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## Fracking the Rez: An untold story

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Posted: Monday, November 5, 2012 11:56 am | Updated: 5:03 pm, Wed Feb 13, 2013.

Miranda C. Spencer, Shalereporter.com | 2 comments



Posted on Nov 5, 2012  
by [Miranda Spencer](#)

Imagine your family owns a large home. A group of strangers offers you more cash than you have ever seen to rent rooms in it, and you agree. The people trash the place, then leave several weeks later. They're from another country, so it's difficult to sue them. And all that money you made? Much of it gets spent to fix the mess.

Something like that is actually happening to the Three Affiliated Tribes, also known as the [Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara Nation](#), on the one-million-acre Ft. Berthold Indian Reservation in North Dakota. Under their lands lies the Bakken Shale, an immense geological formation that also spans parts of Montana and Canada. Fracking the oil (and gas) beneath these plains has led to North Dakota's mega-boom in energy development -- 7,700 wells to date.

While the change has generated new jobs and royalties of nearly \$200 million to reservation communities, it has also ushered in some unique social, environmental and cultural challenges.

While most mainstream news media have been "all over" the Bakken boom, they have sidestepped these tribal concerns, said tribe member Jodi Rave, a Missoula, Mont.-based journalist who grew up on and around Ft. Berthold. She told [ShaleReporter.com](#), "Every time I visit my son there, he's telling me some new concern of the community related to oil development -- stories I've never read even in the Native papers."

To remedy that, she is co-producing a documentary called "[7-Oil-1: Inside the Bakken](#)."

"7-Oil-1," whose title refers to North Dakota's area code (701), will amplify the voices of tribe members affected by fracking-related activity on the reservation. Through interviews with elders, youth, tribal council leaders, entrepreneurs, field workers, law enforcement experts and scholars, it will seek solutions to the problems they face.

Those problems center on what Rave terms the "climate of lawlessness" in the Bakken, where unresolved jurisdictional issues involving the reservation -- a "quasi-sovereign" nation -- the state of North Dakota, and U.S. government agencies create both dangers and inequities.

Of particular concern is crime, especially violence against Native women. "American Indian women are one of the most abused groups in the United States...and 70 to 80 percent of abuses are committed by non-Indians," [said Rave](#). "You bring thousands of oil workers onto the reservation, and our women are at risk because we have no way to arrest or prosecute those who would commit a rape

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Miranda C. Spencer, a researcher with the online news sites Environmental Health News and The Daily Climate, is a freelance journalist and media critic based in the New York metro area. Her writing over the past 25 years, including eight magazine cover stories, has appeared in The Daily Climate, Extra! (the journal of FAIR), E magazine, American Forests, and many other publications. Miranda's investigative work has been honored by Project Censored. Her website is [Red Panda Communications](#).



Suzie Gilbert is a writer, a state and federally licensed wild bird rehabilitator, and the founder of Flyaway, Inc., a non-profit organization dedicated to the rescue, rehabilitation and release of injured and orphaned wild birds. She has written an award-winning environmental column for Taconic News Media, and has published the children's book "Hawk Hill" (Chronicle Books, 1996), and her memoir "Flyaway" (HarperCollins, 2009.) Her articles and opinion pieces have appeared in various newspapers, including the Washington Post. She blogs for "The Crooked Wing" and "10,000

or beating.”

Roads are clogged and falling apart from all the traffic. “At my son’s school, we have a mandate that parents have to walk their kids to the bus because it’s just not safe anymore. People are dying and getting run off the road by semi trailers.” Rave said. “Trucks don’t have to obey speed limits on the reservation because the Indian cops don’t have jurisdiction to arrest them.”

On top of that, there are environmental worries: “Hydraulic fracturing is still unproven and highly contentious. People’s hearts are breaking over the transformation of our once-rural landscape.”

Click for a clip of how that looks.

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_embedded&v=WgrhdzKtdNQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=WgrhdzKtdNQ)

Adding insult to injury, “We’re feeling the negative effects of drilling, but getting only a fraction of the oil revenues.” (The state currently receives 50 to 80 percent of taxes from oil production on tribal and private land within the reservation.)

That’s not to say the entire tribe is anti-oil development. Their chairman, Tex Hall, has asked government agencies to streamline the [permitting process](#), and an [Indian-owned refinery](#) is in the works. The question, said Rave, is “How do we have greater say and equality? How do we strike a healthy balance for the tribe? One of these things is hearing from them, and getting it before a wider audience.”

“7-Oil-1” is still in the research and planning stage, and Rave and a small crew are trying to raise \$5,800 via the crowd-funding site IndieGogo by Nov. 29. The money will allow them to create a trailer that will help raise more funds to complete the documentary.

“For our tribe it’s been one continual destructive onslaught of change,” Rave said.. “In the 1950s, 90 percent of our tribe had to be relocated from the Missouri River bottomlands for the Garrison Dam project. Now we’re being flooded again by oil development. We have 12,000 tribal members, not all of whom live on the reservation, and this will definitely impact our future.”

Anyone can donate as little as \$10 to help fund this film. I did, [and so can you](#).

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Posted in Miranda spencer on Monday, November 5, 2012 11:56 am. Updated: 5:03 pm.

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Birds” and has been profiled in both the New York Times and on Andrew C. Revkin’s New York Times blog, Dot Earth.



Tara’s academic work and pursuits are focused on eco-feminism and ethics. Tara has been featured on AOL’s Patch.com as a weekly columnist, Moxie Momma, exploring social concerns and parenting strategies. Writing articles on lifestyle, entertainment and local travel, Tara has been a regular contributor to the Bethlehem, Hellertown and Upper Saucon Patch. As a research and investigative journalist, Tara’s work is regularly featured in the Elucidator Magazine. A specialist in the technical fields of psychology, philosophy and theology, Tara also teaches classes on Ethics and Moral Dilemmas, Death and Dying, World Religions, and Introduction to Philosophy.



Kimberley Sirk is in communications in the healthcare industry. She is also the features editor for Drug Discovery News, which reports on issues, trends and product development in the pharmaceutical industry. She has more than 15 years of experience in a broad range of professional positions, including newspaper journalism, university public relations and county government management.

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#### 2 comments:

Miranda Spencer posted at 12:19 pm on Wed, Nov 7, 2012.

Posts: 42

Blogger's update: The film producer of 7-Oil-1 notified me of an issue that should be clarified. Regarding traffic violations on the reservation, she says, "Semi drivers tend to disobey speed limits on the reservation because the tribal cops have limited civil regulatory authority to stop or detain non-Indians. Tribal cops have no criminal jurisdictional authority over non-Indian activity."

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Ivy Bear posted at 10:06 pm on Mon, Nov 5, 2012.

Posts: 4

Fracking is polluting and just delays the day when we can get off of fossil fuel. Native Americans have always been treated horribly, and the fracking industry is perpetuating this tradition. Great job on publicizing this!!

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