

Put an end to plastics

By Sarah Sobanski

The snow might be done.

I don't want to get anyone's hopes up. But we may have seen the last of winter here in Bancroft.

That's good considering it's community cleanup time and getting to the area's accumulated trash is hard enough without icicles forming on your eyelashes.

If you plan to participate in community Earth Day events (some were postponed until better weather) keep an eye out for plastics. This year the **Earth Day Network** is campaigning to end plastic pollution. It's a good thing too because they're needlessly clogging up our landfills and our oceans.

In a calculator for how many plastics you consume a year (www.earthday.org/plastic-calculator/), the Network lists plastic cups, straws, cotton swabs, cigarette butts, plastic resealable bags, plastic cling wrap, plastic cutlery, plastic stirrers, food containers, food packaging, plastic shopping bags, cleaning containers, toothbrushes, toothpaste, medicine bottles, diapers and feminine products. As a society we've become obsessed with convenience ? having everything at the end of our fingertips, no muss, no fuss. It was reflected in my editorial on Canadian water consumption a few weeks ago. We love using in excess and we love anything one-and-done.

Why do we drink out of plastic waterbottles? For the convenience of throwing them away after?

Why do we use plastic straws? For the convenient extension it lends to our lips?

Why do we use plastic bags? For the convenience of not having to walk back to get the reusable bags we forget in the car?

Ask yourself: why not glass straws and containers, bamboo toothbrushes, reusable bags and waterbottles, plain old silverware, cloth diapers and reusable feminine products? All of these things are available.

Think about that. We are so aware of the need to eat healthy and organic but most of the things we consume come in plastics. Even at the grocery store, we put our fresh produce into plastic bags even before we get to the checkout counter ? each vegetable and fruit individually!

According to [?Five Ways That Plastics Harm The Environment \(And One Way They May Help\).\]? a Forbes article that came out last week, plastic pollution has made its way to the most remote locations on the planet. The article suggests, ?Plastic debris is found absolutely everywhere, from the Arctic to Antarctica... and is even piling up on Mount Everest.?](#)

As a result, the world's wildlife is consuming it. Forbes estimates there are 270,000 tons of plastic floating in the ocean. ?But more than floating around in the water column, plastic trash is found in the guts of more than 90 per cent of the world's sea birds, in the stomachs of more than half of the world's sea turtles, and it's even choking the life out of whales. At the rate at which plastic is accumulating in the oceans of the planet, it's predicted that, by 2050, the mass of plastic in the world's oceans will exceed the mass of all the fish that live there.?

Last year while participating in community cleanups nearly 100 per cent of what I pulled from the area was plastics. They don't just disappear. They have a devastating impact on our planet and we need to change our mindset to reflect that.

Think of it this way if you're wondering how deeply and needlessly plastics are engrained in our society:

We use plastic garbage bags during our community cleanups.