

Former Yarmouthian's film part of Toronto festival

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“You just made me feel incredibly old.”

That's how Berny Hi, a filmmaker from Saskatchewan, reacted when told it has been 22 years since the closure of the tin mine in East Kempville.

Not that Hi is old – he's just 34 – but he was struck by how much time has gone by since he left Yarmouth. He lived here in the late 1980s/early 90s, while his father worked at the mine.

That time can go by quickly and that we therefore should try to make the most of it is among the messages Hi hopes people will take from his short film, George Bassler's *Perpetual Motion Machine*, which was selected to be premiered at the imagineNATIVE Film and Media Arts Festival in Toronto.

Hi's three-and-a-half-minute film is scheduled to be screened Oct. 24 as part of what is described as the world's largest festival showcasing native art and culture in contemporary media.

The film is about an inventor – Prairie homesteader George Bassler – who in the 1940s tried to create a perpetual motion machine, a device that transcends time.

“He had a lot of tragedy in his life,” Hi said of Bassler. “He lost basically his whole family due to different circumstances and spent the last (part) of his life trying to build this perpetual motion machine.”

It was the tragedy that Bassler faced and his response to it that was captivating, Hi said.

“I thought there was a real story there,” he said. “He (Bassler) saw these things kind of come to a sudden stop in his life and, to me, it seemed like he wanted something that went on forever.”

During his research for the film, Hi found “uncanny similarities” between Bassler and an inventor who had lived two centuries earlier – Johann *Bessler* – who also had worked on a perpetual motion machine. Hi says he may revisit the subject at some point and do a longer piece.

Hi just began a position as artist-in-residence at the Saskatchewan Filmpool Cooperative and credits a former artist-in-residence there – Chrystene Ells – with inspiring him to do the Bassler project.

As for the time he spent in Yarmouth as a boy, he says he has fond memories of living here. “I remember the winters being a lot nicer than they are here on the Prairies,” he said.

Hi says he loves filmmaking and, in the spirit of his Bassler film, he encourages everyone to make the most of their time. To those who have something they want to do – maybe a career path, an artistic endeavour, whatever it might be – Hi’s question is: “What are you waiting for?”