



Academy award-nominated documentary director Josh Fox came to Saskatoon, Saskatchewan for our screenings of *Gasland* and *Gasland II* and to speak at the Council of Canadians' annual conference.

Josh Fox: Fracking Is Being Met with a Citizens' Uprising

Josh Fox, an Academy Award-nominated director and environmental activist, has toured the world to sound the alarm about hydraulic fracturing – or “fracking” as it’s more commonly known. He was a keynote speaker at the Council of Canadians’ annual conference held last October in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. He made these remarks at a press conference before the event. Fox has been touring the world, screening his latest fracking documentary *Gasland II*

“I want to talk about the grassroots movement against fracking that exists all over the world. It is this incredible, amazing uprising of hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of people.

“There is fracking going on in 34 states in the United States and either proposed or happening in 30 countries worldwide.

“In all of those places there has been a citizens’ uprising. With *Gasland I* and now with *Gasland II*, I have toured personally to about 300 cities to talk to people. I’ve witnessed firsthand how in tiny, little towns we would

have 800 people out to an event. We had 1,700 people come to see *Gasland II* on one night and at the time it was the largest environmental protest in Pittsburgh’s history.

“Fracking is simply changing the game across the world. We’ve got a ban in France, a ban in the Netherlands, a ban movement in nine countries in Europe. We have a ban in Vermont and we have five ballot initiatives in Colorado to ban fracking. California is against fracking. People are really moving.

“It was at the end of this tour last week in Detroit that I started to see these

unbelievable pictures coming in from [Rexton] New Brunswick – from the First Nations’ action and blockade there.

“When I saw these pictures of rubber bullets, tear gas and high pressure hoses being fired upon First Nations women, it struck me that this is an institutionalized, racist reaction on the part of the Harper government and the RCMP. I do not believe that if we had a bunch of white grandmothers – like my mom who is always out there somewhere doing this – that you would have seen that kind of reaction. It is absolutely outrageous that [the RCMP] would show up with 700 police and snipers to a town of 800 people.

“Those pictures and what actually happened there is getting all around the world and inspiring people – it is the frontline, and it is creating a remarkably passionate reaction in people.

“So what is extreme energy and why is this causing such a reaction?

“We know that conventional fossil fuels are on their way out. There are not as many conventional sources. So there must be a paradigm shift in energy development. What the oil and gas industry has done has shifted it into this category of what I call ‘extreme energy.’ It’s like extreme sports – instead of just skiing down a slope, it’s like skiing straight down the Empire State building. It’s much, much more dangerous, it’s inherently toxic, and it’s much more destructive.

“Fracking is an extreme energy. [It is] fracturing rocks thousands of feet below the surface, using hundreds of carcinogenic chemicals in that process that have been shown over and over again to contaminate water, pollute air, and cause a health crisis, as well as regional air pollution and smog, the fragmentation of communities, and what my new film is about – the contamination of our democratic governments with an influx of influence and corporate cash to the people who should be representing us.

“This is an experiment and it’s taking over huge areas. The oil and gas industry in America alone has leased more land than the entire landmass of California and Florida combined.

“I was in an oil and gas conference sponsored by *The Financial Times* and I was the only non-oil and gas person speaking. I was in a room of a hundred oil and gas executives and their question was: ‘Why is fracking causing such a big movement?’ They are clueless. They think only about their bottom line, they think only about their balance sheets and their profits. And when I got up and said, ‘Because you are causing human rights violations all across the world and you are invading people in their backyards all across the world – from England to France to Australia to South Africa to Canada to the United States.’ And they just looked at me blankly. There was a total disconnect.”

[A reporter asks a question about fracking being safe because drilling occurs below the water table.]

“So we are magically teleporting from the surface to below the water table? No. You drill through the water table when you do all of this activity.

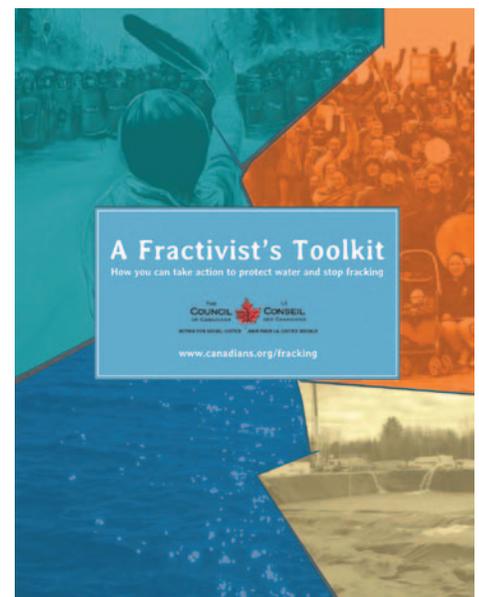
“We know that the highest probability of failure of these water wells is the cement casings around the wells. Basically, we are talking about steel pipes that are surrounded by cement. The cement is supposed to stop the oil and gas from coming up around the sides of the steel pipe and not getting into the groundwater aquifers. We know from the industry’s own science on this that 5 per cent of those cement barriers fail immediately upon drilling, and that 50-60 per cent of them fail over a 30-year period.

“What we are seeing in Pennsylvania right now is gas migration and chemical migration in approximately 8-11 per cent of the wells that have been drilled. That’s in line with industry projections. So the wells don’t fail down at the bottom, they fail near the water table, and you are creating a highway

of hydrocarbons going right through the aquifer.

“The Society of Petroleum Engineers put out a Powerpoint – it’s featured in *Gasland II* – that stated that right now out of the 1.8 million oil and gas wells in the world 35 per cent of them are leaking. They also say in that same Powerpoint that they plan to drill more wells in the next 10 years than they have in the last 100 years. Oh, and by the way, the public is becoming increasingly aware of ‘zonal isolation problems’ – which means that these wells are leaking. And then the next bullet point is: fixing these leakage problems will require a ‘push’ in technology, meaning [the industry] does not know how to solve this.

“Until there are a series of tests that last 10 to 20 years to examine these methods, what’s going on is an experiment on human subjects all around the world, by the oil and gas industry, for profit.”



Learn more about fracking, and how to take action in your community, in the Council of Canadians’ groundbreaking *Fractivist’s Toolkit*. The toolkit gives an overview of fracking in Canada, provides case studies of communities fighting fracking, and offers tips and tools for taking action. Download a copy at www.canadians.org/fractivists toolkit.