

# Our Opinion... and we have one!



by Kelly Wilk & Jeffrey Luscombe

**Kelly Wilk:** One thing Idle No More brought to the attention of Canadians was our environment and natural resources, especially in regards to what's happening in Alberta. Who here has a major desire to exchange Harper for Obama when it comes to these issues? It seems like the "I want the world to have this for generations" perspective is just not able to compete with the "I want it now" strategy. I worry about the environment and keeping the world we live in safe for future generations, but it seems like Harper and his Conservatives have forced the hands of Canadians to protect the natural bounty and beauty of our country.

**Jeffrey Luscombe:** I'm not anti-tar sands (I steadfastly refuse to call them oil sands). I'm not one of those calling for a stop to all development; the tar sands are important to Canada's economy and its economic future. I just want more science and research before diving in—and a transparent government that shows the people of Canada the cost of development (and a debate about those costs).

More science and research could also yield better—less dirty—ways to extract the oil as well. But sadly, this government doesn't appear to be much of a fan of science, does it? I hope Alison Redford keeps her commitment to the "unprecedented commitment to openness and transparency of energy development" she described in her piece in *USA Today*. That being said, I'm not crazy about pipelines—and I definitely don't want to see them running through environmentally sensitive areas.

**KW:** Yes you have hit it! Those are sensitive areas to butt heads on. How do we ensure the responsible handling of our resources, the need for a good economy but also the livelihood of individuals? My wife's family is from Cape Breton or "down home" as they call it, and they were a coal mining family. When the Prince Mine closed down in 2001 it was the last of its kind and a whole generation of miners had no work. As my wife's great Aunt told us, the kids are all "going to the mainland" to find work and New Waterford was much changed and empty. Especially now



# Idle No More on the Environment

that they have sought work in the “tar sands” as you say. They are away for up to nine months at a time, my mother-in-law told me, away from their families to support them. What else could they do? Coal ran in their blood, the kids traditionally got into the buckets when they were babies.

**JL:** And like coal, eventually the new technologies of tomorrow will supplant the fossil fuel guzzling of today. If Canada hopes to remain relevant in a post-fossil fuel world, it will need to invest in new—and cleaner—energy technologies. Profits from today’s tar sands should be directed into researching such technologies. But right now it seems the tar sands have a public relations problem, which is why Alison Redford wrote the piece in *USA Today*. I think a sober middle ground (away from the rhetoric of the right and left) to their development—with as little environmental impact as possible—is likely the best way forward for the tar sands and Canada.

**KW:** Absolutely. There needs to be a balance between our economical needs as well as our environmental ones

and one can’t negate the other or that will continue to be non-sustainable. And trying to fix the problem after it has happened doesn’t count. It seems like some corporations participate in green practices such as Earth Day Canada to make amends, but it never seems to balance the initial harm done by their non-green practices. And if Harper continues to allow these practices for the sake of profit, while dismantling our participation in the Kyoto agreement, it all just seems like PR on the government’s part as well as the corporations, until they are all allowed not to be responsible any more.

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Jeffrey Luscombe is a freelance writer and author of the novel *Shirts and Skins*. He is also the creator and author of The Gay Groom blog ([gaygroom.wordpress.com](http://gaygroom.wordpress.com)).