



THE MILL

A fifty-year-old environmental controversy reaches a boiling point

A DOCUMENTARY FILM BY DAVID W. CRAIG

CINEMATOGRAPHER KEVIN FRASER EDITOR PETER GIFFEN LOCATION SOUND JAMES O'TOOLE COMPOSERS JUSTIN SMALL & OHAD BENCHETRIT
SOUND DESIGNER JUSTIN GAUDREAU PRODUCERS ANN BERNIER DAVID W. CRAIG WRITER/DIRECTOR DAVID W. CRAIG

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www.themillfilm.ca

SYNOPSSES



CANADIAN SCREEN AWARDS 2020



AWARDS

Most Inspirational Feature, Eugene Environmental Film Festival

Nominee: Canadian Screen Award 2020 Best Documentary Program

Nominee: The Kathleen Shannon Award; Director Non-Fiction; Multicultural Award (30 Minutes & Over), Yorkton Film Festival

Environment Award, International Ocean Film Festival

Walter W. Ordway Best of the Fest, Oneota Film Festival

Synopsis (75 words)

The Mill is a gripping portrait of a rural community deeply divided over the fate of the local pulp mill.

Welcome to Pictou County, Nova Scotia where a plan to redirect pulp effluent into the fishing grounds of the Northumberland Strait has stirred controversy. Lobster fishermen say "No Pipe!" The mill says "No Pipe No Mill". A line has been drawn and with hundreds of jobs at stake the issue has reached a boiling point!

Short Synopsis (250 words)

The Mill is a gripping portrait of a rural community deeply divided over the fate of the local pulp mill.

In Pictou County, Nova Scotia people have disagreed about the mill since it opened fifty years ago. To correct a historic injustice the mill must, by law, stop flowing pulp effluent into the tidal lagoon next to the Mi'kmaq community of Pictou Landing. To keep operating the mill has proposed a controversial plan to pipe its effluent into the environmentally sensitive fishing grounds of the Northumberland Strait. Fishermen say "No Pipe". The mill says "No Pipe No Mill". A line has been drawn and with jobs at stake the issue has reached a boiling point.

The Mill is an observational documentary that conveys its story through the voices of those directly affected: Mi'kmaq and non-Mi'kmaq fishermen; lumber mill and woodlot owners and company representatives. Trying to find the balance between reconciliation with the local Mi'kmaq community, preserving the lucrative lobster fishery or keeping the mill and its jobs, the different sides struggle to influence decisions that ultimately will be made by government and the corporate owners of the mill.

The Mill is a distinctly Canadian story yet its depiction of the mounting struggle between jobs and the environment will resonate with a global audience. It captures a moment when greater awareness of indigenous rights and environmental change has upended long held assumptions. *The Mill* is both a cinematic love song to Pictou County and a vivid depiction of a small community grappling with big historic change.



FESTIVALS

Guelph Film Festival, Guelph,
Ontario

Vox Popular Media Arts Festival,
Thunder Bay, Ontario

Eugene Environmental Film
Festival, Eugene, Oregon

Nickel Independent Film Festival,
St. John's, Newfoundland and
Labrador

Yorkton Film Festival, Yorkton,
Saskatchewan

Dreamspeakers International Film
Festival, Edmonton, Alberta

Oneota Film Festival, Decorah,
Iowa

International Ocean Film Festival,
San Francisco, CA

Elements International Film Festival,
Vancouver, British Columbia

FIN Atlantic International Film
Festival, Halifax, Nova Scotia



Long Synopsis (500 words)

A challenge common to rural communities the world over is taking place in Pictou County, Nova Scotia where there is sharp division over the fate of the local pulp mill.

To correct a historic injustice the mill must, by law, stop flowing pulp effluent into the tidal lagoon next to the Mi'kmaq community of Pictou Landing. To keep operating the mill has proposed a controversial plan to redirect its effluent into the environmentally sensitive fishing grounds of the Northumberland Strait. Fishermen say "No Pipe". The mill says "No Pipe No Mill". A line has been drawn and with jobs at stake the issue has reached a boiling point.

