

# SLICK MAILING HIGHLIGHTS OIL RISK

Environmental group uses direct marketing to bring messy debate to B.C. homes and capture public attention.

Named after British Columbia's provincial flower, the Dogwood Initiative is a grassroots environmental group that's become a leading voice opposing the construction of oil pipelines and the resulting increase of tankers in B.C.

It brings voters together to work on urgent challenges facing B.C. residents. The group's goal is to strengthen its current base of engaged citizens who are willing to address environmental challenges in ways the existing political party system has not, cannot or will not. When international oil companies pushed to increase the number of tankers in Canadian waters, the group responded.

In November 2014, around municipal election time, with heated debate playing out publicly, the Dogwood Initiative mailed tanker-shaped sample packages filled with black, gooey oil [made with vegetable-based gel and black food colouring] to hundreds of B.C. homes. It was a spin on the traditional shampoo sample. In many cases, the packages ruptured while in transit, soiling the mail piece and punctuating the group's point dramatically. Reactions were invariably strong. Supporters sent positive tweets while critics sent angry letters.

The biggest impact by far was online. Hundreds of direct mail recipients shared photos of the mailing on Twitter and Instagram. National news outlets picked up the story, spreading it further.

The *No Tankers* campaign ultimately increased pledges of support by 400 per cent in a single month. A crude demonstration of the dangers of oil transport turned out to be a slick marketing idea.



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