

A North Hastings idea for saving our precious water

By **Jim Eadie**

Water is our most precious natural resource, according to United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, and working together, preserving it to support the world's growing population, should be a big priority.

Adding climate change to the mix further risks our water future by causing changes in the supply of water around the world from less than usual in some areas, to more than usual in other areas. Currently mankind diverts billions of liters of water every day in pipes or bottles from lakes, rivers, or wells where nature placed it. Then it is used without much thought, and dumped where nature didn't place it. One large and unnoticed culprit in this staggering movement of water is in the form of vegetables, which are composed mostly of water. Most of the weight of the grocery store produce department is water, which has been shipped here mostly from somewhere else in the world.

Established in 1993 by the United Nations, World Water Day, which was held this year on March 22, was the kick-off of a local initiative to highlight the importance of fresh water, and bring attention to sustainable management of our water resources. To mark the occasion, Harvest the North Community Gardens and North Hastings Community Trust are hosting a Rain Barrel Truckload Sales Event during the month of April, culminating on April 22 with a thoughtful celebration of Earth Day at Riverside Park in Bancroft.

A rain barrel kit costs \$55, and includes a colourful food-grade plastic 55-gallon barrel, and all the parts to set up your own water supply from the eaves trough and downspout of your home. Barrels will be delivered to the Earth Day celebration at Riverside Park. If you didn't get a chance to pre-order, some kits will be available that day.

We should all pay more attention to rainwater, because this resource, so essential to all life on earth, is not infinite, said Jane Kali, program co-ordinator for North Hastings Community Trust. We should all be conscious of the water we use and waste, and make efforts to maximize the functions for which water is used.

A rain barrel covers off a lot of that ground. Collecting rainwater and using it for gardening where it fell, reduces water bills, and eases pressure on municipal and business infrastructure systems delivering or removing water. It is an immense benefit to establishing a backyard garden.

This creates another opportunity for growing some healthy food, said Kali. All proceeds from the sale of rain barrels will be used by Harvest the North to build more community garden spaces this summer in the Bancroft area.

In addition to picking up a rain barrel on April 22, anyone can come to Riverside Park for an Earth Day celebration from 1 to 6 p.m. There will be music, food, and a bon fire, said Kali. We will have Metis and Algonquin Nation people with us, as well as high school youth we will have a good time.