The Mill is an observational documentary focused on average citizens on all sides of the debate standing up to what they perceive is a threat to their livelihoods and way of life. While the mill has been the subject of heated debate over the fifty years of its existence the insistent force of the global environmental crisis and greater sensitivity to indigenous rights and reconciliation has upended the long established attitude that the jobs the mill provides offsets the pollution it creates. Now a coalition of indigenous and non-indigenous fishermen is in confrontation with the province's forest industry. For a tightly knit community reliant on fishing and forestry the hardening position drawn between fishermen and the mill has divided families, neighbours and businesses.

The Mill takes place over a year from the time the plan for an effluent pipe was announced in 2017 to March 2019 as government makes its initial assessment whether to approve the project or not. As opposition to the pipe mounts, there is a growing sense the future of Pictou County for better or worse is tied to the fate of the pulp mill. As an investor in the mill as well as the regulator responsible for its effluent, the government of Nova Scotia presides over a Gordian knot of its own making: if it allows the mill to continue operating it will break its promise to the people of Pictou Landing and threaten the lucrative lobster fishery indigenous and non-indigenous fishers depend on. If it closes the mill, the entire forest sector of the province will be disrupted and hundreds if not more jobs will be lost.

The Mill is a distinctly Canadian story that reflects a global dilemma facing rural communities that bear the brunt of the environmental and economic fallout of increasingly unsustainable resource industries. It gives voice to indigenous and non-indigenous fishermen, forestry workers and community leaders, deeply rooted in the land and waters of their area, who struggle to influence decisions that will ultimately be made by government and the foreign corporate owners of the mill. Cinematically capturing the rough beauty of the landscape and the unpretentious eloquence of the people that depend on it, *The Mill* is both a loving tribute to Pictou County and an illuminating portrait of a small community dealing with profound historic change.



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

The Mill was born out of proximity and necessity. Growing up in New Brunswick where pulp mills were a fact of life I barely noticed them or their effects. Like most folks I knew little about forestry despite its importance to the community where I lived. The Northumberland Strait made more of an impression and later in life I found myself drawn back to that familiar shoreline.

When my partner and I bought property in Caribou just outside of the town of Pictou we knew about the mill but it didn't impede our decision. In 2014 things changed. The air in the Town of Pictou, just four miles away, became unbearable as the mill operated full bore without pollution controls. People protested, connected on social media and a Clean The Air Concert brought national attention to the situation. Still it took several years to rectify.

No longer will people rationalize the mill's emissions as the 'smell of money.' Intolerance for the mill's environmental impact, combined with growing awareness of injustices inflicted on the local Mi'kmaq community have reached a new limit.

2014 was also the year the Mi'kmaq community of Pictou Landing shut down the mill with a blockage to protest a pipeline break that spilled over 40 million litres of untreated effluent on their traditional burial ground. To resolve the impasse, the Nova Scotia government of Stephen McNeil promised to close the notorious Boat Harbour effluent treatment plant that had plagued Pictou Landing since the mill started operating fifty years ago. These events raised my awareness of the impact of the mill on the community even if I was still a seasonal resident. By 2017 when the mill proposed placing an effluent pipe into the Northumberland Strait to replace the old treatment facility I felt an obligation to get involved. This time it was personal.

I was also inspired by Joan Baxter's book *The Mill: Fifty Years of Pulp and Protest*. In December 2017 it made national headlines when Joan's book signing in New Glasgow was cancelled. Mill workers had threatened to boycott the local bookstore if it went ahead. Joan had consolidated decades of local lore and conducted solid journalistic research to share the history of Pictou County's pulp mill. I optioned the book immediately after reading it.

The alliance of indigenous and non-indigenous fishermen and their opposition to the mill's effluent pipe shaped the conflict that is the crux of the documentary. Much of the complicated history of the collusion between the government and the foreign owners of the mill had to go by the wayside for a 44-minute television documentary. Growing up in the region I was aware that for too long decisions that governed the interests of the community have been made behind closed doors and against a background where protest is ground down by bureaucratic



stonewalling and secrecy. I wanted *The Mill* to contribute to an informed and balanced debate and expand public awareness of the mill and its future prospects. “Showing Canada to Canadians” was the famous motto for the National Film Board of Canada but it also instilled the belief in a generation of documentary filmmakers, including me, that filmmaking and democracy were intertwined. I was thrilled and grateful when the CBC, our public broadcaster, commissioned the film.

