

Case Study Series

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Taking the high road: campaigning for safe driving

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Parachute Vision Zero creates case studies that feature a variety of issues and examples of Vision Zero from across Canada and around the world. We hope these practical, evidencebased case studies will help educate, inform and inspire those who are interested in road safety and getting to zero. We share when we publish new case studies through our enewsletter, **Word on the Street**.

Summary

A Vision Zero approach to road safety embraces a systems approach, recognizing that it takes efforts from all involved in creating, using and regulating our roads to reduce or eliminate serious injuries and deaths. Road users, policy makers, law enforcement and system designers all have their role.

Even within this systems approach, influencing and changing driver behaviour is a critical component to improving road safety. It seems obvious that a good driver comes to the wheel well-trained, sober, rested, undistracted and prepared to follow the rules and regulations of the road, including speed limits. As we know from experience and data, this is frequently not the case.

Examining the research on driver behaviour in recent years, Parachute has noted increased nonchalant attitudes toward two particularly dangerous driver behaviours, particularly among youth: driving while impaired by cannabis, and speeding.

To respond, Parachute has developed and led awareness campaigns to engage young Canadian residents, challenge their perceptions and raise awareness of the dangers of driving while high and speeding – all within the framework of our larger, systems-change commitment to road safety through Vision Zero, supported by **Desjardins Insurance**.

Driving While High: Know What Impaired Means

The **Know What Impaired Means** campaign grew out of <u>published research from the</u> <u>Canadian Centre on Substance Use</u> (CCSA) that many teens and young adults didn't believe consuming cannabis affected your motor skills; some even believed they were actually better at physical and cognitive tasks such as driving when they were high (Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse [CCSA], 2015).

In 2017, we created informative "myth versus reality" graphics based on the CCSA research on teen beliefs about cannabis and driving. Each one featured a photo of a young person with a thought bubble drawn on the image containing a phrase such as "If I had only one toke, then I could drive absolutely fine". Under the photo was a rebutting fact, such as "Cannabis doubles the risk of being in a serious crash."



Cannabis and driving infographic, 2017

We paid to promote these as posts to a youth demographic on social media, reaching young people in Canada who aren't subscribers to our accounts on platforms such as Facebook. And we got trounced by young cannabis users, who claimed we were scaremongering and derided the messaging, along with the messenger. What, after all, did a fuddy-duddy safety charity understand about weed and its chillacious effects?

Canadian youth have one of the highest rates of cannabis use worldwide (Inchley et al., 2020; United Nations Children's Fund, 2013) and the use rate is twice as high in 15- to 24-year-olds than adults 25-plus (Government of Canada, 2020). And while people 16 to 34 represent 32 per cent of Canada's population, they account for 61 per cent of all deaths from cannabis related collisions (CCSA, 2020).

With legalization then pending in Canada, the need to improve young people's understanding of the impairing effects of cannabis on motor control and perception grew even more pressing as the argument of "don't do this, it's illegal" was about to go away.

Another study showed that 39 per cent of Canadians who use cannabis had driven less than two hours after getting high (Government of Canada, 2017). While people may have thought they are driving "slow and careful" when stoned, in fact their reaction times are greatly decreased and they aren't fully in control of their vehicles, which could lead to collisions, serious injuries and deaths.

Prim nagging from a safety charity, no matter how evidence based, wasn't going change any cannabis user's mind.

First iteration of Know What Impaired Means

Initially, Parachute worked on its own to change our approach. In 2018, we chose to address cannabis impairment as our central theme for <u>National Teen Driver Safety</u> Week, held in October. Several months prior, we found an opportunity to work with a team of student designers, supervised by a senior Registered Graphic Designer (RGD), in the first <u>RGD Designathon</u> run to support charities in need of fresh creative skills. The student designers created eye-catching stylized illustrations, a change from our usual stock-photo approach, that they assessed would be appealing to teens and young adults on social media.

Thanks to a grant from the Ministry of Transportation Ontario, we also created a short <u>whiteboard-style video on #KnowWhatImpairedMeans</u> in English and French that took a peer-to-peer narrative approach and used an illustrative style to match the student-created design assets. We didn't demonize or judge cannabis use but pointed out that



#KnowWhatImpairedMeans social media graphics, 2018

"A car weighs nearly two tonnes. It turns into a deadly weapon when you're impaired and your driving skills go down the toilet."

The result

The campaign and hashtag, without paid promotions, earned **6.5 million social media impressions**. It also drew the attention of the Substance Use and Addictions Program (SUAP) of Health Canada, which was looking to expand health and safety messaging in Canada around cannabis now that it had become a legal substance.

