

Napanee Beaver, March 2006

Celebrating Napanee's recycling legacy

OPPONENTS of the Richmond landfill expansion aren't just working against the expansion but toward eliminating the need for landfills altogether. The 3Rs (reusing, recycling and reducing) are part of this, with recycling efforts having a major impact on diversion of waste from landfills.

So instead of another disturbing story about a garbage-industry giant's attempt to create a megadump in our community, I offer instead a simple account of the efforts of a few people to solve this problem of garbage another way, a group which was the catalyst for today's recycling program in our community.

In 1990, Women's Institute member Rowena Raycraft noted all the cans discarded at parks, schools and community events and, seeing the waste in it, organized her group to take action. They installed black barrels lined with plastic bags in these public areas. Members from all area WI groups took turns collecting the cans weekly and processing them in the parking lot of NDSS, or in the small adjacent building during bad weather. They came armed with magnets and sledgehammers and wearing good sturdy shoes. The magnets enabled them to sepa-

rate the types of metal, the hammers and shoes to crush the cans. Not easy nor always pleasant work, as bees and other insects were drawn to the 'sticky' project on warm days.

DISCOURSE ON THE DUMP

BY MARILYN KENDALL

The end-plan for their endeavor was to sell the cans to recyclers and turn the monies made back into the community, but they had to wait until they collected the minimum volume required. So their husbands were enlisted to truck the cans to storage facilities: Bill Raycraft's garage initially, then his parents' barn and various institute members' sheds for the overflow.

The project got people thinking and soon the familiar blue box became a fixture in every area household and the town a forerunner in recycling efforts. This story shows what one person can do, one person with a good idea and a caring spirit. We all need to care that much.

And we all, from each individual to

every level of government, need to do more toward expanding those initial recycling efforts. The town should supply residents with updated lists of what is and is not recyclable (I've had great difficulty trying to obtain one). It should be involved in finding new markets or alternate disposal options for what is not. And it should have recycle bins at all public events (I've heard many comments on the lack of such).

And the province? For one, it should enforce industry regulations about excessive packaging (such laws do exist). Composite packaging (where two recyclable materials are melded to make neither recyclable) should be banned. The list goes on. Mostly the province should look for any and all ways to promote the 3Rs before allowing increases in the number and size of landfills.

It is up to us to apply the pressure to force these changes. We have the power. Margaret Mead said, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."

Rowena Raycraft and her group of Women's Institute members have shown us that. Let's take their example and move forward.