

# Bakken

Genre: Drama

Format: Limited Episodic Series

Nutshell: Silkwood/Erin Brockovich meets Promised Land meets House of Cards

Logline: A proud, independent, North Dakota widow enters a Faustian deal with a fracking company to avoid bank foreclosure of her ranch but joins Native American neighbors, whose land and water is despoiled by drilling operations on her land, to battle the fracking company over environmental and social consequences of their operation while DAPL resistance builds nearby.

## OVERVIEW

Bakken examines and reveals the lesser publicized social and environmental aftermaths of fracking for shale oil through the effects on two families whose worlds rarely intersect though they live in the same sphere - until they are united through common crises. Drawing from past environmental films, such as Dark Waters, the titles mentioned in the nutshell, A Civil Action, A Different American Dream, as well as missing and murdered indigenous women titles such as Wind River, Somebody's Daughter, and Rustic Oracle. Bakken elevates strong lead female and Native American characters above monolithic stereotype and lauds Native American fortitude in their related struggle against the Dakota Access Pipeline. Through it all, as the lead white female protagonist confronts a plethora of related issues, Bakken's storyline will show that anyone can evolve if they look outside their own boundaries.

CHARACTERS \*note - actor images for ideation only, none currently attached.

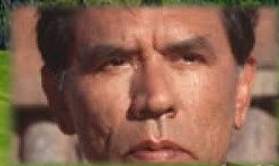
Wilma Johansson - White, 60s, owns the Bar J Ranch outside Williston, ND and is one of the main protagonists of Bakken. Staunchly politically conservative and insular in her world view until the institutions she treasures fail her in a time of crisis, leading her to evolve. Think Margo Martindale.



Alma Cooks With Stone - Assiniboine, 60s, a Medical Doctor, who left a thriving practice in Chicago to return home and minister to her Native American community on the reservations and surrounding area. Think Tantoo Cardinal.



Tom Cooks With Stone - Assiniboine, 60s, Ph.D. in Literature, Nobel Laureate, who left Chair in the Literary Department of Northwestern University to return with Alma and replenish his creative well on ancestral lands. Character modeled after N. Scott Momaday. Think Wes Studi.



Inga Johansson - White, 30s, Wilma's eldest daughter, accomplished Environmental Attorney, works for an Environmental NGO. Estranged from Wilma due to clash of worldviews. Think Jennifer Landon.



Analiese Johansson - White, 20s, Wilma's middle daughter. She's a horse woman, stayed on the ranch after high school, loves the land as much as Wilma. Traumatized by her father's death when she was a child, she turned to alcohol for comfort as a teen but hides it from Wilma under a toughened veneer. Think Julia Garner.



Lily Johansson - White, 16-17, Wilma's youngest daughter. She's a runner on her girl's high school long distance team. Being shaped by Wilma's world view, yet has an innate sense of right and wrong. Keeps Analiese's alcoholism secret but it enhances sibling frictions. Think Kaitlyn Dever.



Mabel Cooks With Stone - Assiniboine, 16-17, Tom and Alma's only child. She's a distance runner and Lily's teammate. She struggles against the catty racism of her white team mates. Becomes friends with Lily after saving her from a training injury on a deserted road. Think Jamie Loy.

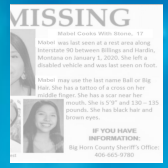


## SUMMARY

Wilma Johannsson cannot believe her banker, who she has known her entire life, will really foreclose on the Bar J. But their relationship and Wilma's grit are no match for the Ranch's economic downturn. Meanwhile, far away, in response to rising crude futures, a Texas oil company is looking for their next field. The Bar J sits atop the most potentially productive shale oil deposit of the Bakken geological formation. Researching ownership, they learn of Wilma's financial distress. Oil emissary Red Dawson appears at Wilma's door one day. His siren song seems like salvation, so Wilma, wary but desperate, signs leases. She has no real inkling of the Pandora's box she's opening for her family, community and Native American neighbors she has not cared to meet.



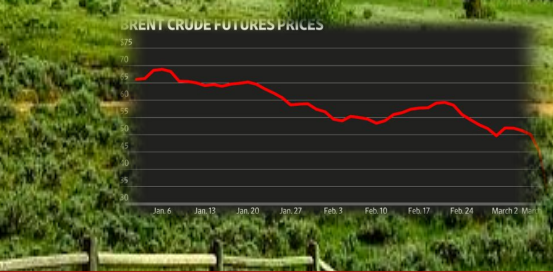
On the Bar J, rigs are pumping, slurry pits fill with toxic waste that overflows into the water supply for the Cooks With Stone's livestock next door that poisons the animals. The fracking process contaminates groundwater that supplies their drinking water. It flames at the kitchen sink.



The man camps, with their "Hell on Wheels" vice following, flourish. Soon, Native American girls and women begin to go missing as the sex trafficking trade grows. Wilma is disinterested, until Lily and Mabel join the ranks. Wilma learns the frustration of Native Americans first hand as local authorities turn blind eyes. She joins Alma to conduct their own investigations.



The tenuous profitability of the Bakken's fracked oil is tightly linked to cheap transport to market by overland pipeline constructed along the most direct route, no matter that it transgresses sacred Native American territory. The oil and pipeline industries ruthlessly leave no political, legal or physical impediment in their path unturned. Unintimidated by their might, Native American tribes rise up to accept the challenge, David vs. Goliath.



Tragically, Tom Cooks With Stone, contracts cancer from their contaminated well water and dies. In a bittersweet epiphany, Wilma finds understanding of Inga's world view and begrudgingly seeks her assistance, leading to their reconciliation. While legal wrangling elevates to the SCOTUS, crude prices fall at market whim, the fracking company abandons the Bar J, leaving behind the scars of their presence on the land and the community. Wilma wonders if her land will ever recover in her lifetime. She worries for her daughters' futures. Alma must adjust to life without Tom. But the two women are now bonded and there is nothing they can't overcome.

~Pilot script and synopsis available~