We applied to SUAP to expand our #KnowWhatImpairedMeans campaign and received funding through to March 2021 to run youth-focused campaigns about the dangers of driving while high.

#KnowWhatImpairedMeans: the national campaign, Phase One

We engaged <u>Mass Minority</u>, a data-driven communications studio, to work with us and also partnered with <u>Academica Group</u>, a Canadian survey firm specializing in youth audiences, to survey 1,000 Canadian residents ages 16 to 24 about their cannabis attitudes.

Mass Minority's research into previous and current anti-drugged-driving campaigns got at the heart of the issue of why few resonated with their target audience. "Why don't people listen?" asked **Jack Perone**, Mass Minority's Chief Strategy Officer. To answer, he displayed a photo of a jubilant 4-20 rally after Canada legalized cannabis and pointed to the celebrating crowd. "Quite simply: they won." In this milieu, anyone who tries to point out the many and real effects of cannabis on humans and their ability to perform complex physical and cognitive tasks can be dismissed with the belief, encouraged by legalization, that weed is harmless.

Early on, we agreed that messaging for Know What Impaired Means wouldn't be branded as coming from Parachute: it would be a standalone campaign, with its own website and promoted from its own social media channels **@knowwhatimpairedmeans**. We would fish where the youth fish swim, going to places and media where they gather and engage influencers who cannabis users followed and trusted.

While our pre-campaign survey revealed that three quarters agreed cannabis can impair someone's ability to drive, close to 40 per cent had engaged in risky behaviours related to cannabis and driving – including 35 per cent who said they had been a passenger in a car driven by someone who had used cannabis in the past four hours (Parachute, 2019).

Our campaign, we decided, would lead people to conclude, themselves, that some activities – including and especially driving – are things you shouldn't do while high. Our survey results also shifted our focus from messaging for drivers only to creating messaging that would resonate with a passenger faced with the prospect of being in a car with a cannabis-impaired driver.

This resulted in the development of two ads that depict potentially dangerous scenarios exacerbated by novices putting their lives in the hands of people impaired by cannabis.



Still from #KnowWhatImpairedMeans ad, 2019

One features a <u>first-time rock climber</u> and the second a <u>first-time skydiver</u>. The skydiver notices the guy packing his parachute might be high; the rock climber's friend gets nervous when the belayer holding the safety rope seems stoned.

The ad prompts viewers to think why they would not feel similar apprehension about getting into a car with someone who was high.

The ads were filmed in both horizontal and vertical formats, the latter to better suit viewing on a phone, at 30-second and 15-second lengths. They were also designed and captioned to work well with no sound audible, a decision that gave us the opportunity to expand our reach via soundless digital advertising boards.

We also created three short GIF-style videos of six seconds' length that focused on lessdangerous but nevertheless embarrassing things that can happen when you try do something requiring attention and in-control motor skills while high:

- a young woman tries shaping her eyebrow and ends up removing it entirely
- a young man tries to sharpen his hair fade and slips
- a guy tries to fix his bike and ends up with a mess of parts on the floor

To kick off the campaign in August 2019, Mass Minority designed and installed an Instagrammable "Impaired" installation at the three-week-long **Canadian National Exhibition**, which is popular with the 15 to 24-year-old demographic we wanted to reach. The sculpture, 3.5 metres high, was made up of words to describe what you feel like when you use weed: high, ripped, lit, stoned. When strung together, you see the vertical word forming: "Impaired."

The installation later moved to **Nathan Phillips Square** in Toronto for October's National Teen Driver Safety Week, prompting more user-generated photos shared on Instagram. We engaged two Instagrammers popular in cannabis culture, Toronto comedian **@thatdudemcfly** and Montreal actor **@afrowasi**, to promote our theme to their followers. Short videos of the installation going through its revealing light-up sequence also circulated on social media.

Newad, an out-of-home advertising company, donated space on its digital sign network at colleges, universities and in bars and restaurants to play the Skydiver and Rock Climber videos: we directed video ads to the 15-to-24 demographic on Facebook and

Instagram and the Parachute team promoted the campaign organically (without paid posts) as our theme once again for National Teen Driver Safety Week 2019.

The result

The campaign garnered **18 million impressions** from social media, through the digital sign plays on campuses, exposure to the Impaired installation and influencer posts.

