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# THE POND & THE SAUNA

by

Kaija Siirala

Submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Fine Arts, Integrated Media Arts, Hunter College  
The City University of New York

Spring 2018

Thesis Sponsor:

May 9, 2018  
Date

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Date

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## **I. Abstract**

*The Pond & the Sauna* is a documentary short film about a family who lived together in the woods of Northern Ontario on a piece of property called "the Hill". For almost thirty years, a small, friends & family-owned puppet business afforded them the lifestyle to sew stuffed animals and raise their kids together. My interest in alternative economies and intentional communities underpins this work, but this is also a personal story as this is where I grew up. *The Pond & the Sauna* is a standalone part of a larger episodic project called *Homemovies*. This episode is submitted in partial fulfillment of my degree. It uses the site of the pond and the sauna, a location on the property, as a jumping off point to explore the themes of an imagined Finnish identity, the cycles of life and how we build home in our active present.

In 2006, the Hill disbanded; the business which lasted nearly 30 years folded under the pressures of global markets and lack of sustainability in a "for the lifestyle" business model. Concurrently, my aunt, had a stroke; my other aunt and her family moved six thousand kilometres away to the Yukon territory; my parents split up; and the land was sold. The kids are grown and are having kids of their own- cycles continue.

Combining interviews, observational footage, animation, archival images, video and film, *The Pond & the Sauna* re-visits the space of the Hill. Drawing on oral history traditions, through collective memory, the project traces the multigenerational and foundational threads that run through all of our lives into the present. Ten years after it ended, how do the values we learned as children manifest in our lives now? How do

we negotiate our place within a wider social context? How are we moving through the cycles of life and what do home and family mean to us?

## **II. Project Description**

This project grew out of a conversation I had with my cousin Casey in late 2015 when she visited me in New York. We were talking about the way we grew up and realizing only as adults what a unique upbringing it was. Casey is now the mother of three children and we spoke a lot about how it's strange not having the Hill to return to in order to share with the next generation. Our family stories and histories have been passed along and recorded in different ways (mainly by our grandmother, Mummi, who had a weekly column in a Finnish newspaper called something like "*The Family Window*"), but our generation in particular had not done this for the Hill. I think of *Homemovies* as a way of honoring the Hill and also as part of the tradition of storytelling and documenting our lives for future generations.

As a child and young adult, I didn't understand that there were other communities similar to the way I grew up. Once I left home, I would describe the atmosphere of the Hill and people would assume it was a commune. It wasn't until much later that I saw that intentional communities and community based economies were a politics that other people had adopted as well. I began to think about the decisions my family made through the lens of politics.

The point of the puppet business was not to make a huge profit, but rather to find a way to live by their own principles while still surviving. Each member of the

business made the same wage whether you were sweeping the floor or designing. How do you carve out a space for yourself in this society if your values do not necessarily prioritize capital above all else? How do people create these spaces for themselves and sustain them?

One of the other main themes I explore in this project is the way in which a community of people decide to raise their children in an extended family structure. My grandparents also lived on the Hill, which created three generations of family living together. Originally from Finland, their presence had a strong influence on the way we were raised. Sauna culture was quickly adopted, as we carved out a pond in our backyard fed by a natural spring and built a sauna next to it, providing at least weekly saunas (certainly a pillar of Finnish culture). The pond became a central meeting point for everyone. An appreciation of good food and company were also instilled as meals became a central point for us to congregate around. Their work ethic and practical ways of making the most out of small means trickled down to all of us.

Another motif is the legacy and act of documenting family histories. In 1960, my dad's family of five children moved from Finland to Staten Island on a North Atlantic freighter. My Mummi bought a super8 camera for the trip over. As mentioned, she wrote a regular column to the Finnish newspaper, the title loosely translates to "*The Family Window*". Between the column and the super 8 camera, it was evidently important to Mummi to document the everyday lives of her family and also reflect on them. She was doing personal documentary work in her own way. In the early 80s,

when the business had some success with the creation of a famous and extremely popular puppet called Wrinkles, my dad bought a video camera and he began documenting our lives. The kids also would take the camera and record their own experiments, plays, stop motion, dance routines etc.. This film is just another addition to the thread of family homemovies.

