

Section III – Items for the Information of the Board

TO: Chair and Members of the Executive Committee
Friday, September 13, 2024 Meeting

FROM: Linda Charlebois, Director, Corporate Services

**RE: Q2 COMMUNICATIONS, MARKETING, AND EVENTS
REPORT SUMMARY (APRIL 1 - JUNE 30, 2024)**

KEY ISSUE

Information report regarding Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) corporate media communication activities during the second quarter of 2024 (April 1 - June 30, 2024).

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT the Q2 Communications, Marketing and Events Report Summary for April 1 - June 30, 2024, be received.

BACKGROUND

The Communications, Marketing and Events (CME) business unit with involvement of program areas across TRCA's Divisions carry out corporate communications programs to provide TRCA with a unified voice that aligns consistently with strategic priorities, and monitors results to identify opportunities for improvements. Working with staff from all divisions and external program and service providers, the business units deliver communications campaigns through traditional media outlets and online social media channels. Content is typically disseminated through materials such as news releases and media advisories, direct outreach to targeted journalists, producers and editors, and responses to incoming media inquiries. Digital campaigns involve posting visual and written content on websites and distribution via social media platforms. All media activity is supported by ongoing assessment and deployment of technology tools and processes to maximize effectiveness.

OVERVIEW:

This report covers communications and marketing activities for TRCA between April 1 - June 30 , 2024, achieved by the Communications,

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Marketing and Events (CME) Team, working with staff across TRCA and our partners including municipalities, non-governmental organizations, and senior levels of government.

Q2 Successes

1. CME successfully supported TRCA staff with a media relations strategy to protect Toronto's first recorded Bald Eagle nest. The use of strong key messages and spokesperson preparation meant that the location of the nest remained largely undisclosed until the eaglets were fully fledged.
2. CME has implemented monthly media pitches that highlight a number of our free events and programming, providing an attractive package for outlets like BlogTO and the Toronto Star to include in their editorial calendars.
3. CME developed and executed a communications strategy to create awareness and drive attendance to the Celebrate the Humber event. Promotions included media pitches, google ads, social media, and a newsletter. Organic social media resulted in 16,916 impressions, 1,112 engagements and 34 clicks to the website. The paid social media ads resulted in 257,440 impressions, 4,231 engagements and 7,433 clicks.
4. CME, with input from relevant staff, designed and printed the panels for the Ashbridge's Bay Public Information Session that occurred on June 19. Working in collaboration with the Restoration Services and the Government and Community Relations teams, we successfully implemented all inputs while meeting required deadlines.

Key Q2 Communications Metrics

1. TRCA consolidated monthly newsletters have been issued with an average open rate (AOR) of **45% (AVG: 34,892 subscribers opened)** and a click rate (CR) slight increase from the first quarter to **3.4%** which is above the benchmarks for the non-profit sector (25.17% AOR / 2.79% CR). These rates remained well above the total average for all industry standards (21.33% AOR / 2.62% CR).
2. CME managed Google Grant Campaigns resulting in approximately 26,400 clicks to our website, at a value of \$100,700 US dollars in free google ads.
3. CME is implementing a Conservation Parks marketing strategy that includes both social media and google ads. Organic social media has