Know What Impaired Means: Phase 2

The second phase of the campaign, developed in spring and summer of 2020 and running in fall 2020, expanded the #KnowWhatImpairedMeans assets and messaging, as well as developed a separate campaign geared to parents of teens, encouraging them to #HaveThisTalk about impairment's negative effects on driving. Parents serve as one of the key influencers for adolescents when making decisions about risky behaviour, such as those on the road (Morrish et al., 2011), but according to Health Canada data from 2021, only 11 per cent of parents have discussed the risks of driving under cannabis influence with their teenagers (EKOS Research Associates Inc., 2016).

For the parent campaign, we decided to brand it as coming from Parachute, given our charity's long history in communicating with parents about their children's safety through our annual <u>Safe Kids Week</u>, among other initiatives. Phase 2 of the youth-oriented #KnowWhatImpairedMean campaigns continued to be promoted through separate social media accounts not associated with Parachute.

Even in one year, the social media landscape for youth had changed. Fish ages 15 to 24 were now swimming to TikTok, away from Facebook. While we continued to use assets from phase 1, we created three more short videos following the 2019 campaign theme, but in a format popular for TikTok, showing young people who are high messing up on:

- baking a cake for mom's birthday
- dying blonde hair pink, but the dye lands mostly on the girl's face
- cutting the dog's hair, with disastrous/hilarious results

Both the phase 2 youth campaign and parent campaign faced challenges unique to communications about cannabis in a world where the substance remains illegal in most places apart from Canada.

Social media companies, based either in the U.S. or China, have strict rules disallowing posts about drugs, including cannabis. Tik Tok is particularly strict: you can't get an ad accepted if it includes the phrase "while you're high" (trust us, we tried). We had to remake our TikTok videos using emojis representing a leaf and the wind, which the cannabis community on TikTok have put together as symbols to mean "get high". Several times throughout the campaign, we had to file an appeal when one of our promoted ads on social media was blocked by an algorithm that rejects any mention or depiction of drugs, regardless of context.

It wasn't only algorithms that presented challenges. We found a popular Canadian social media influencer to do an "awkward talk" video with his real-life teen son about the dangers of mixing cannabis and driving; as part of our campaign, he would promote the video to his large network of followers, many of whom are parents of older children. However, the influencer realized that he would pay too high a cost to work with us as his social media channels, owned by U.S. companies, would be "demonetized" (earn no ad revenue) if he had any cannabis content added to them – even if it was safety messaging.

Our agency, Mass Minority, then developed similarly themed video scripts that we could film using actors, creating a scenario about the need to "Have This Talk" between a <u>mother and daughter</u>, and another between a <u>father and son</u>. Parachute has a long-standing relationship with Bell Media, owner of the CTV Network and a host of other TV channels, and Bell agreed to donate airtime to run these videos as 30-second Public Service Announcements (PSAs).





Stills from #HaveThisTalk ads, 2020

By the time we were ready to start production for these videos in summer 2020, another unforeseen challenge had arisen: COVID-19 public health restrictions. Onset filming had resumed in Toronto, where Parachute and our agency are located, but under strict rules that meant we had to revise our plans. For instance, we hired real-life father-andson actors who lived together so they could perform the scene sitting side-by-side in the son's bedroom and not contravene distancing rules. Our plan to do four PSAs, two in English and two in French, reduced to only three: that was all we could fit into a slowerthan-usual filming day due to COVID physical distancing safety rules.

We also developed a <u>new webpage for #HaveThisTalk</u> at parachute.ca to provide information and resources for parents. It covers why to #HaveThisTalk, what to #HaveThisTalk about (risk, impairment, misperceptions and alternatives/solutions) and how to #HaveThisTalk (prepare and set goals, release judgment, listen actively and build skills).

The youth-oriented campaign ran in fall 2020 and #HaveThisTalk ran in fall 2020 and again over January-February 2021 on TV.

The result

The campaign received **60.8 million impressions**: 53.9 million potential views from 2,370 plays on Bell Media networks and stations, and 6.9 million impressions from social media, including 2.4 million from our TikTok ads.

We also conducted a second survey of Canadian residents ages 16 to 24 in fall 2020, after the phase 2 youth campaign had wrapped. Of those surveyed, 76 per cent of respondents felt the "Know What Impaired Means" campaign is moderately to extremely effective in communicating the message, which is to highlight the negative effect cannabis has on motor and cognitive skills (Parachute, 2020).

