



## To The Tar Sands

Director: Jodie Martinson, Canada, 2008, 61 minutes

*To The Tar Sands* follows a group of nineteen young environmentalists as they cycle northbound over 1300 kilometres across Alberta's Wild Rose Country to witness the impacts of the tar sands boom. They ask farmers, moms, oil industry workers, an urban planner, the chief of a First Nations community, and others 'How has the tar sands boom affected you?'

The result is a three-week long journey that is both mentally and physically taxing for the scruffy, activist riders. By meeting locals on their own turf and genuinely listening to their stories, the cyclists are forced to weigh the environmental needs of the planet against the economic needs of the residents. As the kilometres click away, the complexity of the issues and the ethical dilemmas surrounding oil extraction become apparent. Eventually, several of the cyclists shift gears and stop advocating for a moratorium on tar sands production. Instead, they begin to seek strategies for an economic future of Alberta that does not exacerbate the planet's climate problems.

*To The Tar Sands* doesn't shy away from presenting multiple sides of the story, but even as the most rapidly ideological stance begins to waver under the unrelenting work of cycling hundreds of kilometres everyday, the land is changing around them. When the group finally reaches its final destination, the sheer scale of the tar sands development itself is staggering. There must be a better way than turning large stretches of Canada into something that resembles a poisonous moonscape. The environmental costs that currently

face Albertans, and by extension most of the world, become indelibly clear. As they grease up their bike chains and realize that even they have oil on their hands, the group should be lauded for taking the long road rather than the easy one.

### FILMMAKER IN ATTENDANCE

*Classified for younger audiences. No membership required.*

### DIRECTOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Jodie Martinson, a native Calgarian, holds a BA in Environment from the McGill School of Environment. She studied Producing and Directing at the Berkeley Digital Film Institute in California and is currently pursuing a Masters of Journalism at the University of British Columbia. *To The Tar Sands*, her first feature-length documentary, was made off the back of her bicycle as a testament to low-budget storytelling for social change.

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