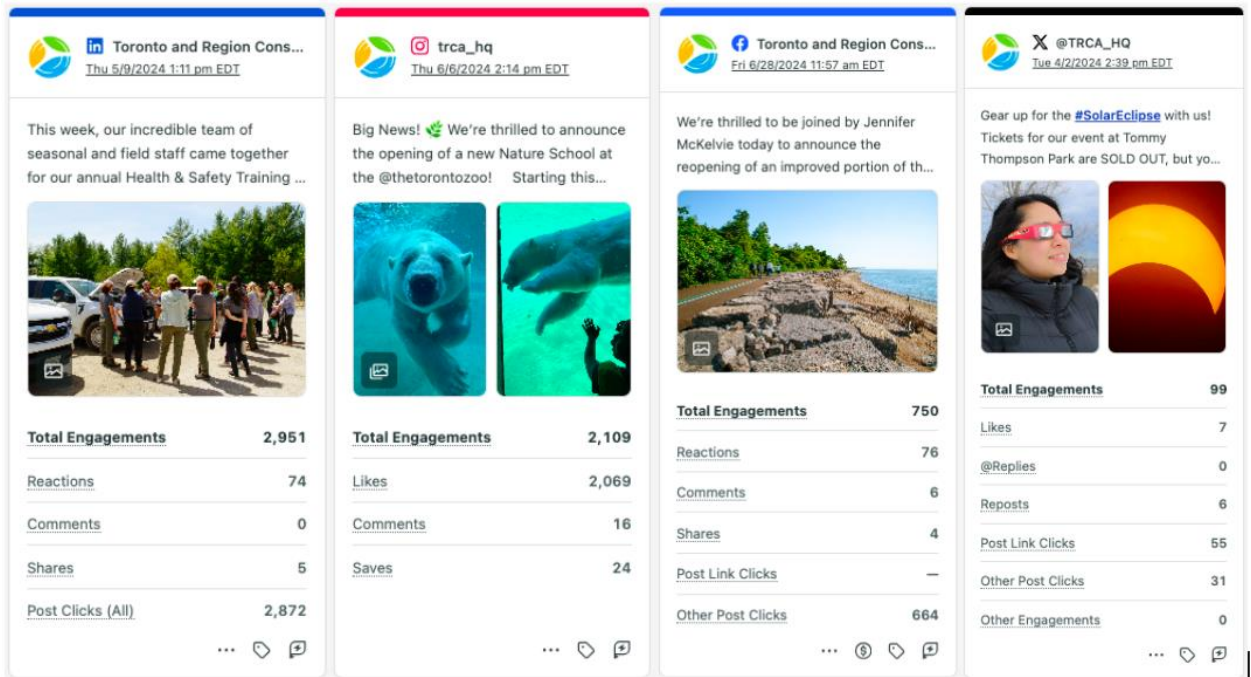
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resulted in 36,800 impressions, with approximately 1,300 engagements, and 412 clicks to the website. Paid media drove over 1.3 M impressions, 20,000 engagements, and over 40,000 clicks to our website.

Q2 Social Activity

In Q2 2024, our social media strategy focused on signature events, including Bike the Creek and Celebrate the Humber, and showcased TRCA's unique education programs like the Boyd Archaeological Field School and The Nature School. We celebrated a variety of events and programs such as the new Nature School at Toronto Zoo and Earth Day, driving engagement and highlighting TRCA's commitment to environmental education and community involvement.

TRCA's top organic posts per social media account were as follows:



1. The top-performing post on **LinkedIn** was a recap of our seasonal and field staff annual health and safety training. This content resonated well with our audience as it highlighted our commitment to safety and professional development. The post's success can be attributed to its relevance to our professional network, showcasing TRCA's dedication to staff readiness, health and safety, and organizational excellence as we prepare for a busy summer season.

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2. On **Instagram**, the news of the new Nature School opening at the Toronto Zoo was the top-performing post. This collaborative post, combining TRCA's audience with the Toronto Zoo's audience, likely contributed to high engagement. The visual appeal of the Nature School and its connection to the zoo's audience amplified the reach and resonance of this post, drawing in a diverse and interested audience excited about educational opportunities and conservation efforts.
3. Our announcement of the reopening of an improved portion of the Waterfront Trail in Scarborough was the top-performing post on **Facebook**. This post garnered significant engagement due to the public's interest in local improvements and outdoor activities. The reopening of the trail aligns with community interests in recreation and conservation, underscoring TRCA's role in enhancing public spaces and ensuring safety and accessibility for all visitors.
4. The top-performing post on **Twitter** promoted our Solar Eclipse event at Tommy Thompson Park. The event's uniqueness and the public's fascination with astronomical phenomena contributed to its popularity. The combination of a rare natural phenomenon and the engaging educational aspect of the event drove high engagement and highlighted TRCA's innovative approach to community outreach and environmental education.

Q2 Events Summary

TRCA's Events team provides strategic direction and assistance to all TRCA business units for staging or participating in events and takes the lead in managing signature TRCA events.

In Q2, the Events team coordinated and implemented the following events:

Disc Golf Launch at Albion Hills Conservation Park

On May 11, TRCA, in partnership with ChainLink Disc Golf, unveiled two brand-new courses at Albion Hills Conservation Park: a professional 18-hole course and a 9-hole family course.

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The grand opening event was well-attended by members of the community, program partners, and elected officials, alongside TRCA Board members and staff to celebrate the newest sport now available at Albion Hills.

