



2018 ARF Ogilvy Awards, Gold

Campaign Title: Bring Back the Bees

Brand: Honey Nut Cheerios

Advertiser: General Mills Canada

Agency: Cossette Media

Category: EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY CHANGE

Summary

1 in 3 bites of food in the world would disappear if bees became extinct.

(United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, 2015)

The decline of bee populations is a widely known environmental issue in Canada (*GMI proprietary research, 2015*). But average Canadians felt like they had no real influence or power to reverse the decline: *"I'm just one person. How will my efforts make any difference?"*

As a food brand with a high stake in the game and Buzz the Bee as a mascot, the Honey Nut Cheerios (HNC) team in Canada believed it could use its wide-reaching platform as a force for good for pollinators. Through extensive quantitative and qualitative consumer research, we found that few Canadians realized the severity of the problem and its consequences. But once Canadians understood the impact and urgency of the honey bee cause, they were more likely to **personally help** the bees.

This cross-section of consumer insight and brand benefit was the cornerstone of the development of a multi-year campaign to raise awareness of the impact and urgency of the honey bee cause, as well as to inspire and mobilize individuals across the country to do one small thing to help the bees: Plant wildflowers.

Launched in March 2016 and currently gearing up for its third year, the holistic campaign has included TV, digital, PR, experiential and a massive wildflower seed giveaway that has culminated in the planting of **over 400 million wildflower seeds** to date (that's 10 seeds for every person in Canada). At the same time, the campaign has also generated a **10% sales growth** to date for one of the country's

largest cereal brands, and has even moved the campaign into the U.S. to make an even bigger impact on global bee populations.

The irrefutable consumer insight: 1 in 3 bites of food would disappear if bees became extinct! How can I, just one person, help?

Marketing Challenge

The decline of bee populations is a widely known environmental issue in Canada. General Mills' proprietary research found that eighty percent of Canadians are aware of the problem and over one third of Canadians concerned with the issue, however few understood the severity of the problem and its consequences.¹

After talking to consumers, the Honey Nut Cheerios (HNC) team discovered that the more people knew about the impact and urgency of the honey bee cause, the more likely they were to help.

One statistic that strongly resonated with Canadians was that one-third of the world's food supply would disappear if honey bees became extinct. **1 out of 3 bites of food would be gone!** Many were stunned by the significance and felt deeply that they needed to do something to help.

Then we uncovered an even more profound truth. Most Canadians were frustrated because they felt like they had no real influence or power to change the situation: *"I don't know any simple things I can do to help."*²

That's where we saw a real opportunity to **help Canadians help the bees**. It was a natural fit for our brand:

- Consumers believed that governments were not doing enough about this problem, and a big company like General Mills had the money and influence to make a real difference.
- Honey bees affect the food chain, and General Mills sells food, so on a broad level the association made sense. In fact, some consumers felt that General Mills as a global corporation should take on the cause because bees are important for all its products, and a global commitment to save the bees might be even more impactful.
- HNC is made with honey and it has our mascot, Buzz the Bee, on the box. Linking the cause with the brand was a "natural fit." Consumers also believed that a brand the size of HNC had a unique ability to spread the word far and wide. We could help get people educated and involved. People would listen to us if we told the story.

Armed with this conviction, we set out to create a sustained, multi-year campaign that:

1. Raised awareness about the severity and urgency of the bee's plight;

2. Mobilized individuals across the country to plant 35 million wildflowers (one for each person in Canada) in the first year; and
3. Inspired other teams within General Mills to join us on our quest to save the bees.

Methodology

We sought to understand the cross-section of cultural and consumer truths around helping the bees, as well as to assess the ability and credibility of Honey Nut Cheerios (HNC) to engage people on this issue over the long-term. Our learning plan was multi-faceted, with consumer check-ins throughout the journey:

1. Better understand the concern and impact of the declining bee population:
 - Built broad and deep consumer empathy on the issue through six qualitative focus groups exploring Canadians' awareness of bee population declines and uncovering impactful insights, barriers to action and call-to-action options.
 - The key insight was that Canadians craved simple, tangible ways to participate in saving the bees, but didn't know where to start.
2. Identify and quantify our media target:
 - Launched a quantitative survey to understand the demographics and psychographics of our media target: Those who cared the most about bees and believed that HNC could help.
 - This phase reinforced what we heard in the qualitative groups. If you had a child, or better yet a grandchild, you cared even more about bees because of the legacy you would be leaving behind for future generations.
 - Identified and quantified the ways that people could foresee themselves helping, which ultimately led us to align on wildflower seed planting as our mission for the campaign.
3. Evaluate rough strategy ideas to inform creative development:
 - Conducted qualitative interviews to understand the appropriate tones for the campaign, most captivating messages, and to build up ideas beyond TV.
4. Assess emotional resonance of creative executions to drive consumers' behavior change
 - Copy-tested creative execution to diagnose whether the ad was eliciting the emotional connection we intended, was relevant to

consumers, broke through the media clutter and was distinctly linked to our brand.

