



# RAVEN REPORT

April 2014

## Coffee Cups Confusion Causes Concern

“Don’t talk to me until I’ve had my coffee”, a lot of us are like that in the mornings. For a lot of people who are like that, the morning commute to work includes a stop at Timmy’s, Starbucks or a local coffee shop for that first taste of coffee and the possibility of dealing with that annoying chirpy coworker without bloodshed. Now, let’s turn away from the coffee to the container. What cup are you using? Is it a reusable travel mug? A single use compostable cup? Or a single use cup that doesn’t say compostable anywhere on it?

Yes, it’s the coffee cup issue again. Though to be fair, the same applies to containers for all hot and cold beverages. Aside from the environmental issue, Raven has an interest in this as often we find the single use cups in the recycling bins due to people getting confused as to what to do with them. Single use paper

coffee cups are not recyclable, they have a thin plastic lining on the inside of the cup which plays hob with the recycling process. It also goes down like a lead balloon when it comes to composting the cup. Some cups are made with biodegradable linings and so can be composted but not recycled. Those cups should also not be put in recycling bins. Often the question comes up, why not just get rid of the plastic bits? Ever tried pouring coffee into a paper bag? Yes, exactly.

The best thing to do of course is to buy a nice reusable cup and use it every day. Naturally, there’ll be those days where you pull up at the coffee shop and remember that the mug is sitting on the kitchen counter. If you’re committed enough then feel free to skip the coffee, but using a single use cup now and then won’t cause the universe to catastrophically implode.

Small independent coffee shops are more likely to listen if you ask for compostable cups, if they aren’t already using them. The chains are more difficult, the local managers have little power over what they use so if you’re concerned then write to the chairman of the company or get a petition together. They might listen if enough people say something.

“WHY SHOULD I CARE ABOUT FUTURE GENERATIONS? WHAT HAVE THEY EVER DONE FOR ME?”

— Groucho Marx

### DID YOU KNOW?

The Yukon winters can be tough on vehicles and particularly their lead-acid batteries. Most of us have been faced with the need to buy a new battery at some time. What about the old battery though? Fortunately they are recyclable and there are places in Whitehorse who accept old batteries, including Raven.

The batteries have to be kept safe during storage and transport as the liquid in them is sulphuric acid, a very corrosive material. When they reach the recycling plant they are broken up by machine and the various pieces sent into a vat. The plastic casing pieces will float on the acid and the lead will sink along with any other metals.

The plastic is scooped off the top and melted down, it’s formed into pellets and shipped to a manufacturer who will use it for new products, often new battery cases. The acid is either neutralised and turned into water or turned into sodium sulphate which can be used in making laundry detergent among other things. The lead is also melted down and impurities removed. Once it has been formed into ingots it will be shipped to battery manufacturers and turned into new batteries.

Most of the lead-acid batteries made are recycled into new batteries. Battery recycling is particularly important as both the lead and acid are extremely hazardous to the environment.



**RAVEN RECYCLING**  
Your Community Recycling Center

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