Distinguished guests that attended the launch and provided remarks included:

- The Honourable Sylvia Jones, Member of Provincial Parliament for Dufferin Caledon, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health
- Mario Russo, Regional Councillor, Town of Caledon and TRCA Board Member
- Jeff MacKeigan, Co-Founder of ChainLink Disc Golf
- Richard Ubbens, Director, Conservation Parks and Lands, TRCA

Other distinguished guests and TRCA staff in attendance included:

- Doug Maskell, Councillor, Town of Caledon
- Cara Hovius, ChainLink Disc Golf
- Laurie Nelson, Director, Policy Planning, TRCA
- Ian Boyd, Senior Manager, Conservation Parks, TRCA
- Victoria Kramkowski, Senior Manager, Government & Community Relations, TRCA

Peel EcoSchool 15-year Anniversary Celebration and Planting

On May 14, at Claireville Conservation Area, TRCA hosted a celebration event to commemorate 15 years of the Peel EcoSchools program.

Since 2008, TRCA has been funded by the Region of Peel to support the implementation of the EcoSchools Canada Certification Program within the Regional Municipality of Peel. The Peel EcoSchools program is a collaborative initiative involving the Region of Peel, Dufferin-Peel Catholic, and Peel District School Boards. It aims to build environmentally responsible schools by integrating climate change knowledge and awareness into the curriculum through the EcoSchools Canada Certification framework.

Darryl Gray, Director of Education and Training, opened the event and welcome Peel school board trustees and approximately 120 students from EcoSchools in the Dufferin-Peel Catholic and Peel District School Boards attended the event, planting 410 trees and shrubs, with each plant symbolizing a school in the region. The planting was generously supported by the TD Friends of the Environment Foundation.

TRCA Spring Bird Festival

On May 11, TRCA hosted its annual Spring Bird Festival at Tommy Thompson Park. This year, the event welcomed an estimated 600 attendees who were excited to hear the musical chorus of migratory birds on their annual journey.

The festival began with a smudging ceremony led by Indigenous guest Cat Criger, followed by opening remarks from Colin Love, Supervisor, Community Outreach & Education at TRCA. Several representatives of TRCA's Senior Management team including TRCA's CEO John MacKenzie, Karen McDonald, Wendy Rowney, and Miguel Pacheco, attended with TRCA staff and volunteers to meet with non-governmental organizations and participants.

As part of the larger city-wide Toronto Bird Celebration, the festival offered activities catering to bird enthusiasts of all ages. Attendees enjoyed the opportunity to participate in 11 guided bird walks and workshops to learn about various bird species and bird migration.

One of the highlights of this year's festival was the chance to engage in shrub planting, a hands-on activity emphasizing the significance of establishing sustainable habitats for migratory birds. Participants planted a total of 150 native, berry-producing shrubs, which will provide essential shelter, food, and foraging opportunities for the birds that inhabit the park.

TRCA Celebrates Pride

On May 31, members of TRCA's Senior Leadership Team joined staff at Black Creek Pioneer Village in a raising of the Pride flag commemoration to kick off Pride month.

As June was Pride Month, the Pride flag was raised on May 31 and flown until June 30 at our flagpole locations:

- Albion Hills Conservation Park
- Black Creek Pioneer Village
- Claremont Nature Centre
- Indian Line Campground
- Glen Haffy Conservation Park

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Raising the Pride flag is an important symbol of solidarity and support for the 2SLGBTQ+ community and reinforces TRCA's message and shared commitment to creating a more inclusive TRCA for our staff, visitors, and partners.

Bike the Creek

On the early morning of June 8, hundreds of cycling enthusiasts gathered at the Jim Archdekin Recreation Centre in Brampton for the annual Bike the Creek event.

Co-hosted by Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA), this year's event marked the 10th anniversary of Bike the Creek and attracted a record-breaking turnout of over 1,200 riders, showcasing the growing enthusiasm for active transportation in the Region of Peel.

This year's event offered a variety of inclusive route options to suit families, friends, and cycling enthusiasts of all ages, experience levels, and interests.

Participants cycled through the scenic landscapes and landmarks of Brampton, Mississauga, and Caledon, celebrating the event's legacy since its inception in 2014.