- Results showed our 30 second launch ad generated the largest positive shift in brand opinion (2x the norm) of any ad in General Mill's Canadian ad database.³

5. Measure in-market results and build upon what worked:

- Measured the number of media impressions generated by the campaign to understand which marketing tactics drove the highest awareness and emotional resonance.
- Utilized social listening to understand and amplify the "buzz" around the campaign. (Sorry, we couldn't resist the pun.)
- Understood impact of the campaign on the Honey Nut Cheerios' sales volume through market mix modeling, which was used to inspire General Mills' brand teams in U.S. to join us on our mission to save the bees.

Creative Execution

The insights collected from our consumer research resulted in a holistic, 360-degree campaign called "Bring Back the Bees," which included:

Campaign Launch via a PR Blitz (March 2016):

- Created a unique brand presence at *Canada Blooms*, Canada's largest home and garden show, utilizing this large media moment to launch the "Bring Back the Bees" campaign.
- Conducted a media tour leveraging renowned entomologist and bee expert, Marla Spivak, and home and garden expert, Mark Cullen.
 - In her interviews, Marla shared her support for the "Bring Back the Bee" campaign and encouraged Canadians to visit www.BringBackTheBees.ca to order free seed packs.
- Sponsored an event at Black Creek Pioneer Village, an agricultural community dedicated to bringing people closer to the land by showing life in Toronto in the Mid-1800s, where we planted a bee garden and invited participants to meet experts, such as beekeepers, who educated the group about bee populations.
- Coordinated in-depth interviews with national news and print media, such as the National Post and BNN, as well industry websites, such as Food Canada.

Television and Online Video (March – July 2016; March - July 2017):

- Crafted a highly emotional 30-second TV launch spot called "Help" that galvanized support for helping the bees.
- Integrated with YTV, the #1 children's network in Canada, to create bee-themed programming to empower the next generation to be champions for the bees.

Packaging Change (March – July 2016):

- Removed our iconic Buzz the Bee mascot from the front of our boxes, leaving a blank white space to highlight the issue of the declining bee population and contain a direct call-to-action to visit our website to get free wildflower seeds.

Experiential Store of the Future (March 2017):

- Built upon success of experiential launch event by creating a pop-up “store of the future,” illuminating how barren grocery store shelves would be if bees went extinct.
- See attached video.

Education and Seed Giveaway via Dedicated Website (Ongoing):

- Our awareness generating tactics above all highlighted and drove consumers to our website www.bringbackthebees.ca. Once here, we encouraged people to sign up to receive packet of our Bee Friendly Wildflower Mix seeds to plant and help feed the bee population. Our promotions team worked on a partnership with Veseys seeds who provided the seeds in a custom Buzz the Bee package.

Business Results

The “Bring Back the Bees” campaign has shown fantastic results at every touchpoint since its launch in March 2016. Highlights include:

- 115 Million seeds given out in the first 2 months of the campaign, exceeding our 35 million seed goal by more than 200%!
- More than 400 million seed given out to date (that’s nearly 10 wildflowers for every Canadian!)
- 214+ Million PR impressions from launch event.
 - Coverage spanned national news and print media, such as the National Post and BNN, as well as industry websites, such as Food Canada.
 - Special recognition of the campaign in Ontario’s 2016 [Pollinator Health Action Plan](#)
- 2,000+ visitors attended the “Store of the Future” experiential program.
 - Event garnered national media coverage on Global News and CBC Radio (39 million traditional media impressions, 15 million social media impressions).
- 2,000+ National GRPs of TV media dedicated to "Help"

- YTV aired the TV spot “Help” for FREE because they believed in the cause so much.
- 10% Sales lift on Canada’s #1 cereal brand⁴

In addition to the incredible business results, the Canadian HNC team inspired a deeper commitment to pollinator health across General Mills in 2017:

- Expansion of the campaign into the U.S., where:
 - 2.5 Million U.S. households requested 1.5 BILLION seeds (10x the U.S.’s goal).
 - 105,300+ media placements totaling 490+ million impressions across traditional and social media, with more than three-fourths of coverage endorsing the initiative.
 - Expansion in support for pollinator health from the General Mills Foundation, the philanthropic arm of the company to support and help farmers plant and protect pollinator habitats over the next five years.

HNC Canada remains committed to helping the bees, and looks forward to launching year three of the campaign in March 2018.

¹ General Mills Canada Quantitative Survey

² General Mills Canada Qualitative Focus Groups

³ Honey Nut Cheerios Synqrinus Adpulse

⁴ Honey Nut Cheerios Market Mix Model