Mummi was also a prolific writer, writing a weekly column for a Finnish Canadian newspaper and writing weekly with her sisters who remained in Finland. I was fortunate to have my aunt Hansu translate the Finnish writing and I layer it in the film with both the Finnish (read by my aunt Hansu) and the English is read by me, layering the generations through sound. Again, this writing gives another multigenerational, temporal quality to the piece as it reflects on a present moment, instead of ruminating on the past. It feels very immediate.

One of framing devices that I used for this episode (and will be using for future episodes) is to use a site on the Hill (i.e. the pond, the sauna) as a starting point to explore various themes that arise from that location. As mentioned above, the sauna is foundational to Finnish culture - it is often the first thing that is built in a home and is central to family life. The pond, which was dug directly next to the sauna was a central gathering point for the people on the Hill. *The Pond & the Sauna* weaves the themes that arise from these locales: inherited cultural identity, home & chosen family, generational traditions, as well as a deep connection with nature/land.

I thought a lot about my position as the maker in creating this project. I endlessly considered whether to foreground my position as part of this community or let it be one of the tensions in the film that gets slowly revealed. Ultimately, in conversations with my thesis advisors, I was encouraged to foreground my position as it could be used as a framing device to let the viewers in to the film and as a way of communicating some of the stakes that may be involved. In January 2018, I took a workshop hosted by Columbia University's Oral History Master's of Arts program with Nyssa Chow called "Oral Historian as Guide". The workshop uncovered different ways that Oral Historians introduce themselves as characters into their own work. At the end of the workshop I asked Ms. Chow if she had any examples of insider stories that didn't foreground their own insider position. She simply asked: "What are you hiding from? What are you afraid of?". This question resonated with me a lot. I think one sensitivity I have is familial and personal privacy. Growing up, because of the nature of our family business, we were often "selling" the story of the Hill to others as a way of selling the puppets. We had a shop on our land that people would come to and definitely cross boundaries "to see how they lived". Sometimes it felt a little bit like we were subjects of a safari. I do recognize the irony in making a film that discloses some of these family intimacies, a peak into the "family window" as it were. But for that reason, I think that I wanted to keep some details a little bit more obfuscated and if the viewer paid keen attention they would pick up on details, but otherwise details may be missed. In terms of positioning myself at the foreground of the story, part of that felt insincere to the project which I believe is a collective story. I felt uncomfortable

claiming it as my own or framing it as such because it meant so much to this larger group of people, each with our own individual experiences. However, I tried thinking of the opening of each episode as a dedication to the people, values and “lessons” that are represented and explored in each episode.

### **III. Research Analysis**

My Mummi’s 8mm footage spans approximately 25 years and the video 8 footage spans approximately 20 years. This has been a rich source of material to play with both in visually matching to the present and in terms of providing archival visual evidence of the past. The process of digitizing was part of my research. This provided me the opportunity to notice dynamics and histories between people, to look for interesting visual patterns, references to the process of filming (which was prevalent in the video8 audio remarking on the presence of the camera). I paid special attention to the multigenerational aspect and the patterns contained therein. This helped me focus the production phase of my project so that I could find ways to transition between these materials. It also helped hone what storylines and motifs I wanted to focus on moving forward.

Beyond my family archival research, another concept that heavily influenced me was starting to think of the project almost like an oral history. Oral histories often contain a collection of voices that tells a story or depicts a period of time. As Samuel Schragger writes in his chapter of *The Oral History Reader* called “What is Social in Oral History?”



“From this perspective, oral history is composed of more and less inclusive categorizations of events. At one end of the spectrum are stories about unique instances...As narrators we play across the whole range, matching aspects of experience with the capacities of various pieces of memory to depict them. Shifts from one type of statement to another are as effortless as shifts from one character’s point of view to another’s, and they can happen repeatedly while narrating without drawing any notice” (284).

Because there are so many people involved in the Hill, it didn’t feel right to tell this story from a singular perspective, not even my own. I wanted there to be a sense of “character” in some ways, often through tellings of particular stories or having moments where we spend more time with a focused character, but I didn’t want to make this a character-driven film. I found this concept of switching between one character’s point of view to another, and from one statement to another - weaving the memories together - the best way to tell the story, allowing for the differences/similarities to be contrasted in through personal memories. I was drawn to the fact that oral history prioritizes multiple points of view, which is a quality I wanted my project to have. These interwoven narratives almost take on the role of a greek chorus, an attempt at undifferentiated narrative voice.

