



Landfill Wastes

Introduction

Historically, waste presented little difficulty for First Nations as they relied on natural materials that were easily disposed of and naturally recycled back into the environment. The nature of waste has changed significantly, however, and now presents many challenges in some First Nations communities. Inadequate long-term and short term funding to operate well-managed landfill sites and transfer stations poses considerable risks in some First Nations communities.

Considerations and Challenges

WATER CONTAMINATION

Where landfills are not properly built or managed, liquid waste can seep out of the landfill and enter ground water. Given that many First Nations communities rely on well water as a source of drinking water, this contamination poses serious concerns. Similarly, surrounding surface water, such as lakes, rivers and streams, can also become polluted by harmful toxic wastes, endangering the species that rely on those waters for habitat or food.

POOR AIR QUALITY

The burning of landfill wastes can release harmful environmental pollutants, such as dioxins and furans, into the air. Exposure to chemical pollutants in the landfill, some of which may be unidentified, pose potential health risks to community members.

INSUFFICIENT CAPACITY

First Nations communities face several challenges with respect to storage of waste. They lack sufficient capacity to store waste in landfills and temporary transfer stations. Inadequate funding results in improper management of waste management facilities.

While some communities have enacted by-laws to deal with waste management concerns, this approach presents additional difficulties, as the First Nations communities lack the resources to monitor illegal dumping and to enforce the by-laws, and the limited fines available under the Indian Act do not act as a sufficient deterrent.

A well managed landfill is critical to protecting the community from exposure to toxic chemicals. Planning can help the community to determine how best to handle its waste. Developing a waste management plan or an operational plan can reduce environmental and health risks.

Raising awareness in the community of the environmental and health concerns associated with waste is necessary. Educational materials, in the form of flyers, newsletters, brochures and workshops should be developed to inform communities about options for waste management.

A better way of thinking about waste is **REDUCE, REUSE and RECYCLE**

Establishing composting and recycling programs can minimize the amount of waste in landfills, resulting in healthier environments for communities. Before developing a recycling program, however, communities need to determine the type of program that would best suit the community, the costs of such a program, and available funding.

Limited funding is available from Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) through the First Nation Infrastructure Fund. The purpose of this fund is to increase the development of public infrastructure, including solid waste management, such as waste disposal site construction, waste diversion projects, transfer stations and recycling.

In order to access these funds, First Nations communities are required to submit an application form, including their project proposal by September of each year, from 2007 to 2011. The fund allows First Nations to apply every year, but the maximum amount payable per recipient will be capped at \$10 million over the five-year program. First Nations must also demonstrate the ability to share costs of the project with the federal government by leveraging other band funding, or relying on other public and private sector sources for financial support.

For More Information

A listing of Canadian municipal recycling programs can be found on Environment Canada's website at http://www.ec.gc.ca/envirozine/english/issues/62/any_questions_e.cfm

More information on how to access the First Nation Infrastructure Fund can be found at <http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ih/ci/fni-eng.asp>