Tired but enthusiastic attendees were addressed by dignitaries, including Sonia Sidhu, Member of Parliament for Brampton South; Michael Palleschi, Regional Councillor, City of Brampton; Catherine McLean, Commissioner Community and Human Services, Town of Caledon; and David Laing, Chair, BikeBrampton.

Gage Board, Manager of Tourism at the City of Brampton, emceed the event, and Kathryn Lockyer, Director, Legislative and Property Services, spoke on behalf of TRCA, emphasizing the significance of connecting people to recreational and active transportation opportunities, and underscoring how this event encourages a healthy lifestyle and a deeper appreciation for our green spaces.

A dignitary ride was held with the following distinguished guests riding:

- Dave Barton, Mayor, Township of Uxbridge and Vice-Chair, TRCA Board of Directors
- Catherine McLean, Director, Community Services, Town of Caledon

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- Arash Olia, Manager, Transportation Engineering, Town of Caledon
- Michael Palleschi, Regional Councillor, City of Brampton Wards 2 and 6
- Navjit Kaur Brar, Regional Councillor, City of Brampton Ward 2 and 6
- Gurpartap Singh Toor, Regional Councillor, City of Brampton Wards 9 and 10
- Marlaine Koehler, Executive Director of the Waterfront Regeneration Trust
- Vince D'Elia, Senior Manager, Restoration & Resource Management, TRCA

TRCA's Staff Appreciation BBQ

On June 12, at Boyd Conservation Park, TRCA hosted its annual Staff Appreciation BBQ. Over 450 staff attended the event and enjoyed a BBQ lunch and participated in some good old fashion lawn games. CEO John MacKenzie recognized staff and highlighted the amazing work that each employee performs each day.

Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Tour at TTP

On June 27, the Honourable Steven Guilbeault, MP Julie Dabrusin and local community organizations visited Tommy Thompson Park. TRCA staff provided a tour with the following highlighted discussion points:

- Cell 1 Lookout:
 - Investments
 - Ecological & Social Value
 - Potential Opportunities
 - Challenges
- Embayment D:
 - Wetland Stewardship
 - Species Management (Rafts, Baffles)

Participants in this tour included:

TRCA:

- Darryl Gray, Director, Education & Training
- Anil Wijesooriya, Director, Restoration and Infrastructure

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- Johanna Kyte, Senior Manager, Government & Community Relations
- Karen McDonald, Senior Manager, Restoration & Infrastructure

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVES:

- The Honourable Steven Guilbeault, Minister of Environment and Climate Change Canada
- Julie Dabrusin, Member of Parliament for Toronto-Danforth
- Natalie Woodland, Ontario Regional Advisor
- Josette Chen, Constituency Manager, Office of Julie Dabrusin

COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS:

- Gregory Ford, Swim Drink Fish
- Ferielle Jarrett, Don't Mess with the Don
- Jennifer Angel, Evergreen Brickworks
- Chelsea Rochman, U of T Trash Team
- Andrew Simpson & Tom Connell, Toronto Nature Stewards Middle Mill
- Anna Hoad, Toronto Nature Stewards Cherry Beach

Waterfront Trail West of Highland Creek opening

On June 28, TRCA and City of Toronto formally commemorated the reopening of the waterfront trail west of Highland Creek with a ribbon cutting event.

Deputy Mayor Jennifer McKelvie was in attendance and joined by TRCA staff, Darryl Gray, Director of Education and Training, Lisa Turnbull, Associate Director, Professional Services, Matthew Colenbrander, Government & Community Relations, Whitney Brennan, Project Manager and Keith Daubeny, Construction Site Supervisor.

Event Spotlight – TRCA Celebrate the Humber

On June 15, TRCA kicked off the summer in style with its annual Celebrate the Humber event at Étienne Brulé Park, attracting more than 800 visitors this year.

In 1999, The Humber was designated a Canadian Heritage River, recognizing its cultural, recreational, and ecological significance. TRCA

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Celebrate the Humber honours this designation and explores the river's rich history and the importance of the Carrying Place Trail.

This year's event commenced with Elder Garry Sault, an Ojibway Elder of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, performing a traditional smudging ceremony.

Following this, TRCA CEO John MacKenzie delivered remarks emphasizing the significance of the river's natural, cultural, and recreational heritage. He stressed that the event is also a call to action, reminding us of our shared responsibility as stewards of this watershed.