Oral histories also have a fable-like quality to them. In his chapter “What makes Oral History different?” in Robert Perks’ *The Oral History Reader*, Alessandro Portelli points out, “Oral sources tell us not just what people did, but what they wanted to do, what they believed they were doing, and what they now think they did” (Portelli 67). There is an element of narrative and subjectivity. Of course, all interviews have this quality in filmmaking, but I wanted to highlight and prioritize this subjectivity and also contrast it among the various participants. Where does the story intersect? How is it

the same, and how is it different? What details do some people remember and others do not? All of this was very interesting to me and spoke to the larger question around how we shape our own individual memories within a collective whole.

In terms of the tradition of linear documentary film, I am excited to place my work in the context of a multitude of influences. I am inspired by animated works such as *Why is the Tall Man Happy?* by Michel Gondry, based on a series of conversations between Gondry and Chomsky, all represented in hand drawn animation. I am also inspired in Corinna Belz's *Gerhard Richter Painting* which is an interesting mix of observational footage and interviews done on the fly while in the middle of a shot. I certainly employed this idea during production, having my participants doing something (often preparing a meal, gardening, knitting, doing something with their hands) as I asked them questions. I think it provides an interesting texture in contrast to the strictly observational or more formal interviews. Alan Berliner's *Nobody's Business* is also a touchstone for me as it is about a filmmaker making a film about his/her family, and the employment of humor to get at something more serious. Chantal Akerman's *News from Home* blends audio of her mother reading her letters over images of Akerman's new home of New York City. The tension between the audio and the visuals creates a new meaning - we feel the distance and isolation of being somewhere away from your family, but how the intimacy of that relationship is embedded in the communication.

In terms of using an episodic structure, I am also inspired by narrative serialized television, such as Jill Soloway's *Transparent*, which follows a multitude of characters

in a family, their interactions and isn't afraid to blur the lines of time and generations. Pamela Adlon's *Better Things* often plays with the form of a 22 minute television show. Sometimes she has storylines that continue over a few episodes, sometimes she puts two narratively unrelated stories together in one episode that are thematically linked (though not necessarily obviously so from the outset).

My project is also situated in the tradition of the personal documentary film. I will not attempt a comprehensive survey of this particular group of films but rather I will selectively address some as they relate to this project. Ross McElwee's *Sherman's March* (1986) includes interviews with people as he is filming them doing various activities and takes time getting to know different participants in different ways before moving along his quest to make a film about Sherman's March. McElwee uses voice over as a way of grounding the viewer in his personal narrative. This quest to make a film provides an inherent structure, but there is a subtextual quest also in McElwee finding a path to approach his romantic life as well. I really appreciate the humour and levity of this film.

Cecilia Aldarondo's *Memories of a Penitent Heart* (2015) was also a personal film about a woman delving into her family's unspoken, murky histories - the ways personal histories get retold and forgotten. The film structures itself around the concept of a quest. It is full of contrasting interviews of people in intimate domestic spaces (their living rooms, their bedrooms). Aldarondo's hand as a maker is present in the film's construction: her voice over is intimate and talks about the production which helps with the quest structure; we can hear her asking questions sometimes; the

archival material shown of her uncle's personal possessions and others' memories of him have a tactile quality, as if she is gathering tokens as her quest nears completion. At the end of the film, she pairs a meeting between her mother and her uncle's lover with a telephone conversation with her mom about feeling overwhelmed about making the film, and her expectations that footage was going to be instrumental in the third act of her film but that because there was no depth to the relationship between her mother and her uncle's lover beyond their mutual love for her uncle - the footage was flat. It was a brilliant way to end the film. It is here that Aldorando's hand is most felt as she shares with us the intimacy of how challenging the process of filmmaking can be. It also shows the weight of the narrative structure, even on documentary film. Stories are expected to be told in certain ways and have particular outcomes, even when we know that isn't always so in "real life". The interrogation of narrative structure within documentary is something that I thought a lot about as I was making my film as well.

