

# Communications Plan - Peterborough Timbermen



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## **SITUATION ANALYSIS**

The Peterborough Timbermen, part of the recently announced Arena Lacrosse League, are an amateur men's lacrosse team. They will begin play in January 2017 with a 14-game regular season schedule through April, all on weekends. The ALL has hopes of becoming the NLL's official minor league affiliate in the future, raising their status to semi-pro.

Peterborough is no stranger to lacrosse as the MSL's Peterborough Lakers are a popular entertainment option during the summer. The city supports the Lakers and is primed for a local winter lacrosse team to cheer for. The Timbermen will feature primarily local players which will excite the community. However, due to arena conflicts, the Timbermen will only play two home games at the Peterborough Memorial Centre. Their remaining five home games will be played at the Tribute Communities Centre in Oshawa. This will hopefully be changed for the 2018 season.

As a new team, the Timbermen are starting from scratch in building their program, although the components are there because Peterborough is already a strong lacrosse city. Connections to local media and a strong communications plan will ensure citizens know there is a new team in town to support.

In lacrosse, the goal is less about making money (although that is a necessary evil when in business) than it is about spreading the enjoyment of the game. Creating the Timbermen brand is important not only to sell tickets but to provide an atmosphere that allows the players to develop their careers and an atmosphere that allows the fans to fall in love with the game. This sounds idealistic but lacrosse was given to us as a gift from the Creator and those involved with the game at every level honour this. The Timbermen will continue to uphold the ideals on which the game was developed.

## SWOT ANALYSIS

<b>Strengths</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Peterborough is a strong supporter of box lacrosse community</li> <li>• Local staff and players</li> <li>• Knowledgeable staff and coaches</li> <li>• Strong core of players should contend for a title right away</li> </ul>	<b>Weaknesses</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New team and league – there will be growing pains and miscommunications</li> <li>• This level of lacrosse is new to Peterborough</li> <li>• Only two home games</li> </ul>
<b>Opportunities</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partnering with other lacrosse programs for exposure, such as Trent Excalibur, or minor teams</li> <li>• Knowledgeable fan base already understands the game</li> <li>• Built-in fan base will support their local players right away</li> <li>• Follow the Lakers model of success by creating a relationship with them</li> <li>• Can take advantage of time at TCC to build a strong product to present full-time in 2018</li> </ul>	<b>Threats</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Peterborough Petes (OHL) – they eat up arena time and fans may not want to support both hockey and winter lacrosse</li> <li>• NLL's Toronto Rock – professional lacrosse is only two hours away</li> <li>• Hard to work with city staff to find available arena dates</li> <li>• Current conflict between the city and the Petes and Lakers regarding arena revenue sharing</li> </ul>

### OPPORTUNITY STATEMENT

The Peterborough Timbermen are a new lacrosse team in Peterborough looking to build their own unique brand separate from other local teams. A well-constructed and implemented communications plan will incite interest in the team, allowing the Timbermen to grow their fan base as they prepare for their inaugural season.

### OVERALL GOAL

To make Peterborough fall in love with local winter lacrosse.

### OBJECTIVES

To introduce Peterborough to the Timbermen and ALL lacrosse before the season starts on January 7, 2017.

To generate enough interest in the Timbermen to sell 2500 tickets to each of two home games at the Memorial Centre on February 26 and March 19.

To ensure fans have constant, updated access to relevant team and league information through a comprehensive social media strategy.

## **AUDIENCE ANALYSIS**

The Timbermen's primary audience is the population of Peterborough. This comprises heavily of families and seniors. Both groups will benefit from weekend games when they are looking for activities to involve themselves in. Many citizens of Peterborough are already Lakers fans and would welcome the opportunity to cheer for their local boys on a winter team. If they are already Lakers fans, chances are they are of the "rabid" type – very knowledgeable and very passionate about lacrosse. These fans are very influential. Peterborough is growing, but still has a small town feel and word-of-mouth is very important.

Peterborough is geographically isolated from other large centres and as such promotes the endeavours of its own citizens. Having local players on the team will be an asset. Partnerships with local businesses for cross-promotions should help build brand awareness.

Students from Trent University and Fleming College are a critical audience to appeal to. Post-secondary students are always looking for new activities to procrastinate from work, and the combined full-time populations of Trent and Fleming are approximately 14,000. The Peterborough Petes have never been able to capture the students' attention but it's a demographic that shouldn't be ignored.

A secondary audience is general lacrosse fans in Ontario. Lacrosse fans of all ages are rabid about the sport and will travel long distances to see a game. NLL games are also much more expensive than ALL games will be so the ALL can be promoted as an alternative to an expensive day at the Air Canada Centre. Having double-headers is also an asset as fans get to see twice the lacrosse for the same amount of travel time.

