



KONELINE: our land beautiful

Documentary. Directed by Nettie Wild.

Opens June 10 at Bloor Hot Docs Cinema. 96 minutes.

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Nettie Wild's astonishing, masterfully shot documentary and recent winner of the best Canadian feature prize at the Hot Docs takes its title from the Tahltan First Nation word that can mean both the land and the mind are beautiful. Wild stays true to that poetic purity in exploring the stunningly visual story of life in Northwestern British Columbia, juxtaposed with changes forced by progress and ramped-up copper and gold mining. Equal parts sigh, song and cry, Wild shows restraint in stepping out of the way to let people from tribal elders to a wilderness hunting guide and miners tell their stories without passing judgment.

Linda Barnard



Koneline: our land beautiful (4 stars) *Written and directed by Nettie Wild*

In the new documentary *Koneline: our land beautiful*, a British Columbian guide who leads big-game hunters into the wilderness tells an anecdote about a client asking what survival gear she has in her pack. The question stumps her because she doesn't have any. So instead, she replies: "I don't survive out here; I live out here."

Created by documentarian Nettie Wild and recognized as the best Canadian documentary feature at last month's Hot Docs festival in Toronto, *Koneline* is a subtle and remarkably even-handed evocation of what it means to live near the site of the Red Chris gold-and-copper mine among the sweeping landscapes of northwestern B.C.

Koneline will be at the Bloor Hot Docs Cinema in Toronto next week. ... What's the optimum amount of technological modernity? Is life only about putting food on the table?

Perhaps it is to a young father from the Tahltan First Nation who confesses that he now mines the land of his ancestors: Quietly, frankly, he explains this is how he feeds his family. Wild does not judge that; indeed, she reveals a certain heroism in the installation of the transmission towers that will bring power to the Red Chris mine. The battle to get one tower into place is just one of many spectacular images captured by cinematographer Van Royko, whose camera swirls vertiginously over trees and mountains.

Wild skillfully juxtaposes a soundtrack of gentle ruminations about nature, culture and economics spoken by the Tahltan, white hunters and mine workers against a meditative film of ceaseless activity: geologists consider core samples, line workers pull electrical cables, elders blockade a road, locals rescue stranded salmon, hunters shoot a moose, and the guide swims her team of horses across a swollen river.

All these people have a stake in the land; and the mine, opened by a company that suffered a bad spill from a tailings pond at another location, poses a painful dilemma of economics versus environmentalism.

Cleverly, Wild symbolizes that with a traditional Tahltan game in which the dancing players seek to conceal from their opponents in which hand they hold a token. Which one do you choose?

Koneline: our land beautiful opens June 10.



Mine chief-turned-activist: The startling backstory of 'Koneline'

With her Hot Docs award-winner, *Koneline*, Vancouver filmmaker Nettie Wild taps her family heritage as a wilderness lover who inherited a mine



Director Nettie Wild in the mountains of B.C. / photo by Robin Lupita Bain

[Brian D. Johnson](#) June 8, 2016

It's an all-too-familiar scenario. A mining company starts tearing up pristine northern wilderness, scattering the wildlife and polluting the water, while the local Indigenous community throws up a blockade to protect its ancestral land. That, ostensibly, is the story at the core of *Koneline: our land beautiful*,

a documentary shot in the mountains of northwestern B.C. by Vancouver director Nettie Wild. But this exquisite film doesn't follow the

familiar template of your typical environmental doc, with a morality tale pitting noble First Nations against rapacious industrialists. Instead it rolls out an epic canvas populated with miners, hunters, diamond drillers, Indigenous elders, salmon fishermen, transmission-tower linemen, outfitter guides on horseback—each of them staking a personal claim to the land. Whether drilling holes in the rock or sewing beads on baby moccasins, they all come across as sympathetic characters with a profound affection for the wilderness. The usual white/Indigenous stereotypes simply don't hold: a pair of white trophy hunters armed with bows and arrows camp

in a teepee and stalk mountain sheep to no avail, while two Indigenous hunters in a pick-up truck casually bring down a moose with a high-powered rifle and butcher it for meat.