*Quadrangle* by Amy Grappell is a film about her parents who lived in an alternative family structure with another couple (basically they "couple swapped" in the 1970s and both already had kids while doing so). What is interesting and marked about this film, is that we don't know it's a personal story at the beginning. This fact is slowly revealed over time (and confirmed at the end) that Grappell is the child of one of these couples and grew up in this unconventional household. I have created the "dedication" at the beginning of the episode as a framing device so that people are grounded at the beginning of the film of my position as the filmmaker/insider in this community but I felt very strongly that I would not use my voice throughout because it

was a collective story. Grappell does not use a voice over in her film, and instead interweaves interviews with her parents (sometimes overlapping the sound of people's voices who appear on a split screen). It is an intimate portrayal of a personal story without hearing explicitly how the filmmaker feels about it, but rather communicating this in the way that she has made the film. I think it's was important for me to realize that just because I'm not necessarily in the frame, or acting as a guide through the film using my voice, my authorship and the weight that carries is present in the film. This is done through the dedication that opens the film, the back and forth conversations in the interviews, my presence in the archival footage and a scene in which I make coffee in my apartment in Brooklyn while the voices in my life today swirl around me, representing my chosen family, my responsibilities and the various aspects of my life.

One of the things I thought a lot about with this project was how to approach the structure. Early on, I realized that I would want to experiment with a somewhat non-linear story structure. To put this story into a classic narrative three-act structure following one plot line, and a sub plot, would not do the story justice. To me, what is interesting about this project is in the small details, the interconnections, the threads that play out thematically across generations, relationships and life-cycles. But how does one structure this in a linear film? If there are multiple storylines and connections happening all at once, how do you approach creating this not just in the final product but also in production. I found the concept of a rhizome very helpful. In their introductory chapter called "Rhizome" of their seminal work, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari write about this idea of

a rhizome as an alternative structuring method in writing/thinking. One of the rhizome's first properties, as they define it, is "Principles of connection and heterogeneity: any point of a rhizome can be connected to any other, and must be. This is very different from the tree or root, which plots a point, fixes an order" (Deleuze and Guattari 7). This provided me with another structural model beyond the typical narrative with a beginning, middle and end.

One way that this work helped me during production was when I was figuring out how to ask my family questions. There were many topics that I was curious about and knew I wanted to discuss, and in some cases, these would be connected to other questions and interviews. Because my intention was always to tell the story through multiple voices, I knew that I would need to ask similar questions of people so that I would be able to intercut them. However, not all questions were relevant to all people. I quickly came up with the approach of using color coded-cue cards for my questions. I divided the topics of conversation into 4 broad categories: "The Hill, in general" (green); "Senitt Dolls and Puppets business" (yellow); "Siirala Family/Finnish traditions"(blue) and "Present day"(pink). This made the questions more modular, which helped with organizing and not feeling too overwhelmed by the number of interviews I conducted. For each of the 15 interviews, I had a cue card for each of these four categories which I would consult mostly before the interview (and sometimes have a quick peek at during as a reminder). These allowed me to cross reference (using the colour coding) between people what questions I wanted to ask and had asked in previous interviews, to make sure that the overall story was getting

covered. I also was able to tailor the questions to each person individually without reinventing the wheel each time or asking something irrelevant. I found this a really helpful conceptual tool for interviewing, and in-fact this color coding idea carried through to when I began to look at piecing the whole project together.

The fifth/sixth principle of a rhizome Deleuze and Guattari discuss is that of “cartography and decalcomania”. They make the distinction between a map and a tracing, writing that a map “is open and connectable in all of its dimensions; it is detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification...Perhaps one of the most important characteristics of a rhizome is that it always has multiple entryways” (Ibid 12). The idea of “multiple entryways” feels extremely relevant to how I considered structure in this project. As I said, condensing the story into a linear structure was not of interest to me - I wanted to look at how certain threads played out across generations. How seeds that get planted when we’re children then begin to manifest themselves in our adult lives or conversely, how those manifest themselves differently in different people. I felt that I could have framed this story in a lot of different ways - through the lens of the business, through the lens of a “character”, through the lens of my Finnish heritage. These all seemed like interesting sites of investigation and so I wanted to look at this story in a lot of different ways. When I began to structure the film, I thought about how it would be a series of stories, that would hold your attention (hopefully) in a present moment, and I would use some sort of connective tissue to transition from one to another. This isn’t necessarily temporal (though sometimes is) but can also be thematic, graphic etc. (discussed below). As this principle of the

rhizome dictates, there are multiple ways of connecting parts together, and I wanted to explore these. While the individual scenes, or small stories would connect to each other in some way, when you got more perspective, you would get a fuller picture through investigating something in detail, and then pulling back and placing it within your own “map” of what the story was, and all of the subplots of that story. I wanted this to be an active process for the viewer, that each of these scenes would somehow give you clues to a bigger picture of the story, different viewers gleaned different details, and cobbling together their own understanding. This allows for interpretation and also some potential frustration in not fully knowing everything.

