

Background - Our Garbage

Up until 1892 Victoria's garbage was disposed of in James Bay and east of the Empress Hotel.

From 1892 until 1955, garbage was loaded onto barges at the foot of Herald Street and dumped into the sea, about two miles out from the entrance to Victoria Harbour.

From 1955 until the early 1970's, most of the local garbage was sent to a number of dump sites along Millstream Road and the present Hartland landfill site. Burning was used to reduce the volume of the garbage.

Concern over health hazards associated with open dumps resulted in the CRD acquiring the Hartland site and assuming responsibility for solid waste disposal in the Region.

For more information or to book a school program and/or tour of Hartland landfill and recycling facility, please contact the CRD Hotline at 250.360.3030, 1.800.663.4425, hotline@crd.bc.ca, or visit www.crd.bc.ca/teacher

Before we had landfills and before we had dumps, even before we thought we had to manage garbage, garbage was produced. For most of the last two and a half million years, people left garbage where it fell. This worked well for hunter and gatherer societies because people would regularly leave their temporary shelter or campsite in search of food. During this phase of history, garbage was neither a problem nor an issue. People had moved away long before too much garbage had accumulated. Once plant and animal domestication became commonplace, and farmers and herders began to replace hunters and gatherers, garbage became an issue. The method of leaving garbage where it was produced began to cause problems as the garbage pile grew. Instead of the people moving, they began to move the garbage. Some garbage was simply thrown out of windows, into the streets. Free-roaming animals would eat the food scraps while human scavengers would move the rest of the garbage to vacant plots of land, take the valuables out and leave the rest.

Over the past 100 years, waste management has evolved into a highly scientific, well-managed process. The biggest change occurred during the 1960's when health, safety and environmental concerns surfaced. The way garbage was managed was greatly altered. Dumps were replaced by sanitary landfills*, managed by engineers and highly trained staff.

*Sanitary landfills refer to an engineered method of disposing of wastes on land by spreading it in layers, compacting it, and covering it, taking regard for environmental impact through leachate collection systems, ground water protection and gas control.

Our garbage over the last century has changed and now includes many man-made materials and non-biodegradable items. Our society consumes an excessive amount of materials and convenience products, many with short shelf lives and long term impacts. A lot of these materials do not decompose, even when landfilled. Before landfills reach capacity, action needs to be taken. The great news is that the people of the CRD have been working hard to reduce garbage entering Hartland landfill for many years. Since 1989, approximately 40 per cent of the total waste has been diverted from Hartland landfill through recycling programs, composting and other 3R (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle) programs. Hartland landfill is the only disposal facility in the CRD for municipal solid waste. In order to continue to extend the life of this facility, 3R programs must flourish and succeed.