Our documentary team followed fishermen, community activists, and citizens voicing their opposition to the pipe through demonstrations and grass roots organizing. We reached out to Northern Pulp, forestry workers and politicians for their perspectives. In the process I learned a lot about Pictou County and its people — my neighbours. This is truly a situation where there are “good people on both sides.” The delicate equilibrium between the pulp mill and its community has shattered. No longer will people rationalize the mill’s emissions as the ‘smell of money.’ Intolerance for the mill’s environmental impact, combined with growing awareness of injustices imposed on the local Mi’kmaq community mark a significant change in attitude here.

We must change not only in Pictou County but everywhere and change is hard. I want *The Mill* to reflect the experiences of people grappling with this process.

– David W. Craig, Director

“...There is no narrator telling you what to think just the voices of the people who will be affected by what will happen and that is most commendable.”

- VIEWER ONLINE COMMENT

INTERVIEW SUBJECTS



Chief Andrea Paul Pictou Landing Band

Chief Paul represented the Band in the negotiation that led the Nova Scotia government to close and remediate Boat Harbour. Now she has been instrumental in coordinating with the larger community to support the 'No Pipe' protest.

A personable and genuine figure, Chief Paul is quick to laugh and equally quick to shed tears yet her easy manner disguises a steely determination that has been tested by the enormous pressure she has faced from the government, the mill and even her own community. A teacher by profession she has a strong commitment to education and she aspires to integrate the clean up of Boat Harbour into the curriculum of the Band's elementary school.

If the proposal for a new effluent pipe fails she will face renewed demands to extend Boat Harbour's use as a treatment facility. She sees the cleanup of Boat Harbour as her legacy and she is insistent on her people's traditional role as keepers and protectors of the land, air and water.

Chief Paul has been deeply impressed by the support she has received from the non-indigenous community and she has been crucial to the 'No Pipe' movement as demonstrated by bringing all the Mi'kmaq chiefs in the province to the July 6, Land and Sea Demonstration. Widely respected,

Chief Paul has emerged as a significant leader in Pictou County. She still must contend with her community's decades long distrust for the government and the mill by giving hope that the land and water will return to what it was before the mill came.



Ronnie Highton President, Northumberland Fisherman's Association

An unassuming man in his sixties Ronnie has been president of the local fisher's association for 30 years. An operator in the tough and politicized world of Canada's fishing industry, he's been in the boardrooms and back rooms of various agencies and all levels of government. He has the hard job of keeping his independently minded and sometimes unruly members focused on their 'No Pipe' advocacy goal of getting the feds involved.

Hardly an extrovert Ronnie comes alive in a fight. He likes a joke and makes wry comments about politicians such as; "he has been sitting on the fence so long he has splinters in his ass." Ronnie is well aware of the power of the camera and he has orchestrated a visually



compelling summer media event by bringing 200 lobster boats to the Land and Sea Demonstration in Pictou Harbour. The boats dancing and circling in the harbour in front of the mill was a spectacle. Accordingly the event made national television news that night (July 6) on all the major networks.

Ronnie has placed a lot of faith in the federal government. Is it well founded? While the Prime Minister is now aware of the situation in Pictou County he was quick to note that this was a provincial jurisdiction. Over the dog days of summer Ronnie has gone fishing while at the same time planning next steps with his legal team.



Krista Fulton *Friends of the Northumberland Strait*

She was raised in Pictou and has lived here all her life apart from a stint at college. Krista met her lobster fisher husband at 17 and now has a young teenage daughter. She owns a trucking company.

Attractive and charismatic Krista challenges expectations of what someone who picks up garbage for a living should look like. She also challenges the wisdom of pumping effluent into the nearby fishing grounds. A founding member of the Friends of the Northumberland Strait she has been on the forefront of the 'No Pipe' struggle. She was a key organizer of the Land and Sea Demonstration and MC at the event.

If Krista has a question about the mill she doesn't hesitate to call General Manager Bruce Chapman to ask it. Her education in wastewater management lends credibility to her concern about the proposed pipe. She lives in close proximity to the mill and accepted it up until November 2017 when the plan for the pipe was announced. The idea seemed absurd until she realized it was serious. Since that time she has been juggling her time between work, family and serious advocacy on behalf the Friends. Presentations to town councils, radio interviews, and countless meetings fill her impossibly crowded agenda.

