

# Garbage

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Follow independent filmmaker Andrew Nisker on a documentary journey as he examines how much garbage a typical Canadian (based in Toronto) family produces in a 3-month period. The MacDonald family of 5 (2 adults and 3 kids) saved all the garbage they produced during a 3-month period to measure their physical output and hopefully learn about their patterns of consumption along the way.

While the MacDonalds are storing their trash, Nisker follows the garbage trail from curb to landfill to methane production, our electricity from the coal plants to the mountains where the coal is mined and our sewage to the sites where untreated sewage ends up in water systems.

Nisker takes us on a dirty journey that few people ever get to see or experience in their lifetime. *Garbage!* shows us the secret side of waste like the residents that live next to massive dumps in Michigan (where Toronto transports their waste) and gives voice to their concerns with noise, sewage sludge, mercury vapors and CO2 emissions.

At the end of the 3-month period, the McDonald family has produced more than 320 pounds of wet garbage (compost) and 83 large garbage bags of household trash and recycling.

One particularly poignant part of the movie is the interview with old-timer Larry Gibson who refuses to sell his land and mountain to the mining corporation – even though he stands to make millions of dollars. The land is simply more important to him. (Visit *Keepers of the Mountain Foundation* at <http://www.mountainkeeper.org/> to find out more about Larry's story.)

During the garbage journey Nisker peppers his narratives with relevant garage-facts such as: 'It takes 500,000 trees for Sunday papers in the USA', 'In California more than 3 million empty water bottles are thrown away daily' or '1 gallon of oil destroys 1 million gallons of drinking water'. *Garbage!* advocates in favor of the reduction of consumption, conservation of resources, energy efficiency, green power and decentralized energy production while presenting the information in a wryly entertaining manner.



At the end of the 3-month period (which included Halloween, Thanksgiving and Christmas), the MacDonald family has produced more than 320 pounds of wet garbage (compost) and 83 large garbage bags of household trash and recycling. It is an unpleasant realization just how much waste one family is capable of producing in such a short time.

Although Nisker's choice of 'the typical family' is questionable as the family lives in a large home, drives an SUV or two, has 4 children (one is born near the end of the film) and utilizes paper plates, kitty litter, disposable diapers, large volumes of plastic, chemical cleaners, laundry detergents and appear to regularly consume meat. Perhaps this is the typical Canadian family, but in some ways choosing the MacDonald family as central protagonists in this film seems a bit outdated, like the overly consumerist families of yesteryear.

The film also lacks some sense of redemption or cathartic awakening. After the family has spend 3 months intimately charting their consumption nothing appears to change —the MacDonald's family remarks it has been a rather eye-opening experience and they will make some changes, but we never see what these changes are. In fact, the only information we get is that the MacDonald family has had another child. *Garbage!* would have benefited from some sense of redemption within the subject family.

Filmmaker Andrew Nisker represents the new breed of filmmaker that is both an activist and skilled documentarian. And who knows, he might just have started the *Garbage Revolution*. An eye-opening contribution to the consumption debate.

**Visit:** <http://www.garbagerevolution.com>

**GreenMuze.com Rating:** ★★★★★

LAST UPDATED ( WEDNESDAY, 27 AUGUST 2008 )