

## Establishing a Recycling Program in the Resort Village of Mistusinne

Table #7 - PARCS Convention 2010 - Members Fair

### Background

It started out being about money but it ended up being about doing the right thing. Concerned about the rising cost of garbage removal, we began by investigating user-pay garbage. We discovered that user-pay garbage had the potential to pay for itself. There was one big drawback to a user-pay system: that the garbage in tagged pre-paid bags must be picked up. As with many resort communities, our household garbage goes into self-serve bins. Bins need to be available 24/7 as people come and go from the resort village. So, without 24 hour supervision, user-pay would not work for us.

Then we thought about distance. Our household garbage is hauled 130 km to Saskatoon. We approached the town of Outlook (only 75 km away) thinking to save money by reducing hauling distance. (But really the majority of garbage costs are the tippage fees into the land-fill site, not the hauling!) Anyway, Outlook replied that they would only accept garbage from communities that were full-service recyclers. We discovered that Outlook has one of the best regional recycling programs in the province; they accept all plastics, glass, tin, waxed milk cartons, paper, and cardboard – everything except Styrofoam. We began to wonder if we were approaching our garbage issue from the wrong perspective – maybe we needed to recycle more and generate less garbage.

### Getting started

Our research told us that the best recycling center is supervised, to prevent it being used as an alternate garbage dump. We were lucky that we owned a large plastic Quonset-style building (about to become empty because we were building a heated all-season maintenance building). We were also lucky that our proposed building was located right next door to our office/club house which meant that the admin assistant who works Saturdays handing out boat stickers and selling golf passes could also slip over to the recycling centre to open it up as required, with negligible increase in the number of hours she worked. We determined that all we needed to do was have a recycling trailer built, purchase some used bins for our trailer, hire someone to haul the bins to Outlook and re-educate our citizens. Start-up costs were \$6,600 (for the trailer, the used bins and the once-only fee to register in Outlook.)



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### Operating costs

After paying Outlook to receive our recycling and the hauler to pull the trailer there, we have determined that every bin that goes to recycling costs us **about \$10 less than a bin that goes to the landfill (a 25% savings)**. Every year, the number of recycling bins increases while the number of garbage bins decreases. It will take have taken us about 4.5 years to recoup our initial investment.

But we also have the SARCAN factor. When we set up the recycling centre, we set up some extra cardboard bins along the side wall, asking people to donate their refundable items (pop bottles, beer bottles, tetra drink packs) to the *Playground Fund*. Our driver takes these items in the back of his truck and drops them off at Sarcana who mail us a cheque. Each year the playground fund earns about \$1,000 this way.

### The real payoff

Now we're looking to buy a used horse-trailer for hauling cardboard (to free up space in the recycling bins so they won't have to be hauled away as often). The horse trailer will be small enough for our staff to pull behind the village half-ton whenever they go to Outlook for supplies. This winter there will be a community bee to build new steps up to the trailer (all built from materials donated by the community).

It has become about more than money. It has become about a community's shared pride in doing the right thing for the environment. It is not uncommon, when a newcomer is about to put cardboard into a garbage bin, for a resident to step in and point out that cardboard belongs in the recycling centre – which is open every Saturday morning during the summer season and alternating Saturdays during the off season.