extensive use of online channels, particularly social media, to engage with Canadians and let them discover, discuss and share statistics during Canada 150. These platforms require plain language and products with "consumable" style and content.

First, Statistics Canada has developed (or is using) a number of social media campaigns to share interesting facts as part of telling Canada's story. One such campaign promotes the popular *By the numbers* feature, which presents compilations of various statistics on specific holidays and special occasions, such as, Valentine's Day, Mother's Day, Father's Day, Canada Day, Back-to-School, and Christmas.

Second, Statistics Canada has established social media partnerships with schools, associations and universities and encourages these organizations to post Statistics Canada content on their own websites and social media platforms. For this activity, the agency is also leveraging partnerships with more than 4,000 associations across the country that were established for the 2016 Census.

Third, the Young Canada 150 Contest targets Canadians aged 8 to 18, inviting them to submit a short story that uses Statistics Canada data to illustrate one of the Canada 150 themes. The three winning stories will be published on the website and shared on social media.

## **VI. A ROUND OF APPLAUSE FOR THE ORCHESTRA: CELEBRATING OUR EMPLOYEES**

For Statistics Canada's Centennial in 2018, employees will be at the heart of the celebrations. The storyline that forms the basis of Centennial communications activities has three elements:

**Commemorating the past:** Recognizing the organization's strong foundations by acknowledging the achievements of the past 100 years.

**Celebrating the present:** Highlighting how the organization is modernizing and innovating to address multiple emerging data needs and expectations.

**Inspiring the future:** Prompting employees to think about the future and how the organization can continue to inform Canadians while meeting their emerging information needs.

Centennial activities will include the following events and activities: "A journey to 2118 – Transforming ourselves toward the next 100 years," the Chief Statistician Regional Tour, an electronic publication on 100 years of the organization's history, 100 stories posted internally that honour 100 employees for their long-term contributions, a collage of 100 employee selfies shared internally and on social media, commemorative plaques and exhibits.

## **VII. THE FINAL NOTE**

Statistics Canada wants Canadians to know more about their history and the contemporary reality of their country, to be more connected with statistics, and to engage with our work and the stories we tell. For employees, this means sharing corporate knowledge and memory, reinforcing their sense of pride in their work and embracing future challenges and opportunities.

Canada 150 and Statistics Canada's Centennial are still ongoing. Activities have been and continue to be well coordinated, driven by proactive, multichannel and consistent communications.

Each type of communications activity has its own performance indicators: web metrics, social media metrics and analysis of social media interactions, Speaker series evaluations (audience feedback questionnaire), partner feedback (quantitative and qualitative), level of participation in the Young Canada 150 contest. However, measuring the impact of branding and outreach is still a challenge. We must always ask ourselves: Putting aside budget, time and resources constraints, could we have done things differently? Would a different approach have been more successful?

So far, we have reason to be confident in our decisions. The campaign has hit all the right notes. The strategic planning is solid and in place, the branding and positioning look good, the consultations and partnerships are strong, the audience is listening, and the orchestra is motivated and in place. Let's enjoy the show, and most importantly, let's keep them humming the tune long after the celebrations are over. Show must go on!