Koneline, which won Best Canadian Documentary at Toronto's Hot Docs festival, is a landmark film. It's hard to think of another environmental documentary that has portrayed the sanctity of the wilderness *and* those who

prey on it with such a magnanimous spirit, without muddying the issues. But then director Nettie Wild came to the film with a natural-born affinity for both the land and the miners. She had inherited a mine from her grandfather. “It wasn’t much of mine,” she told me over coffee in Toronto this week, “just seven holes in the ground”—a bunch of exploratory tunnels in the flanks of the Kootenay Rockies. Her grandfather was Wesley Prowd, a Vancouver doctor who was seduced by the stock market and became the majority shareholder in a tungsten mining operation. (Wild says he was also was the first doctor in Western Canada to treat cancer with radium, and pushed for mining the metal in Canada rather than importing it from the Belgian Congo.)

“The only thing he loved more than fishing and being out in the bush,” says Wild, “was this idea of something that sparkled in the ground.” The 64-year-old filmmaker says she’s spent decades roaming B.C. on horseback, and attributes her love for the bush to her grandfather and her parents. Her grandfather headed up the Rocky Mountain Trail Riders Association. It was on a trail ride that her British father, Roland Wild—a foreign correspondent assigned to cover the ride—met Nettie’s mother, Barry Prowd.

After her grandfather’s death, Nettie became vice-president of the mining company—incongruous considering her pedigree as an activist filmmaker. “We’d have these totally bizarre mine meetings,” she recalls. “My documentaries were taking me to revolutions around the world, and I’d come back from Mexico or the Philippines, and the lawyer’s secretary would mistake me for the bike courier.” The mine eventually was abandoned, but she never lost her fascination with the “chase” of the mining business. In making *Konelīne*, she says, her “visceral understanding” of it allowed her to win the trust of at least one key player from the industry, after four others denied her access. Harvey Tremblay, owner and founder of Hy-Tech Drilling, allowed her to film one of his drill crews working at a remote gold and copper mine. But access was also tricky on other fronts. Despite Wild’s obvious sympathy with the First Nations protest against the mine at the heart of her story, at one point a Tahltan elder tried to stop her from filming when the director refused to contribute her truck to the blockade.



Transmission tower linemen caught in the backwash of a helicopter

Wild had covered a similar conflict in an earlier documentary called *Blockade* (1993). But she felt the current climate of environmental politics required a less pointed approach than she’d taken 23 years ago. “I’ve become fatigued by a lot of smart people telling me it’s the end of the world. The rhetoric and dogma have become really loud.” With *Konelīne*, she says, “our objective was to bring a curious eye instead of a judgmental heart.” With

a bare minimum of talking heads, she let the camera hunt for art in every frame, mining veins of abstract beauty rather than sharp nuggets of political narrative. Her narrative roams among half a dozen loose storylines with an associative rhythm that she likens to jazz. And whether the

camera is fixed on the glass-eyed stare of a stuffed trophy animal in a lodge, or an iridescent pillow of blood draining from a freshly killed moose, she allows every image an ecumenical grace.

There are scenes of breathtaking spectacle, including one of horses being forced to swim the massive and turbulent Stikine River, as a motorboat churns through rapids to pull them to the far shore. But the film's most striking visual is of the world's biggest helicopter lowering a 16,000-lb. transmission tower into position as a crew of linemen—leaning into the gale-force backwash of the rotors—struggle to nudge the base of the tower into its slot amid a whirlwind of debris. Out of such an elemental havoc, something transcendent emerges. The effect is not unlike the apocalyptic glamour of industrial vistas framed by photographer Ed Burtynsky in [Manufactured Landscapes](#) and [Watermark](#).