## **EMPATHY MAP – POPULATION OF PETERBOROUGH**

### *Think & Feel*

- Will this team stick around or will it fold quickly?
  - Is it worth my time to invest my interest?
- Proud to have a local team as Peterborough historically produces top-notch lacrosse talent.
- The city is starved for a championship (Petes 2006, Lakers 2012 were the last championships, and this city is impatient).

### *Hear*

- Information spreads quickly in Peterborough, a lot of it coming as people sit around at Tim Horton's and chat with their friends (every demographic does this in Peterborough).
- Current conflict between city council and the Petes and Lakers regarding revenue sharing agreement at the Memorial Centre. The local sports teams are in financial trouble.
- City council has a history of not supporting sporting endeavours and refuses to make a plan to replace the aging Memorial Centre.

### *See*

- The Lakers began trading away local players for higher-end talent a couple of seasons ago and fans were not happy about it. They want to win with local players.
- Fans watched the Canadian Lacrosse League fold after just five seasons (the closest team to Peterborough was in Oshawa, and it had many Peterborough players).
- Locals will get a chance with the Timbermen. Twenty-one were drafted and two more were recently acquired in trades.

### *Say & Do*

- If they become invested, they will cheer at games and share their experiences afterwards, encouraging others to take in a game.
- Some will make the drive to Oshawa for the five "home" games the team plays there.

### *Pains*

- Worry about shelling out money for a new team that plays inconsistently. Nobody can predict how the team will play until they do face their first opposition.

- These players, while local, are not to the level of the Lakers. The Lakers are a summer team comprised of NLL talent. The ALL is comprised of the players who have yet to make it to the NLL either due to age or talent level.

### *Gains*

- Lacrosse isn't called "the medicine game" for nothing. It has a beautiful capacity to bring communities together.
- New entertainment opportunity for winter in Peterborough. The city lacks family-friendly entertainment options.

## **STRATEGIES AND TACTICS**

Develop and execute a television, radio, and print campaign to promote the team within Peterborough, especially for the two home games.

*Peterborough, while growing, is still a traditional town with a thriving TV, radio, and print journalism industry. Many people are still primarily reached through these traditional avenues.*

- Rely on free television, radio, and print advertising where possible – pitch stories rather paying for ads.
- Invite local media to a game to provide coverage.
- Create partnerships with local media companies for consistent coverage, for example, Peterborough Sports HQ (local sports magazine).
- Send press releases immediately when pertinent information becomes available.
- Use a consistent, professional style and design in all team communications.

Create a social media presence that is continuously monitored and updated.

*The Lakers have a thriving social media presence and their fan base will be shared by the Timbermen.*

- Have Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram accounts in place by November 26<sup>th</sup>.
- Aim for one tweet per day to keep the Timbermen in the public eye.
- Invite social media influencers to the game for free in exchange for a review on their website/social media platforms.
- Live-tweet games and provide post-game analysis including game summaries and statistics.
- Develop an independent team website ready to launch by January 7, 2017.

Let the public meet the team to foster a sense of familiarity and loyalty.

*Fans are more passionate about a team they feel like a part of. They are more likely to promote the product for you if they feel personally connected to it.*

- Live tweet the draft and provide emphasis on local players.
- Hold a press conference once roster spots have been decided to introduce players.
- Player profiles on official website with up to date information.
- Post-game meet and greet/informal autograph sessions.

## **KEY MESSAGES**

Lacrosse is a Canadian sport and the Timbermen are made of predominantly local players trying to realize their dreams of one day playing in the National Lacrosse League.

The Timbermen will be transparent in their communication with the media and public. All fan inquiries are welcome and will be responded to by a team member.

The Timbermen are committed to creating a fun, safe environment for all their fans and players.

## **SPOKESPEOPLE**

Head coach and general manager Joe Sullivan is the primary spokesperson as he works closely with both the team and business operations departments of the Timbermen. Joe is also the main liaison with the league and is responsible for passing on their messages to his team. He will be the one interviewed first after games or when the team does anything noteworthy such as make trades.

Communications director Anna Taylor is also a good spokesperson for the team as she is the main media contact. Any press releases are crafted by her and she is the first point of contact for questions from the media. If the team has any future press conferences, she will be the moderator. She is responsible for creating and maintaining the team's image and key messages and keeping all staff and players on message at all times.

## EVALUATION

*Objective:* To introduce Peterborough to the Timbermen and professional ALL lacrosse before the season starts on January 7, 2017.

*Benchmark:* Social media channels were set up prior to the draft so that fans can follow the team's progress. A website will be set up by the season opener. Fans are being informed of every move the team makes including trades, new staff hires, and training camp results.

