



# The Daily Gleaner

## Why not try a 'Carbon-Reduced' Christmas?

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My 6 year old daughter has a very cool Christmas book, simply called 'Santa Claus' by Rod Green. It's a wonderfully crafted book about the North Pole, Santa's elves, and other Christmas related topics. But you may be surprised about what else is in the book. On one page is a pocket holding a 'pretend' front page of a newspaper. Articles in the newspaper include: "Ho, ho, ho! Is it a UFO? (No, it is Santa)"; 'The First Christmas Baby'; 'Travel Sales Boom'; and 'World in Danger as Ice Melts'.

It seems that climate change is popping up in the most unlikely places! The article talks about scientists' repeated warnings about the effects of global warming on the Arctic ice cap, the fact that the ice cap could be gone by 2100, and sea level increases could flood towns and cities around the world. The article concludes by saying we should save energy and use less gasoline. Well then!

This begs the obvious question and concern; just how do we manage to educate our young children about the climate crisis? We have to be careful about how this information is presented on a grand scale, but also stress the importance of what we can do to reduce our own personal impact on climate change.

There are many Internet resources to educate youngsters about global warming, such as Tiki the Penguin at [tiki.oneworld.net](http://tiki.oneworld.net), [globalwarmingkids.net](http://globalwarmingkids.net), or check out the Green Gurus section on [greenmattersfredericton.com](http://greenmattersfredericton.com) for many kid-friendly links.

Now let's go back to Christmas. The Christmas season has different meanings for everyone - a time of joy, a time to celebrate the birth of Jesus, a time of giving, a time to promote peace. But perhaps Christmas also brings with it the opportunity to introduce our families to the philosophy of being thankful for our Earth and our duty to protect it. And don't doubt that our 'green' actions in small and large ways can put legs on this philosophy! I know on a global scale, this is a small step, but it's an important one for us to take – for ourselves and for our children.

Many of us have tried to have a 'calorie-reduced' Christmas, but this year let's try something new - a 'carbon-reduced' Christmas. Here are some ideas to get you started:

1. The gift of energy efficiency. A few compact fluorescent light bulbs for your brother-in-law? A programmable thermostat for your parents, or a tire gauge for your children's teacher? Low flow showerheads for your adult children? This really is the gift that keeps on giving - energy savings for years to come.
2. Christmas dinner. It often travels thousands of kilometres to arrive on your plate. Where did the vegetables come from? The cranberries? The turkey? So take a few minutes at the grocery store to check labels on where the item came from or go to the market to buy local. See if you can reduce the kilograms of carbon emitted to put your Christmas dinner on the table.
3. Decorating your home. My two favourite Christmas movies are 'A Christmas Story' and 'Christmas Vacation'. And as much as I want to save the planet, I need my annual fix of watching Clark Griswold stapling 25,000 lights to his house. However, imagine how much more energy we use at Christmas because of those 25,000 lights (and those blow-up or lit-up deer and snowmen, etc.). This year try to use fewer lights for your decorating, or leave your lights on for fewer hours, and most importantly use LED lights (they cost a bit more, but will last forever and use very little energy).

So, as we start planning what gifts to buy and how to celebrate Christmas this year, perhaps we can give some thought to new, creative and earth-friendly ways we can honour our environment. Our children look to us for guidance on so many things – when it comes to celebrating with the earth in mind this joyous season, let's guide them well.

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