Interestingly, the numbers related to attitudes around cannabis were largely unchanged since our fall 2019 survey: The good news is two thirds of youth reported that they don't engage in risky behaviours related to cannabis-impaired driving, whether it's driving themselves or being a passenger with a driver who has used cannabis. Sustaining that majority is important. As we know from other issues, such as seatbelt use and alcohol-impaired driving, shifts in culture need to be maintained and we can't let up. There is an opportunity to look at the one third of youth who do report risky behaviours related to cannabis and better understand how to drive change in that group.

Know What Impaired Means: Phase Three

While our contract with **Health Canada** wrapped in March 2021, we knew that Canadians 15 to 24 were not the only people who needed to hear and respond to our #KnowWhatImpairedMeans messaging.

Historically, the age groups with the highest percentage of fatally injured drivers who test positive for cannabis are 16 to 19-year-olds and 20 to 34-year-olds. However, 35- to 49-year-olds are the most recent age group to peak in this measurement, reaching 27.7 per cent in 2016. In particular, in recent years, the percentage among 45 to 49-year-olds has been comparable to 16 to 19-year-olds (Traffic Injury Research Foundation, 2019). The emerging data on drug-impaired driving-related deaths among drivers in young to middle adulthood indicated an opportunity to expand our efforts to this target audience.

Thanks to funding from the **Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario**, Parachute is developing a third phase of #KnowWhatImpairedMeans, launching in spring 2021, aimed at cannabis users ages 25 to 49 within the Province of Ontario

To support this campaign, we are developing short GIF-style videos and a 30-second ad video, all to be promoted through social media to Ontarians between ages and 25 to 49. We're also developing a campaign ad that will run in KIND, a cannabis lifestyle magazine distributed through cannabis retailers.

The campaign acknowledges there is so much choice now in the legal, retail cannabis market. Legal cannabis products are being marketed based on the effect the consumer wants, in the format the consumer wants: bud, edibles, beverages, oils. However, there is no cannabis that makes you a safe driver. Throughout the campaign, the same message comes through: as an adult, you can choose to use cannabis for a variety of reasons and effects, but don't use cannabis and drive after. As one video script states: "There's a type of cannabis for when you just want to snack and binge ... but not for driving to get more popcorn."

The results

This campaign is in market at publication time of this case study. It is being promoted in Ontario only through our funding partnership and we hope that, at a future date, we'll be able to further develop this adult-market campaign to extend its reach nationally.

SPEEDING: #SpeedIsNoGame

Speeding is a contributing factor in one in four fatal crashes in Canada. Reducing vehicle speed has been proven to be effective in preventing crashes and reducing the severity of injuries. Even small reductions in speed can be significant: for each 1.6 km/h reduction in average speed, collisions are reduced by five per cent (Rosen et al., 2011).

For our National Teen Driver Safety Week (NTDSW) 2020, supported by our Vision Zero sponsorship by **Desjardins Insurance**, we chose to focus on the theme of why speeding is dangerous for drivers and vulnerable road users (pedestrians, cyclists) alike. NTDSW is run under the Parachute brand but we wanted to take what we had learned from our #KnowWhatImpairedMeans experience to ensure our messaging and approach resonated with our target audience: teens and young drivers across Canada.

We were fortunate enough, once again, to win a spot in the competitive <u>Registered</u> <u>Graphic Designer (RGD) designathon held in February 2020</u>. Because we had been a beneficiary of this benevolent activity in 2018, initially our application was unsuccessful as other first-time charities had priority. One of those, however, was unable to complete their brief describing what they wanted a student team to work on so we were offered a last-minute opportunity to join.

The 12-hour marathon design session, held on a Saturday at a Toronto design studio, began with an in-person morning meeting with the student team, led by an experienced RGD mentor. We discussed what motivates young drivers to speed. The conclusion: it's less about being "in a hurry" or "running late" but more "for the thrill". At the students discussed further, they said the culture of gaming they grew up made it seem normal to race and speed – but IRL (in real life) – #SpeedIsNoGame.

The designers worked until 9 p.m. refining illustrations to bring this theme to life, inspired by early-generation video game animations.



Examples of video game elements, RDG Designathon, 2020

Their initial proposal used the "health bars" feature of video games to show pedestrians who were safe (a full green bar) and those who were in danger from an oncoming speeding driver (half orange bars).

We wanted to test this concept with youth advisors but, within a couple weeks of getting the design files, COVID-19 restrictions came into effect. We needed to rethink how we would consult with youth and also, a bigger challenge, how to plan an NTDSW for fall 2020 potentially without having the community activation tools of school assemblies, rallies and positive ticketing challenges, where teen volunteers hand out "positive tickets" with safety messaging, produced by Parachute, to drivers in their community.