In *Illinois Parable* by Deborah Stratman she uses multiple voices as a device to create a narration. This film has no main character or no main narrator, and instead is tied together through themes of migration, settlement, and discoveries, among others. I wanted to tell my story from a multitude of voices that weren't necessarily disembodied but the only real indication of who the people are is in their generational markers and perhaps from small clues left throughout the film. I felt that to reduce the story to one perspective would do a disservice to the way the Hill was experienced and could be communicated. Like Stratman, I am attempting to communicate the idea of a place at a particular time, where people converged together. It wasn't about one person but really about the collective whole. It was encouraging to see another way of telling a story through a combination of voices that weren't necessarily identified as “individuals.”



In June of 2017 I went to see *BalikBayan #1: Memories of Overdevelopment Redux VI* (1979 - 2017) by Kidlat Tahimik at MoMA. Tahimik has been making and re-making this film for many years. He mixes and weaves a multitude of intersecting stories (personal, historical, fictionalized) across multiple generations and characters. It is a complicated film to describe but here is an attempt: It portrays the story of Enrique de Malacca, (played by Tahimik in 1979), who circumnavigates the earth as a slave of Portuguese explorer Ferdinand de Magellan and returns to the Philippines as a free man. This is intercut with another story of an elusive old man (played by Tahimik in present day) pursued by a curious traveling artist mixed with documentary footage of an artist community in Northern Philippines. It is Tahimik's analysis of the Philippines' colonial legacy incorporating themes of movement, family, heritage. There isn't necessarily a strict correlation between Tahimik's work and this project but what Tahimik did to transition across all of these time periods and storylines was that he would also use a through line of some kind (sometimes thematic, sometimes a match-cut) to make the transition. It was almost as if this was his key to opening up a time travel portal. I found this a really helpful tactic when putting together this project. As I began to think about my approach of how to tell this epic story, I needed to search for those threads, those moments where i could "pass the baton" (this is how I came to think of it) of attention between these disparate scenes.

*Illinois Parables* is also structured in a very different way, transitioning from eleven seemingly unrelated stories beginning in 600 CE to 1985. The parables combine to show Stratman's understanding of the land that we now call the state of

Illinois. I was inspired by a structure can take the viewers attention moment to moment or story to story, take left turns to the next, and then at the end the film gives a greater impression and understanding of the space. Although I didn't explicitly want to use markers as a way of dividing the film, I thought of the project in sections, with arcs unto themselves that fit together and hopefully by the end of the film you have a bigger impression of what the overall story is through a multitude of lenses.

#### **IV. Thesis Production Process**

This project has been two and a half years in the making. I began with pre-production from Fall 2015- Spring 2016 involving speaking with family members, digitizing and logging 8mm video and film footage, and thinking through approach of interviews. I decided that I would ideally like to have people doing things with their hands, cooking, knitting, sewing while we spoke. (It turned out in some cases this worked in others it did not).

Principal photography took place over three months in the summer of 2016 and in January 2017. I shot and ran sound by myself in five different locations. I traveled to Vancouver, BC; Whitehorse, Yukon Territory; Haliburton County, ON; Guelph, ON; Toronto, ON; and Villa de Leyva, Colombia. I did additional shooting in my apartment in Brooklyn in Winter/Spring 2018.

In Fall 2016, I began logging, subclipping and creating sequences around different stories, "plot points", themes for each interview. I transcribed about ten hours of interviews and then realized that I would not have time to do this (or means). I

instead relied on a rigorous marker/subclipping approach in Avid Media Composer. I had threads of the interviews speaking to different themes or plot points (following similar lines that I had developed in the modular interview cue cards).

In Winter 2017, post-production and beginning to assemble scenes started. Throughout both production and post-production I kept extensive diaries and notes detailing the process, my thoughts and reflections. These notebooks contain a spectrum of technical to emotional content. While conducting the interviews, I created a colour coded modular cue card system in order to make sure that I was getting all of the “plot points” of the story covered while also being able to individualize each of the interviews.

One of my challenges was in representing a place that does not exist any more. How can we represent memory beyond just archival photographs and footage (which has a very specific kind of quality and risks being overly sentimental in the ways that it is read). I came up with the idea that I would use macro images, composite video layering including chalk animation to give a more imagined and blurred quality. I wanted it to be more of a sensual than illustrative experience.

