



Waste Reduction Week in Canada: October 18-24th

Third in a series of articles about waste reduction initiatives in the Vanderhoof area.

The Nechako Waste Reduction Initiative (NWRI), along with the Nechako Valley Food Network (NVFN), is part of the Nechako Healthy Community Alliance. Funding is provided by the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako (RDBN), which is responsible for handling waste in our area.

Since 2001, National Waste Reduction Week in Canada (WRW) has been organized by a coalition of non-government, not-for-profit environment groups, and from each of the 13 participating provincial and territorial jurisdictions across Canada. WRW is currently held the third week of October each year.

The success of the WRW in Canada program continues to grow with the number of participants in all three targeted audiences – schools, local governments and small to medium-sized businesses – more than doubling in the last six years alone.

The District of Vanderhoof is joining many other towns and cities across Canada in proclaiming October 18-24th Waste Reduction Week in Vanderhoof.

What is waste? The Oxford English Dictionary defines waste as: *“eliminated or discarded as no longer useful or required.”* We need to think of items that we would otherwise discard as: *“resources that we conserve, reuse or recycle to protect our environment.”*

If we can reduce the amount of waste that is produced in the first instance, we are conserving resources and limiting the need to reuse or recycle. Canadians produce more than 31 million

tonnes of waste annually; that’s 2.7 kgs per person per day. In perspective, that’s the same volume of waste being generated as piling up 31 million average family cars. Nearly 40% of this waste is generated at home, with the remainder coming from commercial, industrial, construction and demolition sources. Of the waste we are generating, we are diverting less than 25%.

Most of our waste is buried in landfills. For waste to decompose in a healthy environment, such as your compost pile, it requires air and water. These are not present deep in the landfill, and as the waste slowly decomposes and reacts with what is around it, it can produce a leachate which may end up in our groundwater system, not to mention creating greenhouse gases such as methane and carbon dioxide. In properly managed landfills, leachate is collected and treated along with greenhouse gases. According to Environment Canada, landfill sites account for 38% of Canada’s total methane emissions.

It is up to each of us as individuals, communities, schools or businesses to consider what we are throwing away and the environmental impact this is causing. We need to look for alternatives that will promote waste reduction and help to protect our environment.

For more information on waste or Waste Reduction Week, go to wrwcanada.com/resources. Here you will find information and ideas to reduce consumption and make the most out of our natural resources by re-using and recycling.

Source: Waste Reduction Week Canada