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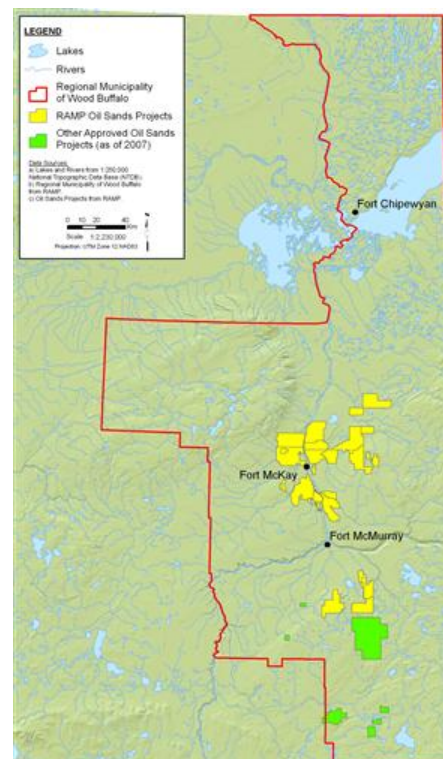
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Oil Sands Development

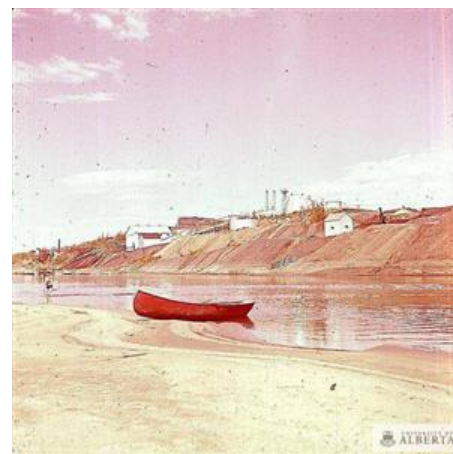
Oil and gas deposits are found worldwide. In some places, oil and gas are readily extracted from drilled wells, while in other locations, advanced technology developed over years of research is required to recover the resource. With increasing global demand for energy, companies have invested in new technology to extract petroleum resources from previously unlikely sources. Over the last four decades, Alberta has been at the forefront of development focused on recovering bitumen from the oil sands. The processes and techniques used today are the results of those efforts.

The methods used to recover bitumen from an oil sands deposit depend on the characteristics of the area and the deposit. The bitumen content of oil sands can range from less than 1% to more than 18% by weight. Deposits containing more than 12% bitumen are considered rich, while deposits with less than 6% bitumen are less viable (ERCB 2008b). Viable bitumen deposits can be mined or extracted through *in situ* methods depending on the depth of the overburden; deposits more than 75 m below the surface are too deep for mining to be practical. The steps involved in the development of an oil sands project from exploration to reclamation and closure are detailed [in the environmental management in the oil sands region interactive feature](#). The following sections describe methods used to recover bitumen from the earth and process it into marketable products.

[Next page: Oil Sands Mining](#)



Oil sands projects in the RMWB
Source: Hatfield Consultants
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The Bitumount plant, 1949
Source: University of Alberta Archives (image 91-137-041).
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