Attendees engaged in hands-on activities to learn about the river's history and conservation efforts.

Highlights included starting native seeds in paper pots, a guided exploration of the Humber River, examining aquatic sediment under a microscope, and learning to cast a fishing rod.

These activities provided educational value while cultivating a deeper connection to the river and its ecosystem.

By bringing the community together to celebrate the Humber River's heritage, we foster environmental responsibility and ensure that the Humber River is protected and valued for future generations.

Q2 Media Coverage – Summary

Requests for information or interviews occurred from various members of the media during Q2 2024 through:

- Our Media Request Form or direct media email on our website.
- Directly to our Communications and Media Relations Specialist.
- Contacting staff at TRCA who notified CME.

TRCA received **41** requests in Q2 through our online Media Request form and other methods listed above. Of the **41** total requests, **14** were for TV/Radio, with the remaining related to print or online.

Highlighted below is a combination of the following:

- Media requests to TRCA resulting in media coverage.
- Additional organic coverage where TRCA was mentioned by name
- TRCA's key findings/reports were referenced

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- Articles that resulted directly from TRCA issuing a media advisory / media release

TRCA received over **92** direct mentions in media coverage in Q2 2024. Of the **92** total direct mentions, **12** were for TV/Radio, with the remaining related to print or online.

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April, 2024

Date	Media Outlet	Title	Link
April 3, 2024	CBC Radio: Here and Now Toronto with Gill Deacon	Protecting the spring migration of birds.	STORY LINK
Information			

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A report on the timing of spring bird migration through Toronto. Includes an interview with Andrea Chreston, Senior Project Manager Restoration & Resource Management.

April 7, 2024	Global News	Torontonians celebrate historic eclipse at Tommy Thompson Park.	STORY LINK
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Information

A report on Torontonians attending Tommy Thompson Park for the solar eclipse. Includes an interview with Colin Love, Supervisor, Community Outreach & Education, Education & Training at TRCA

April 20, 2024	Toronto Star	Black Creek Pioneer Village to drop 'pioneer' from its name as part of inclusivity plan.	STORY LINK
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Information

An article on Black Creek Pioneer Village undergoing a name change later this year and developing longer-term plans to give a permanent home to an Indigenous exhibit. Includes an interview with Darryl Gray, Director, Education & Training.

May, 2024

Date	Media Outlet	Title	Link
May 3, 2024	Toronto Star	Ontario has the largest number of invasive species in Canada. Here are some to look out for.	STORY LINK

Information

An article discussing common invasive species that may be found around your home — and what not to do with them. Includes an interview with Karen McDonald, Senior Manager, Restoration & Infrastructure at TRCA.

May 3, 2024	Toronto Star	'History in the making': Two eaglets spotted at first documented bald eagle nest in Toronto.	STORY LINK
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Information

An article highlighting the success story of the eaglets. Includes an interview with Karen McDonald, Senior Manager of Restoration and Infrastructure at TRCA.

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May 16, 2024	Caledon Citizen	Two disc golf courses open at Albion Hills Conservation Park.	STORY LINK
Information			
An article on the grand opening ceremony for two disc golf courses at Albion Hills Conservation Park, hosted by TRCA and ChainLink Disc Golf.			
May 21, 2024	The Global & Mail	Become an active participant in preserving and celebrating Indigenous culture.	STORY LINK
Information			
An article on the societal shift towards greater recognition and appreciation of Indigenous cultures and histories, driven by movements for reconciliation, social justice, and cultural preservation. Featuring a quote from Wendy Rowney, Senior Manager of Community Outreach and Education at the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA).			

June, 2024

Date	Media Outlet	Title	Link
June 10, 2024	Toronto Star	Filling the new Don River valley was all going according to plan. Then it sprung a leak.	STORY LINK
Information			
An article on the development of the new Don River valley water project, highlighting concerns raised by workers regarding a leak. Includes a quote from Rick Portiss, Senior Manager, Aquatic Monitoring & Management at TRCA.			
June 14, 2024	DurhamRegion.com	Uxbridge Urban Provincial Park officially opens to the public starting July 1.	STORY LINK
Information			
An article announcing the opening of Uxbridge Urban Park for public visits, with TRCA acknowledged as a collaborating partner.			
June 20, 2024	Yahoo News	Over 1,200 participate in annual Bike the Creek event.	STORY LINK
Information			

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An article covering the Bike the Creek event, with TRCA acknowledged as a partnering organization.