To run our consultations, we turned to the Zoom platform, recruiting an online focus group of a dozen people between the ages of 15 and 21 in Ontario to critique the student designers' work. We hired one of the student designers to refine the concept and then partnered with the RCMP, who provided us access to their <u>National Youth Advisory</u> <u>Committee</u> to further review. Once again, we met via Zoom, with student participants

from across Canada. Both groups liked the design concept but brought up great points on how to make the messaging clearer, including adding speed limit signs, percentages to the health bars and working a speedometer into the driver-view representation of the car's steering wheel.



The initial draft, above, and final promotional banner, below, for National Teen Driver Safety Week, 2020



The student designer created additional illustrations to enliven our social media posts, including this one depicting someone losing control of their vehicle on a country road and colliding with another driver.

As we continued to prepare for NTDSW, another unexpected effect of COVID-19 arose: as people reduced travel due to gathering restrictions, the now-emptier roads became an inviting place for racing and stunt driving, particularly for young drivers. Our #SpeedIsNoGame messaging unfortunately became even more relevant.

How could we make our message even stronger: that speeding was dangerous whether on our urban streets, country roads, or highways? It became clear that even if high school students were to return to in-person classes in fall 2020, there would still be restrictions on the kind of large-group assemblies and other activities where, in the past, local education and law-enforcement groups would take the Parachute NTDSW messaging directly to local students.

We knew from our student research that they trusted and listened to influencers on social media: people with large followings of fans. However, as our first focus group pointed out, something such as safety messaging would need to come from a credible source, someone accomplished rather than someone famous simply for being an online celebrity.

Who knows better about how difficult it is to keep a car under control at fast speeds than a racing-car driver? None of the Parachute team follow racing as a sport but, as we began researching the industry, we discovered that Canadian <u>Nicholas Latifi</u>, then 25, was one of just 20 drivers on the elite Formula One (F1) circuit.

We made our pitch to have Latifi become our #SpeedIsNoGame spokesperson via email to his publicist based in England and, to our delight (and shock, to be frank), got an immediate and warm response, volunteering to work with us once the race team had checked out our credentials as a charity and track record in Canada. Latifi's publicist and the Williams racing team provided photography, campaign approval and offered to promote our NTDSW messaging on Latifi's social media channels.

They surprised us by creating a trackside video of Latifi talking about how speed belongs on the track, but never on our streets, <u>published on his Instagram account</u> during NTDSW. That video has 20,000 fan views.

We created billboards featuring Latifi that ran on donated digital board space across Canada, thanks to our media partners at **Media City** (billboards in Ontario, the Prairie provinces, and B.C.), **Outfront Media** (billboards in Quebec markets as well as Halifax, N.S.) and **Bell Media**, which provided billboards in Montreal and Toronto along with plays on their campus and restaurant sign network.



Billboard used in Speed Is No Game campaign, 2020

In fall 2020, Canadian rail company CN became an additional sponsor for NTDSW, allowing us to partner with You Tube influencers who are content creators with a teen audience following to reach more youth directly in Canada. Composer and travel video producer Andrew Gunnadie (aka Gunnarolla) has 91,700 YouTube subscribers: we hired him to create an <u>original video</u>, using our key safety messaging but in his own style and published to his followers.

We also partnered with <u>Québec Youtuber</u>, <u>Élie Pilon</u>, with 66,700 followers. Pilon's videos are long, by usual social media standards, but his followers are keen to enjoy his rapid-fire rant-style musings on a wide range of topics: this time, about speeding on our roads. His video, Les roadtrips en 4 étapes had 20,600 fan views during NTDSW and has drawn another 7,000 views in the months since.

The results

This campaign received **74.8 million impressions**, overall:

- 3.2 million digital board impressions, including in the Astral campus-resto network from St. John's NL to Vancouver, B.C.,
- 16.2 million news release and earned media stories,
- 9.5 million social media impressions for #NTDSW2020 and #SpeedIsNoGame hashtags,
- 2.7 million: Viewed boosted posts and influencer reach

Continuing the #SpeedIsNoGame campaign

Speeding continues to be a dangerous driving behaviour in both youth and older drivers: through a sponsorship from Ontario's Ministry of Transportation in spring 2021, we created updated Latifi images and renewed anti-speeding messaging focusing on stunt driving to promote via social media in Ontario. We are continuing our partnership with Latifi through 2021 as we focus on our #SpeedIsNoGame theme for NTDSW for a second year.



Billboard used in updated Speed Is No Game campaign, 2021

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