*Formative:* This objective will be hard to measure with concrete numbers, but if engagement with team social media channels is high, that's a good sign. We want to build a connection between the team and the community, so if people make the trip to Oshawa to cheer on their team, we will have really succeeded.

*Objective:* To generate enough interest in the Timbermen to sell 2500 tickets to each of two home games at the Memorial Centre February 26 and March 19.

*Benchmark:* Check with the box office to see how many tickets have been sold by February and March 1 before each game. If needed, increase social media postings reminding fans to purchase tickets. Promote booster pack which gets two tickets for \$25, saving fans \$5. Ask the arena to promote ticket sales as well.

*Formative:* Ticket sales will be easy to count through the box office. In addition, the mood of the crowd will be helpful in determining whether fans had a good time and are likely to return. The level of noise and enthusiasm in cheering are great measures of whether fans are engaged. We should also make sure to thank fans after the game via social media and ask them to return again next season.

*Objective:* To ensure fans have constant, updated access to relevant team and league information.

*Benchmark:* This falls on the communications director to constantly (every day) check with the general manager for new information that could be passed onto the fans. That information has to be communicated through Twitter, Facebook and a press release if necessary.

*Formative:* This objective has no specific end date. This is a process that will continue as long as the Timbermen are part of the Peterborough community.

Completion of objectives can be measured in the following ways or by answering the following questions:



- How many tickets were sold to each of the two home games? Did attendance increase or decrease for the second game?
- How many followers does each social media platform have? Specific numbers of engagements can be measured with analytics programs. This can be monitored on an ongoing basis.
- Media coverage can be monitored by creating Google Alerts. These alerts allow the user to track when their search terms, for example, "Peterborough Timbermen," are used in any media sources (The Peterborough Examiner, for example).
- Responses from fans on social media can be monitored. What are they saying about the team? Are they even aware of the team? Are we making an impact in the community? Is the coverage positive or negative?

## SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

<http://www.thepeterboroughexaminer.com/2016/12/06/in-brief-peterborough-timbermen-trade-for-jr-a-laker-and-trent-excalibur-player-nick-finlay> (A story in the local paper using information from my press release)

### LACROSSE

#### Timbermen acquire Finlay

The Peterborough Timbermen have acquired Peterborough Jr. A Lakers and Trent Excalibur player Nick Finlay from the Six Nations Snipers in exchange for Eric Guiltinan ahead of the debut season for the six-team Arena Lacrosse League.

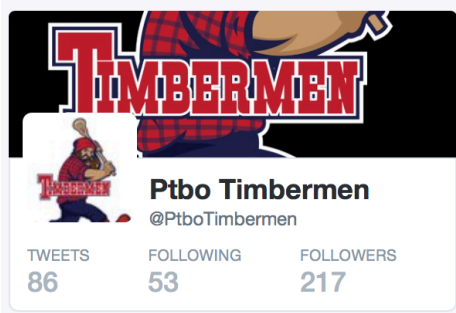
The 6'4", 195-pound Finlay, from Orleans, has played two years at transition for the Peterborough Jr. A Lakers and three years at midfield for the Trent Excalibur. Over his career Finlay has scored three goals and four assists in 19 games with the Lakers and 15 goals and four assists in 31 with the Excalibur. He also had 56 points in 42 games over a four year Jr. B career with the Gloucester Griffins.

Head coach and general manager Joe Sullivan said giving up Guiltinan was hard but the Timbermen are happy to have another local connection on the team.

"Nick brings us the local talent we are looking for," Sullivan said. "I know we were happy to get an experienced player like Eric who plays summer ball for the Cobourg Kodiaks but our vision is to develop local lacrosse talent into NLL players. We are very excited to add another Peterborough Jr. Laker."

The Timbermen open training camp on Saturday at the Baltimore Arena. They will play a 14-game regular season schedule from January to April, with two of their home games at the Peterborough Memorial Centre and the other five at the Tribute Communities Centre in Oshawa.