She feels the pipe threatens her family and way of life and is compelled to act. At the same time she sympathizes with people working at the mill. She wants a solution that won't pump effluent into the fishing ground. Krista has hidden depth and sound political instincts that will help the Friends as they contemplate their next move.



Aaron Beswick *Journalist, The Chronicle Herald*

Aaron Beswick is a Nova Scotia native and his beat is the rural communities of the province's northwest: Pictou, Antigonish and Cumberland Counties among others. He was with Chief Andrea Paul in 2014 when the effluent leak from Northern Pulp was discovered and has been following the story of the struggle between Pictou Landing First Nation and Northern Pulp since then.

In 2019 he was responsible for a four part series of articles in The Chronicle Herald examining the impact of the Pictou County mill and its future. As a young journalist Aaron is passionate about his profession and deeply concerned for the people of rural Nova Scotia. "Journalism matters to us all because the truth matters. But journalism really matters to me because in its pursuit I have got to see the heart and mind at their best, their worst and most places in between. "

In the documentary *The Mill* we see Aaron digging away at the story of the effluent spill and the proposed location of the new effluent pipe. While critical, Aaron retains a balanced perspective on a story whose outcome he knows will have a profound affect on Nova Scotians.



Allan MacCarthy Fisher, Representative of the Northumberland Fisherman's Association, Caribou, Nova Scotia

Allan MacCarthy has been fishing since he was a child. He describes himself as a 'lifer' someone who has fishing in his blood. He captains his lobster boat from Caribou Harbour and fishes lobster in the waters between Caribou and Pictou Island. Like many in the area he is a multi-generational fisher.

Prior to Northern Pulp's announcement of an effluent pipe into Fishing Area 26A of the Northumberland Strait, Allan had no experience as an activist. "I didn't know that the word 'pollution' had two 'L's' ", he says. Over the course of the past two years, Allan has taken on the role of spokesperson for the fishers of Caribou. They will be the most effected should Northern Pulp's effluent pipe go into the waters off Caribou Point.

Allan is calm but adamant. "We are still saying 'No Pipe into the Strait!'" Allan does his homework reading the technical reports on pulp effluent and other studies that are part of the environmental assessment process. He attends and speaks at community meetings and meets with representatives of Northern Pulp, the NS Government and County representatives. He is now the leading representative of the Northumberland Fisherman's Association with respect to issue of the proposed effluent pipe.



Robin Wilber Owner, Elmsdale Lumber, Elmsdale, Nova Scotia

Robin is the third generation owner and operator of Elmsdale Lumber and he proudly looks forward to when his son will take over the business as the fourth generation.

As with other characters seen in The Mill Robin was focused on his own business until it became apparent that the Northern Pulp mill faced potential closure if a replacement for its Boat Harbour effluent treatment facility couldn't be found by January 2020. Such a closure would have a devastating impact on Elmsdale Lumber threatening it with closure.

In The Mill documentary, Robin describes the significant role Northern Pulp plays in supplying logs to the sawmills and paying a good price for chips and other by-products of the sawmill process. As with other characters in the documentary Robin has taken on the role of public spokesperson. As such, he is a thoughtful, genial businessman who is rightly proud of his company's achievements and its role in creating jobs in his community. He contributes an important voice to the debate surrounding the future of the Northern Pulp mill.

CREW



David W. Craig Producer, Writer, Director

Based in Toronto and Pictou County, David Craig is a co-founder of the independent documentary film company Site Media Inc., and a producer on all its films. Site Media's last film, *Strange and Familiar: Architecture on Fogo Island*, won Best Atlantic Documentary at the 2015 Atlantic Film Festival and screened around the world. Before heading to Toronto to work at the Ontario Arts Council and Telefilm Canada, he started his career in film in Halifax working on William D. MacGillivray's *Life Classes*, one of the first feature films to be made in Atlantic Canada.

