

‘Welcome Back’ Campaign

Idea: To raise awareness of the border opening and welcome back Canadian travelers to Minnesota.

Create ‘welcome back’ messaging to convey a special relationship with our northerly neighbors. Present Minnesota in a welcoming image to all and serve reminders of the different types of Minnesota travel experiences that have been missed out on during this time away from each other. (Example: The last couple years, COVID has kept friends, family, and neighbors apart, showing us just how important these relationships are. As the international border reopens, Minnesotans are ready to welcome back our northerly neighbor, inviting Canadian travelers to Minnesota with open arms.)

Execution: Utilize print advertising at the front end of the campaign for additional impact and to drive awareness.

Amplify social media in order to extend reach and market penetration. Social media content could be rolled out in phases – beginning with heart-felt welcome back messaging, followed later by potentially more fun banter with our friends across the border. A later phase could include inviting & chronicling a Canadian influencer’s trip across the border.

Rotate messaging between statewide, metro, and border community to diversify the impact of the campaign and funnel into areas of need. This will also allow us to get a read on what is resonating and not resonating with the Canadian audience. Underscore vaccination rates and requirements where applicable. Highlight new attractions/reasons to visit.

Revisit ‘See You Soon’ campaign concept for messaging ideas as this campaign was a transitional one rooted in optimism, used to help rebuild traveler confidence and sense of normalcy within this new travel environment.

Proposed Timing: October 30th launch

Focus Geo: Winnipeg & Thunder Bay DMAs

Mediums: Print (newspaper), Paid Social Media, Paid search, Travel guide inserts, OOH

Potential Tactics:

- Publish a penned letter from Minnesota to our friend we haven’t seen in quite awhile conveying ‘we miss you’ sentiments.
- Deploy a series of targeted social media posts that keep the border opening top of mind & convey a variety of travel ideas
- Insert surplus travel guides to put incremental MN planning resources into the hands of prospective travelers
- Program messages from campaign within website personalization tools served to identified Canadian web visitors
- Leverage paid search opportunities to raise Minnesota’s travel profile within related keywords
- Explore partnering with / inviting influencer to chronicle travels to Minnesota following border opening
- Develop PR strategy / talking points related to campaign
- Produce Welcome Center signage welcoming back Canadian travelers

PR / Earned media opportunities:

- Integrate campaign messaging & highlight what’s new since Canadian travelers last visited + “what’s old might also be new again”
- Media pitching: Winnipeg, Thunder Bay, Toronto
- Media drops: 10-15 to hyper-targeted contacts in two main target markets (Winnipeg and Thunder Bay) to include penned letter and local/tasteful Minnesota gift items (also consider a simple product that might be highly sought by Canadians).
- Desk side meetings: before and after border opening
- Media talking points: encompassing travel + leisure opportunities, vaccination rates/requirements, tourism economic impact, border communities and broad international marketing strategy

Industry engagement: Communication on what Explore Minnesota is doing to reach Canadian travelers leading up to int’l land border re-opening. Ask industry to tag #OnlyinMN to leverage existing hashtag awareness & content footprint. Share applicable graphics and ads on industry site for integration into partner efforts. Develop landing page

Potential ideas to share with industry: wear red and post ‘welcome back’ inspired message; create Canadian dollar at par programs with hotels/restaurant, Maple Week/Month highlighting maple flavored items, or have a beer on us type promos as acknowledgement promos. Canadians are very deal orientated – share promotional ideas with industry to entice travelers. Develop landing page to capture promos, at par deals, events, etc being done by tourism businesses to attract Canadian visitors specifically – potentially integrate via QR code.

