Pəskehtəkʷok
Joining of the Branches
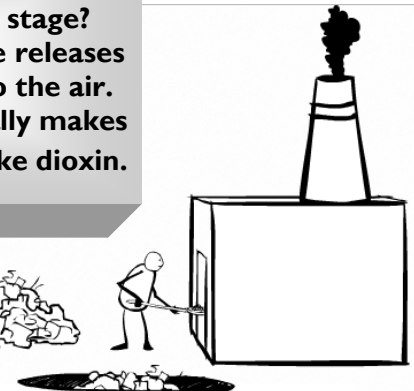
The Story of Stuff - Step #5 Disposal

"So in the end, what happens to all the stuff we buy anyway? At this rate of consumption, it can't fit into our houses even though the average U.S. house size has doubled in this country since the 1970s.

It all goes out in the garbage. And that brings us to disposal. This is the part of the materials economy we all know the most because we have to haul the junk out to the curb ourselves. Each of us in the United States makes 4 1/2 pounds of garbage a day. That is twice what we each made thirty years ago.

All of this garbage [stuff we bought] either gets dumped in a landfill, which is just a big hole in the ground, or if you're really unlucky, first it's burned in an incinerator and then dumped in a landfill. Either way, both pollute the air, land, water and, don't forget, change the climate.
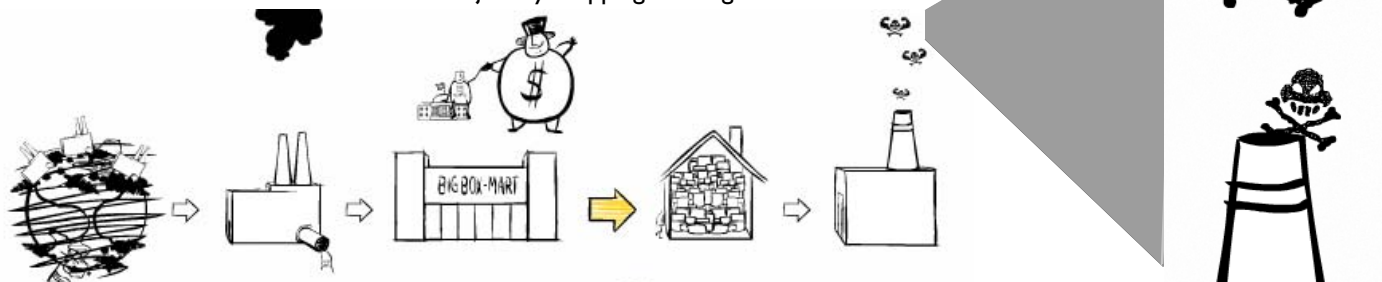
Incineration is really bad. Remember those toxics back in the production stage? Burning the garbage releases those toxics up into the air. Even worse, it actually makes new super toxics. Like dioxin.

Phone Extensions

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Dioxin is the most toxic man made substance known to science. And incinerators are the number one source of dioxin. That means that we could stop the number one source of the most toxic man-made substance known just by stopping burning the trash.

We could stop it today.

Now some companies don't want to deal with building landfills and incinerators here, so they just export the disposal too.

What about recycling? Does recycling help? Yes, recycling helps. Yes, Yes, Yes, we should all recycle.

Recycling reduces the garbage at the end and it reduces the pressure to mine and harvest new stuff at the beginning.

But recycling is not enough. Recycling will never be enough. For a couple reasons.
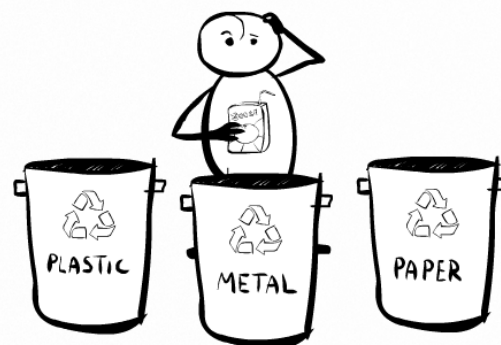
First, the waste coming out of our houses is just the tip of the iceberg. For every one garbage can of waste you put out on the curb, 70 garbage cans of waste were made upstream just to make the junk in that one garbage can you put out on the curb. So even if we could recycle 100 percent of the waste coming out of our households, it doesn't get to the core of the problem.

Also much of the garbage can't be recycled, either because it contains too many toxics or it is actually designed NOT to be recyclable in the first place. Like those juice packs with layers of metal and paper and plastic all smooshed together. You can never separate those for true recycling.

So you see, it is a system in crisis. All along the way, we are bumping up against a lot of limits. From changing climate to declining happiness, it's just not working. But the good thing about such an all pervasive problem is that there are so many points of intervention.

There are people working on saving forests and clean production. People working on labor rights and fair trade and conscious consuming and blocking landfills and incinerators."

To hear more of the story and get the bigger picture go online to www.storyofstuff.com!

We will also continue to feature more of the information in future newsletters!

STORY OF STUFF WORD SEARCH ANSWERS

WORD LIST

Consumption
Contamination
Crisis
Decisions
Disposable
Disposal
Distribution
Economy
Externalized Costs
Extraction
Finite
Limits
Markets
Natural Resources
Production
Retail
Shopping
Think
Toxic Chemicals
Waste

Watershed Boundary Cryptogram

Decode the message by finding each substitute letter or symbol.

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
H	U	I	Y	A	N	D	O	E	P	M	T	C	F	V	Z	J	L	X	G	Q	S	K	B	R	W

L H E F   N H T T E F D   V F   C V Q F G   M H G H O Y E F

N T V K X   E F G V   A E G O A L   G O A   A H X G

V L   K A X G   U L H F I O   V N   G O A   Z A F V U X I V G

L E S A L .