I was also thrilled to spend nearly four months shooting by myself. This really honed my production skills and made me feel increasingly comfortable behind the camera. Although there are definitely technical blips (i.e. soft focus on some interviews, sound levels cautiously low), I am very proud of myself for going out of my comfort zone and taking on the role of camera person. I think that learning the camera

is also embedded into this project and is another small detail that is revealed in the project.

While I was shooting throughout the summer I uncovered the idea of employing an episodic structure instead of a linear feature film. As I shot, I realized how many stories were contained in and around this main story of the business. And all of these stories felt interconnected and equally important. I felt that I would be doing a disservice if I were to overly simplify the narrative of what the Hill was. Because there are a multitude of "characters" (17 in total), I felt that the episodic structure will allow the story to breathe in its complexities allowing the viewer to spend time in little pockets of the story, getting to know the players and slowly piece together a wider picture of the whole. Each episode will be self-contained, but the more you see of the project, the deeper the understanding of the overall picture will go.

I also quickly realized that the relationships of people on the Hill are varied and often contain multitudes (i.e. brother/sister/business partner). I didn't want to start to name or define people through identification because it would be a lot to keep everyone's relationship to everyone else in mind as you watched the film. These relationships certainly are in the film, and referenced, but they are not made explicit (this is another part of the active, clue gathering viewing process I was going for). This would be a lot of energy to ask the audience to expend in keeping everyone straight for not a lot of reward. Because I didn't want to simplify the story, I knew that there would have to be some element of obfuscating people's identities.

Before I started the project, my perspective of this was specific to my understanding as a child growing up in this environment and also observations that have progressed since becoming an adult. However, the project gave me an opportunity to ask questions about motivations, interpretations and feelings on what this was like from the older generation (“the parents”). I think that this process in and of itself was completely invaluable. On a personal level, I learned a lot about where I came from, a past I hold dearly in my heart. Although I had inklings about various perspectives, especially in some of the murkier areas where conflict lies (mostly centered around money), this project allowed me to ask in depth questions and take time to have those conversations. I also think that because the Hill disbanded in such a dramatic way, all of these huge events colliding at the same time, people hadn’t fully taken the time to process, especially with one another. I think there were a lot of feelings that were left by the wayside as a coping mechanism to such a huge schism in all of our lives. I hope that with this project, even the act of talking was restorative for folks. I hope that the process of watching other people on screen, the way that people reflect and honour the past, and also how they are living their lives in the present will be helpful in terms of closure. I won’t speak for other people, but for me, this process has been a real gift.

## **V. Audience and Exhibition**

The next step in this project will be to carve out time and resources to work on the other episodes of *Homemovies*. I have significant segments already in rough cut

stage and treatments for the first three episodes (*The Pond & the Sauna* is intended as the third episode). As such, I would like to start to seek funding to work on these and I would love to partner with a producer to help me do this. My next step will be looking into funding opportunities through the Canada Council for the Arts and the National Film Board of Canada. I also intend to apply to the Camden International film festival short form residency in September, 2018.

My intended distribution will be as a webseries that will roll out an episode at a time, appearing on a map of the Hill (a watercolor that my godmother Cathy painted for me when I was four). This will also allow for a more scrapbook/scavenger hunt feel to the project as I will be able to include extra content and tidbits that will hopefully deepen people's interest and understanding in the project. I think this form capitalizes on the popularity of serialized television/podcasts (such as *Making of a Murderer/S-town*). I think there is an opportunity in the Canadian market for more serialized content and my hope is that the NFB will be interested in exploring this form.

My primary concern is to respect and honour the people who I call home. I did not enter into the decision to make this film lightly and to share our story with other people. As such, my primary intended audience is the members of the Hill, the people I grew up with; it is a way for us to recognize and honour our shared history, and to be able to share it with the next generation of kids.

However, I do believe that this is a film that has the capacity to resonate with people on a personal level. Even if their family is different than mine, people are facing similar decisions about aging parents, whether or not to have children, how to

incorporate the knowledge learned from past generations into your present day life and doing that in a way that feels authentic to yourself and honours where you came from. Also, I think it's important to represent that there are other ways to live in the world that don't necessarily value capital above all else. Even if they aren't necessarily popularly represented, people do find ways to create spaces that imagine the world as they hope it could be. On a personal level, in making this film I reflected a lot on my own struggles to carve out a life that reflects my own principles, recognizes my privileges and to uncover what those are in relationship to how I was raised and how my life has changed since.

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