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A GROUP OF NATIVE CHILDREN IN FORT CHIPEWYAN, ALBERTA PROTEST THE TAR SANDS WITH A SHORT FILM ENTITLED “KEEPERS OF THE WATER”.

“When I protest, everything evolves with each other and helps each other. It makes me feel happy and empowered.”

- Robyn, 12 years old

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With the aftertaste of the G20 still looming, one might mistakenly attribute these words to a citizen protesting government policies, or as Fox News would put it, the rant of a jobless domestic terrorist. But nothing would be further from the truth, for these are the words of Robyn, a 12-year-old girl from Fort Chipewyan, Canada, who got together with other children aged 9-12 in her community to protest the Alberta Oil Sands. A journey that comes to us through the short documentary film *Keepers of the Water* (2010), directed by [Ayelen Liberona](#) and produced by Joseph Johnson Cami and Natalie Galazka. This 4-minute film is told entirely by an unusually aware and precocious group of Native children who got up one day and decided they had had enough. But before we send in the riot police, or ship the children off to the closest Free Speech Zone, we should take a closer look at what drove these children from their youthful innocence to social protest.

- Fort Chipewyan is directly downstream from the world's largest and most environmentally toxic industrial project, the Alberta Tar Sands.
- Native populations are experiencing increased respiratory diseases, rare cancers and cardiovascular problems, suspected to be caused by toxic substances that have leached downstream from Tar Sands production.
- Industrial development of the scale of the Tar Sands could push the boreal ecosystem over its tipping point and lead to irreversible ecological damage and loss of biodiversity.
- About 90% of the water used to process the Tar Sands ends up in acutely toxic tailing ponds that line the Athabasca River and threaten the health of the whole river basin, Canada's largest fresh water resource.
- Canada has no national water policy and one of the worst records of pollution enforcement of any industrial nation.

“We should have a voice, our voice should be heard” - Robyn, 12 years old

The media's coverage and emphasis on the small number of protesters who opted to engage in property destruction during the G20 summit has made it far too easy, some would even say convenient, to forget many of the issues that actually motivated people to put themselves in harm's way and demand change. The Alberta Oil Sands is one of those issues and should not be sidelined for the spectacle of broken glass. The planet, unlike those storefronts, does not have insurance and the damage is already irreparable to the Fort Chipewyan community and their 12,000 years of history in that environment which they know so well.

“I think the government is going along with it because he has a lot of money coming in and he really doesn't care about the planet or the earth.” - Robyn, 12 years old

The message transmitted through the eyes and words of the children in *“Keepers of the Water”* should not be drowned out in this climate of misinformation and social apathy. Perhaps these children can serve as an example to us all. Let them be a reminder of the power and importance of peaceful protest.

The film screens online only until JULY14th. View at the following link <https://tiff.cment.net/step1.html> and select “Keepers of the Water”.

“Keepers of the Water”, has been nominated for an Emerging Filmmaker Award by the Toronto International Film Festival. Vote for it and make your voice heard.

For more about the film and the Tar Sands issue visit www.KeepersOfTheWater.com

For more about the director Ayelen Liberona visit www.AyelenLiberona.com

To see other works by the creators of this film click [HERE](#).

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“Keepers of the Water” is a
[Wandering Eye Production](#)