

Inspiring Earth Day Ideas From Local Teens

Green creativity earns Winnipeg sisters award nomination from Polar Bears International

Winnipeg, MB (April 20, 2009): Being green and helping our environment can be as easy as changing your eating habits, choosing sustainable materials – and hiring a goat?? This is the message Winnipeg teens Rebekah, Rachael and Miranda Vickery want to share with their community this Earth Day.

Although they're just teenagers, The Vickery sisters show tremendous maturity toward climate change, and the positive differences they're making has earned them a nomination in the North American-wide contest, Project Polar Bear.

Supported by Polar Bears International and local zoos, Project Polar Bear challenges teens to develop community projects that will reduce the carbon dioxide load in the atmosphere, creating a positive impact on the environment – and helping to save polar bears. This year's finalists are teams from Winnipeg, Portland, Louisville and Pittsburgh. All four teams will be flying to San Diego for the announcement of the winner on Friday, April 24 at the San Diego Zoo. The winners will be flown to Churchill in the fall, to experience polar bear migration season.

The Vickery sisters, nicknamed Team Canuck Nanooks, took a three-tiered approach in their project: individual, school and community.

"Using media, film, writing books, public speaking and visual graphics, we wanted to encourage schools to 'go green' and help our community make healthy choices. The possibilities are limited only by our imagination and the strength of our legs to bike from location to location," said the sisters.

The depth and creativity of the project greatly impressed the judges for Project Polar Bear. The sisters even managed to meet with the Manitoba Deputy Minister of Conservation!

Here are some of the projects from Team Canucks Nanook that you might try for Earth Day:

- Wanting to lead by example, the sisters decided to build a low cost **Green Gazebo** out of reclaimed and recycled goods. This was a weekend family project. The gazebo compliments the family's acreages emphasis on conservation and they hope that visitors to the property see that 'it's easy being green'.
- Do you have a large acreage? A gas or electric mower might not be the only option for your keeping your grass cut. Team Nanook observed their neighbour's sheep and goats munch through 20 feet of their mom's prized perennial flowers, and figured they were onto something. In the past livestock were loaded into trailers and driven to suitable grazing locations. Why not employ this mobile livestock on a smaller scale with the assistance of portable fencing? In **Moo-ve Over & Feel Baaa-d About Mowing**, networks of neighbours were delighted to have four-legged gardeners do their mowing. This idea was adopted in two more municipalities. For those who didn't want the added fertilizer, Team Nanook suggested planting shrubs and trees, naturalizing flowers, and leaving grass longer.
- After reading a short blurb in an online environmental letter, the Vickerys were interested in the impact of minting coins. An average home has about \$90 of stashed coinage.

More Cents for the Environment was birthed from the premise that putting those stockpiles of coins back into circulation would reduce the production demand. School divisions were contacted with information and posters to promote a friendly interschool penny drive contest. The proceeds were divided between PBI and funding towards a new polar bear enclosure for the Winnipeg Zoo.

- **Thank You Very Mulch** encouraged conservation gardening and farming techniques. One hundred families actively participated and accepted the challenge to 'fast' meat one day each week. Those who did not garden were supplied with lists of local farmers markets. Excess produce was brought to school and church to share with others.
- **Leafing CO2 Behind** was designed to encourage rural neighbours to plant shelterbelts, habitats for wildlife and hedgerows. Team Canuck Nanooks canvassed neighbours and collectively bought trees from a farm in Brandon that grows them as a renewable fuel source.

Interviews are available with the Vickery sisters, as well as Frontiers North's Tundra Buggy Adventures (a sponsor of Project Polar Bear).

For more information on Project Polar Bear and this year's finalists, visit www.polarbearsinternational.org/project-polar-bear/ .

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