Of course, thanks to *Apocalypse Now*, the helicopter has evolved (or revolved) into cinema's ultimate *deus ex machina*. But the iconography goes back further: Wild relishes the fact that her aerial shots of the chopper flying the tower over the mountains echo Fellini's *La Dolce Vita*, with its opening scene of a helicopter dangling a statue of Christ over Rome. "Here we have the transmission line," she says, "which for some people is the cutting edge of the forces of darkness, and for others it's the jugular that will drive industry. We didn't have to say one word. It's all in the frame—dazzling engineering, sheer brawn, and the devastation of the environment. All I have to do is deliver the image and not duck any contradictions."

The sight of an electrical conduit being planted in the wilderness to feed a mine that will cut copper and gold from the mountains needs no explanation. Nor does Wild, who more than lives up to her surname, along with one of the middle names her mother gave her—Canada. As the director explains, Nettie Barry Canada Wild was born in New York City while her father was briefly posted there. Her mother wanted to make sure her daughter would never forget where she was from. It seems to have worked: the filmmaker's production company is called Canada Wild.

Reviews continue on next page....

beautiful British Columbia visuals

Konline: Our Land Beautiful

Director: Nettie Wild

Writing Credit: Nettie Wild

Cast: Northwestern British Columbia and its people

Rated: PG; a bit of salty language

Genre: Documentary

Duration: 96 minutes

Synopsis: A look at the changes development is bringing to northwestern B.C.



If you're looking for a simple take on the politics of development in the wilds of British Columbia, keep looking. If, on the other hand, you can handle some moral ambiguity being served by fantastic visuals, then keep looking at this beautiful, complicated, compelling documentary by Nettie Wild.

Winner of the best Canadian feature at the recent Hot Docs festival, Konline: Our Land Beautiful features gorgeous images of British Columbia's natural beauty, but equally striking shots of "bad" development.

Take the scene in which a giant helicopter delicately manoeuvres a massive power-transmission tower into place while a group of workers struggles to finesse the final few centimetres and bolt it down. The windswept drama feels poised between a zeppelin mooring and a spaceship landing.

The meandering narrative takes in several other stories. There's an unusual juxtaposition between First Nations and white hunters. One uses a rifle and pickup truck to bag a moose; the other favours a bow and arrow, and talks about how the activity connects him to his ancestors of 200,000 years ago. Guess which one is the white man?

The film also features a First Nations linguist, coaxing his father into speaking their native tongue in order to record and preserve it. "There were 500 ways of looking at the universe," he says, referring to the many languages once spoken across North America. "Now there's 200 left." (Konline, in the Tahltan language of the region, translates as "Our Land Beautiful.")

In one of the film's more poetic moments (and there are many), the linguist also mentions that there is no word in his language for "wild." Makes sense: "How can you have an up if you don't have a down?" Similarly, the hunter who is moving her horses from one seasonal grazing area to another remarks that she is confused when people ask her what survival gear she carries in her pack while out on the range. She doesn't carry survival gear, because "I don't survive out here; I live out here."



Spectacular Koneline finds the poetry in First Nations aspirations – and the miners threatening them



The Northern Lights above a tower on the Northwest Transmission line in B.C.

Director Nettie Wild takes a nuanced approach in a documentary unlike her previous, more journalistic pics

by [Susan G. Cole](#) June 8, 2016 5:30 PM

KONELINE: OUR LAND BEAUTIFUL (Nettie Wild). 96 minutes. Opens Friday (June 10). See [listing](#). Rating: NNNNN (5 stars)

This visually stunning documentary conveys the unique relationship of the Tahltan First Nation to their remote lands in British Columbia, now seriously threatened by mining interests.

Director [Nettie Wild](#) shows immense respect for the Aboriginals trying to protect their land and traditions by passing down their skills to the next generation. One extended – and some might say alarmingly explicit – sequence follows an elder sharing his knowledge of how to hunt, kill and eviscerate a moose.

Superb images of the pristine hills and waters contrast with the brutal degradation of the territory at the hands of corporations.

But this is not a pic from the Nettie Wild we know from more journalistic films like *A Place Called Chiapas*, which tends to tell the audience who to root for.

Here, the director's smart enough to show nuanced appreciation for the hard work some Tahltans and others do for the mines. An extended scene featuring four workers trying to secure a hydro tower is so powerful, you find yourself willing these men – working in the mine's interests – to be successful. This documentary, which finds poetry in the actions of all its players, is more than just an ideological statement.