<https://twitter.com/PtboTimbermen> (as of December 11)

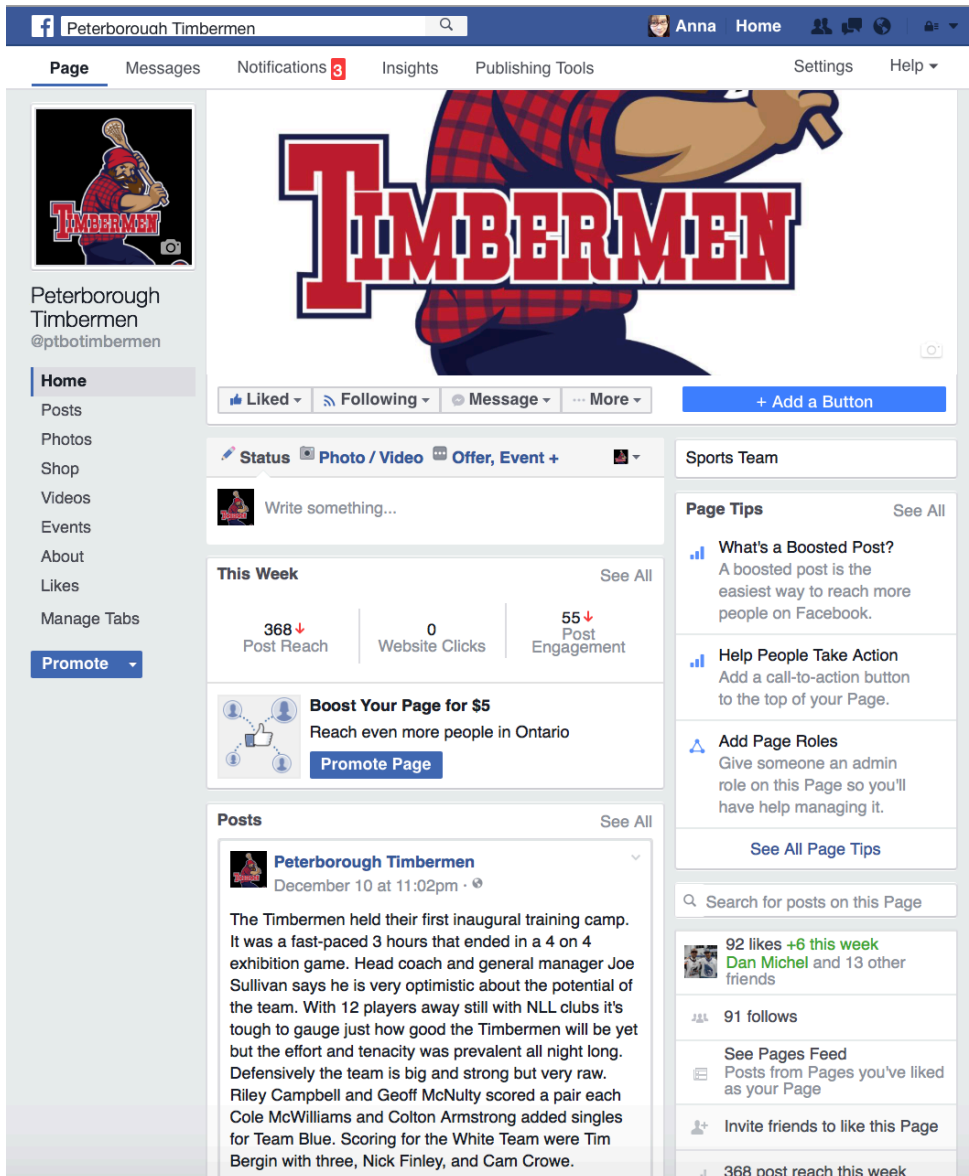


**TIMBERMEN**

**Ptbo Timbermen**  
@PtboTimbermen

TWEETS 86    FOLLOWING 53    FOLLOWERS 217

<https://www.facebook.com/ptbotimbermen/> (as of December 11)



Peterborough Timbermen @ptbotimbermen

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368 ↓ Post Reach	0 Website Clicks	55 ↓ Post Engagement
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**Posts** See All

**Peterborough Timbermen**  
December 10 at 11:02pm · 🌐

The Timbermen held their first inaugural training camp. It was a fast-paced 3 hours that ended in a 4 on 4 exhibition game. Head coach and general manager Joe Sullivan says he is very optimistic about the potential of the team. With 12 players away still with NLL clubs it's tough to gauge just how good the Timbermen will be yet but the effort and tenacity was prevalent all night long. Defensively the team is big and strong but very raw. Riley Campbell and Geoff McNulty scored a pair each Cole McWilliams and Colton Armstrong added singles for Team Blue. Scoring for the White Team were Tim Bergin with three, Nick Finley, and Cam Crowe.

**Sports Team**

**Page Tips** See All

- What's a Boosted Post?  
A boosted post is the easiest way to reach more people on Facebook.
- Help People Take Action  
Add a call-to-action button to the top of your Page.
- Add Page Roles  
Give someone an admin role on this Page so you'll have help managing it.

[See All Page Tips](#)

Search for posts on this Page

- 92 likes +6 this week  
Dan Michel and 13 other friends
- 91 follows
- See Pages Feed  
Posts from Pages you've liked as your Page
- Invite friends to like this Page
- 368 post reach this week