» www.sitemedia.ca



Ann Bernier Producer

Ann Bernier has over three decades of experience as a professional in the screen industry in Canada. She was Director of Operations and Development at imX Communications Inc., which produced such award winning co-production films as: *Margaret's Museum* starring Helena Bonham Carter; *Love and Death on Long Island* starring John Hurt and Jason Priestly; and *New Waterford Girl*. While there, she produced *The Wild Dogs* by Thom Fitzgerald and the Canada/France co-production *Folle Embellie*. She is a producer on John Walker's last three feature documentaries including his most recent *Assholes: A Theory*, for documentary Channel. Ann also worked at Telefilm Canada as an executive where she oversaw film and television development projects and later the new media fund. Ann left the public sector and joined the Atlantic Film Festival to produce the international co-production conference Strategic Partners for two years with the UK and Ibero-America. For the past 5 years, she has been on the selection committee for Canada's official selection of the Academy Awards Foreign language film.

Ann is a great supporter of emerging talent and spends time mentoring upcoming filmmakers and producers. She is also the recipient of the 2017 WIFT-AT Wave Award recognizing her significant body of work. She and her partner Chris Zimmer run Vertical Productions Inc. and are developing a number of projects including two television drama series, the animation feature film *Koati*, and a feature film, *Monica's News*.

» www.verticalproductions.com



Kevin Fraser Cinematographer

Kevin A Fraser directs and shoots documentary films and also works as a cinematographer of commercial and feature narrative work. Kevin has shot commercials for clients including Toyota, Marvel, Tim Hortons, Sport Chek, GoodLife, and a handful of tourism boards. Films Kevin has directed include two TV hour length documentaries: *More Blood, More Heart* (distributed by Mongrel) and *The Haunted Truth about Haven* (distributed by eOne). The last two short documentaries he made both earned nominations for the Canadian Society of Cinematographers award for "Best Documentary Cinematographer". Kevin has had the great pleasure of making moving images in every Canadian Province and over 25 countries while traveling with collaborators he is fortunate enough to call friends.

» www.kevinfraser.com



Peter Giffen Editor

Peter Giffen is a film professional with 23 years of experience. An Editor/story editor of countless Award-winning documentaries, corporate films, TV series, commercials as well as digital media content for Canadian and US brands. Has also worked professionally in many other aspects of the business serving as producer, director, post supervisor, and business owner.

He started Editfarm in Halifax in 1997 and is a proud member of the film and television community in Nova Scotia. His passion has always been telling stories with pictures and though the technology and tools have changed, his love for editing, technology, and post-production remains strong. Post-production software used: Avid Media Composer, Adobe Premiere Pro, Resolve, After Effects, Photoshop.

» www.editfarm.ca

Ohad Benchetrit and Justin Small Composers

As founding members of critically acclaimed Toronto based band Do Make Say Think, Ohad Benchetrit and Justin Small have been creating engaging and epic music together for over fifteen years. As composers, their focus has always centered around artistic integrity, passion, and spirited experimentation.

Cinematic in nature, Do Make Say Think has been featured in such award-winning films as *The Corporation*, *Scared Sacred*, *Everything's Gone Green*, and the Oscar-winning *Syrianna*. The band has also had the honour of doing live scores for silent film masterpieces including the 1919 film *Tales of the Uncanny* in 2009 and most recently for TIFF Bell Lightbox's presentation of Eric Von Stroheim's 1924 film *Greed*.

Ohad and Justin have composed original score for feature films *A Simple Curve*, Bruce MacDonald's *Hard Core Logo 2*, Jay Cheal's *Beauty Day*, an Art Gallery of Ontario curated installation piece for the 2007 nuit blanche, and a remix for the film *Walk All Over Me*. In addition, Justin has sound-tracked a documentary for the CBC titled *Annie Pootitook*.

As a member of Broken Social Scene, Ohad has also had the opportunity to score Bruce MacDonald's *The Love Crimes of Gillian Guess* and *The Tracey Fragments*, *Snow Cake* directed by Marc Evans and more recently, *Day Dream Nation* by Michael Goldbach. An accomplished engineer and producer, in 2007 Ohad produced Kevin Drew's critically acclaimed debut solo album *Broken Social Scene presents Kevin Drew... Spirit If*.

» telepathicouttakes.wordpress.com