And thanks to cinematographer Van Royko, the entire film is spectacular. Not to be missed.

See our Hot Docs 2016 special featuring [director Nettie Wild](#).

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Director Nettie Wild in the mountains of B.C. / photo by Robin Lupita Bain

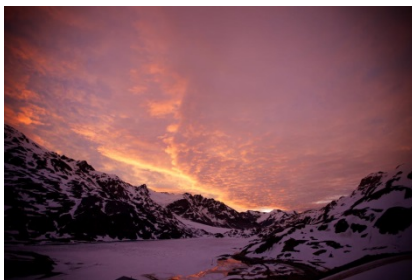
Film review: **KONELĪNE** finds drama in BC's Golden Triangle

By: [David Perri](#) June 1, 2016
[Volume 102 Number 17 Jun 6 – 12, 2016](#)

Northwest British Columbia is a land of abundance and beauty. Teeming with wildlife, the mountains, rivers and valleys are

also home to the Tahltan First Nation. Riches below the surface have inspired miners to call the region the “Golden Triangle.”

This landscape is the focus for Nettie Wild’s documentary *KONELĪNE: Our land beautiful*. The film-maker points a lens at the people who live and pass through this remarkable land, capturing the intersection of natural beauty, development and a native homeland.



Koneline (pronounced koe-ne-lee-neh) is a Tahltan word that means “our land beautiful.” Wild says the one thing everyone in the region shares — from Tahltan elders to prospectors — is a love of the land.

Mineral development in the area can quickly turn controversial, as locals, developers, government and non-

governmental organizations enter the mix. Wild captures these tensions while trying to stay above the fray by focusing on the people in the region.

“There are just so many films out there with people telling other people what to think,” Wild said in a phone interview from her home in Vancouver. “This film is not in my voice.”



Viewers meet Tahltan members who are employed by the development industry, as well as those opposed to and unsure about it. The film documents the Tahltan blockade at Imperial Metals' Red Chris copper project (now a mine), as fears spiked in the aftermath of Imperial's Mount Polley tailings spill farther south in B.C. in mid-2014.



Lacking overt narration or a heavy-handed agenda, the film, which was shot over a full year, delivers some truly fascinating scenes.

The camera follows a pair of Tahltan hunters in the autumn as they stalk, shoot and butcher a moose. Another segment sees a guide outfitter ferry 17 horses,

one by one, across the flowing Stikine River.

The region's natural beauty is in full view, with breathtaking wide shots, but Wild also finds beauty in unexpected places, artfully capturing diamond drillers pulling up core at Pretium Resources' Brucejack gold project.

In one of the film's most gripping scenes, a helicopter delivers a power transmission tower to a crew that struggles to secure it to the ground. Shot in slow motion as the helicopter hovers overhead, Wild calls it an "extraordinary choreographed dance, with linemen, the biggest



helicopter in the world and a 16,000 lb. tower."

She hopes the documentary will challenge stereotypes and stop people on all sides from "writing off" those with differing opinions about development, environmentalism and aboriginal issues.

"My role as a film-maker was to go up there and listen really hard to the people in the North. And then, as best as I could, reflect the poetry of their lives and their voices."



Linemen secure a transmission tower to the ground in northwest British Columbia.

Wild says she inherited a love of the bush from her grandfather, a doctor who caught the mining bug and came to own a tungsten mine near Revelstoke. "The only thing he loved more than fishing and being in the bush was chasing anything that glittered in rock," she said. The mine never amounted to much, but "as a kid growing up, I had this mythology of what we referred to as 'the family mine.'

Getting access to film the various regional actors was a challenge, Wild says. Resistance initially came from all sides and threatened to kill the project.

It was Hy-Tech Drilling founder and chairman Harvey Tremblay who first granted filming access, which snowballed into a wider acceptance from people in the region..

Tremblay admits he was taken aback when he had to sign a document granting full access and independence for the film-maker.