June 26, 2024	Canada National Observer	Kangaroo Kindergarten: Class is in session at the Toronto Zoo.	STORY LINK
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Information

An article highlighting the opening of a new Nature School at the Toronto Zoo. Includes an interview with Adrian O'Driscoll, Senior Manager of Community Outreach and Education at TRCA.

Media Releases:

TRCA was involved with **16** Media Releases and blogs this quarter:

Date	Title	Link
April 3, 2024	Source to Stream Conference 2024: Setting the Standard for Sustainable Innovation.	STORY LINK
April 4, 2024	TRCA Celebrates Earth Week 2024.	STORY LINK
April 16, 2024	Sunshine, Syrup and Success as TRCA's Sugarbush Maple Syrup Festival Wraps Up.	STORY LINK
May 2, 2024	A History of Tommy Thompson Park.	STORY LINK
May 9, 2024	Step into Spring with Family-Friendly Events.	STORY LINK
May 10, 2024	Tommy Thompson Park: A Key Biodiversity Area.	STORY LINK
May 24, 2024	Experience the Thrill of Disc Golf at Albion Hills.	STORY LINK
May 29, 2024	Kick off Your Summer Adventure with TRCA.	STORY LINK
May 31, 2024	Celebrating 15 Years of Peel EcoSchools.	STORY LINK
June 1, 2024	Youth Opportunities at TRCA.	STORY LINK
June 4, 2024	TRCA's Spring Brid Festival: Witnessing the Magic of Migration.	STORY LINK
June 6, 2024	TRCA Announces New Nature School at the Toronto Zoo.	STORY LINK
June 14, 2024	Bike the Cree: Celebrating 10 Years of Cycling, Community and Conservation.	STORY LINK

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June 20, 2024	Midweek Delight: Beat the Weekend Rush at Albion Hills!	STORY LINK
June 21, 2024	Prepare for Summer Storms: Seasonal Safety Tips and Reminders.	STORY LINK
June 25, 2024	TRCA'S Celebrates the Humber: A Party for one of our most important rivers.	STORY LINK

Media Advisories:

TRCA was involved with 7 Media Advisories this quarter, which led to additional media coverage:

Date of Media List Distribution	Title
April 2, 2024	Make a difference with Toronto and Region Conservation Authority Earth Week Events!
May 2, 2024	Fly into Spring with TRCA's Annual Spring Bird Festival
May 6, 2024	Get Ready to Tee Off With Albion Hill's New Disc Golf Courses!
May 7, 2024	Step into spring with TRCA's family-friendly events
May 29, 2024	Join the party and celebrate 10 years of Bike the Creek!
June 5, 2024	Celebrate the Humber Returns on June 15! Free family-friendly activities available for everyone
June 25, 2024	Prepare for Summer Storms: Seasonal Safety Tips and Reminders

Q2 Key Learnings

1. Continue iterating on consolidated newsletters, to offer the best possible content for our audiences.
2. Implement proactive email newsletter strategies that consistently and strategically engage with audiences to promote programs like Summer Camps, Field Trips, Look After Where You Live, etc.
3. Continue searching for opportunities to tell the story of TRCA's complex projects within Restoration and Infrastructure Division.

2024 Q3 Look Ahead

Below is a list of upcoming communications activities set for Q3 2024:

1. Communication support will be provided during Q3 to promote the following:

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- SNAP 15-year anniversary
 - Launch of rebranded Village at Black Creek
2. Planning of communication support will begin for TRCA major events, including:
- Adventures of Salmon
 - National Day of Truth and Reconciliation
 - TRCA Staff Pancake Breakfast

Relationship to TRCA's 2023-2034 Strategic Plan

This report supports the following Pillar and Outcome set forth in TRCA's 2023-2034 Strategic Plan:

Pillar 4 Service Excellence:

4.3 Responsive relationships and a trusted brand with a reputation for excellence

Report prepared by: Miguel Pacheco, Senior Manager, Marketing, Communications and Events

Email: miguel.pacheco@trca.ca

For Information contact: Miguel Pacheco, (647) 407-4825

Email: miguel.pacheco@trca.ca

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