

# Alaska Highway News



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## Stepping up for Mother Earth

KATELIN DEAN PHOTO  
Students from Tiffany Pedersen's Upper Pine Elementary/Secondary School's Kindergarten, Grade 1 split class model their upcycled hats crafted out of recycled material for Earth Day celebrations.

**KATELIN DEAN**  
*Staff Writer*

This Sunday marks the 42nd anniversary of the first Earth Day celebration.

More than six million Canadians will join one billion people in over 170 countries in staging events and projects to address local environmental issues.

One elementary school class in the Peace Region, which is now decorated with bright replicas of truffula trees, has been celebrating the Earth in and out of the classroom for a few weeks now.

Inspired by the Dr. Seuss book 'The Lorax,' students in Tiffany Pedersen's Kindergarten and Grade 1 class at Upper Pine Elementary/

Secondary School in Rose Prairie began doing things to better the Earth.

"I'm going to plant a tree with me and my sister in my backyard or in my garden," said six-year-old Emily Babcock.

The Lorax project began with Pedersen's class performing random acts of kindness, from sending nice notes to teachers, open doors for people and paying a compliment.

"They know it's not to get a thank you," Pedersen said.

After that, the class began performing random acts of kindness for the environment.

"We started by recycling more products in the classroom," Pedersen said.

Like most schools, they already had recycling programs for paper, bottles and other things;

however, Pedersen's class took it a step further.

They created the make-it centre, which is a place where recycled material goes in the middle of the classroom.

They use it to make upcycled crafts.

"We are making upcycled fashion," the teacher explained. "When we recycle, we try to make the same thing again, but upcycling is using recycled materials to make something new."

In preparation for Earth Day celebrations, the class is making upcycled hats to wear and gift. The one rule is that "they are only allowed to use recycled material and glue and tape."

The hats, crafted out of recycled yogurt containers and various decorations from the make-it centre, seem to be a success as each

student shows theirs off to Pedersen before moving on to the next project.

She said this project has resonated with the students.

"They've really taken hold of it because we read 'The Lorax' and they were very sad when the tree died," Pedersen said. "They each decided that they would do different projects for the environment at home."

Inspired by the book, each time a random act of kindness is acted upon, a new truffula tree sprouts.

"I'm going to try to make a really big poster with drawings and a write-up," said student Karlee Ballard. "The pictures will be of planting a tree and picking up garbage."

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Ballard then plans to have it hung in the classroom.

She feels it's important to take care of the environment "because if we don't, the earth will become full of trash." That's bad "because it affects the earth and all the people that need oxygen."

There are now 24 truffula trees that fill the classroom.

"Every time they committed to

doing something (they received a tree)," Pedersen said.

"Each (student) impacted the environment in their own way."

"The more random acts of kindness, the more truffula trees go up," she continued.

Pedersen noted that this project is important to learn at this young age.

"They're learning that they're the ones to take care of the environment," she said.

Pedersen added that while the project began with her, the students really gave it a life of its own.

"Hopefully they continue to take care of the environment (as they grow older)," she said. "We don't have too many adults who recycle."

"They're the ones who will need to take care of the earth," she continued.

She believes that this project will stick with her students.

"The kids have had a lot of fun and

it's one of the ones that will stick around until (at least) the end of the year," she said. "If we can have learning in a fun environment, it will stick with them."

Babcock said her favourite part about the project is seeing the truffula trees sprout up around the classroom.

The young tree planter said taking care of the environment is important "because if we don't, then we won't be able to live on this planet."