A Hy-Tech diamond driller takes in the sunrise at Pretium Resources' Brucejack gold project.

But he said doing so helped ensure the film accurately showed what his drillers do. “We do good work and I feel good about the way we do our work,” Tremblay said in an interview.

“If nobody participates, they’ll make up our part,” he said. “We’re going to be a player in [the film] whether we participate or not.”

Tremblay said the industry should be more transparent about what it does and why, and that informing people about the mining industry will help the public understand its importance. “We should be proud in the mining industry of what we do. We shouldn’t hide what we do — that does us a disfavoured.”



The Northern Lights above a tower on the Northwest Transmission line in B.C.

Tremblay watched the documentary at its opening in Whitehorse and is pleased with the finished product. He praises Wild for her “balanced hand,” which he believes will promote conversation between concerned groups. “It’s a beautiful film. She did a great job of bringing real poetry to the land. It’s an absolutely stunning, visual movie.”

Tremblay isn’t the only one who was impressed. In May, KONELINE won the Best Canadian Feature Documentary Award at the Hot Docs 2016 Festival in Toronto.

The film will play in Toronto from June 10 to 16, and in major cities and mining towns across Canada this year.

The Northern Miner is proud to be Co-Presenter of the film’s Toronto premiere. To view show times and more information, please visit www.canadawildproductions.com/film/konline.

Review: 'KONELINE: our land beautiful'

By [Marc Glassman](#) • Published June 10th, 2016



The Northern Lights above a tower on the Northwest
Transmission line in B.C.

KONELINE: our land beautiful

(Canada, 96 min.)

Dir. Nettie Wild

There's a scene in Nettie Wild's remarkable documentary [*KONELINE: our land beautiful*](#) that sums up the emotional tone of the film. Wild is following a woman, who is moving her pack of horses from one grazing land to another. It's a tough task, across difficult terrain, but she's clearly up for it. People have asked her, she says, what kind of survival gear she carries with her on journeys that seem to many of us southerners as being quite dangerous. Not to the woman Wild is filming. "I don't survive out here," she says. "I live out here."

That's the sentiment, which all of the people in *KONELINE* espouse, whether they speak it or not. Wild has crafted a film that is so stunningly beautiful that it might appear that all of her artistry and energy has been put into shooting lyrical scenes in one of the most gorgeous landscapes in Canada, the forests, mountains, rivers and lakes of northern British Columbia. And, indeed, kudos must go to Wild and her cinematographer Van Royko, whose previous documentary feature, Sturla Gunnarsson's [*Monsoon*](#), was also a ravishing visual spectacle.

But *KONELINE* is far more than a feast for the eyes. In the hands of Wild, an expert storyteller, it is the people who live up north who truly should be celebrated. They are the ones, who can handle the hardships that the land can dish out along with its bounteous treasures. In a style that seems to be meandering but is actually cleverly crafted, she follows many interesting people—we would call them characters—in the beautiful land: owners of a diner; traditional and very modern hunters; line workers; ranchers; people working for a local mine and those opposed to it. Each of these Northerners lives life large in a territory that has its own rough magic.

The area where Wild spent most of the past five years shooting is Tahltan land. She knows their ways, which are contradictory and like everyone else in the film, doesn't follow an obvious pattern. Elders are opposed to copper and gold mines that are destroying part of the land but younger men work there because they need the money. You can't eat visual splendour. So while there is a blockade at one point and other protests taking place, Wild doesn't immediately shift her focus towards those fighting the mine companies. Both perspectives are honoured by interviews and passages depicting their work. For Wild, who made her high critical [reputation as a point-of-view radical documentarian](#), *KONELINE* shows something new, a mature even-handed vision of the world and how people live in it.

KONELINE is a wise, humanistic documentary. It's a tone poem to a beautiful land and the amazing characters who live in it. *KONELINE* deservedly won the Best Canadian Feature Award at Hot Docs. I urge you to see this film.

KONELINE: our land beautiful opens in Toronto at the [Bloor Hot Docs Cinema](#) on June 10.