

Talking salmon and sustainability with The Pristine Coast's Scott Renyard.

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About Imogen Farren

The Pristine Coast follows Alexandra Morton, a biologist and scientist living in British Columbia's Broughton Archipelago, that believes our marine ecosystem is in trouble.

Morton began to document the decline of pink and chum salmon in the late 1990s. Just prior to the decline of salmon populations, there was a massive expansion of open net pen fish farming on the west coast of Canada. Morton believes the events are linked, despite provincial and federal opposition to the claim.

In the spring of 2010, Director Scott Renyard began following the wild salmon story from Alexandra's "Get Out Migration" protest walk from her home at the northern tip of Vancouver Island to the Provincial Capital, Victoria. Thousands of British Columbians joined her, all demanding answers.

We met up with Renyard to talk about *The Pristine Coast* and his journey of making the film.

ME: What do you hope people take away from *The Pristine Coast*?

SCOTT: That sharing of resource wealth should best be done at the local level. When large multinational corporations are in charge of an operation, the executives are too far removed from the problems being caused on the ground. And it is very difficult to get them to change their operations.

It's also more than a salmon issue. All finfish species can be affected by the spread of disease and I show several examples in the film. The one disease I focus on is Viral Hemorrhagic septicemia and it is spreading around the world and causing collapses of many wild fish populations. This virus is in the same order of viruses as Ebola.

I also hope folks see how the loss or decline of wild fish populations damages the ocean food chain. And the food chain is the way carbon is fixed in the ocean. With these biological pumps, as they are called, that are not working - our oceans are now emitting carbon dioxide into the atmosphere and not fixing it. So we need to separate the farmed fish from the wild environment where we can control disease and get the food chain working again. I think it's a huge part of our climate change problem that has been overlooked.

ME: What inspired you to direct and make this film?

SCOTT: I used to sport fish on the Vedder River near Chilliwack and I noticed about 15 years ago that the salmon populations were declining. Especially the chum salmon. Around that time I heard about Alexandra Morton and her work on the decline of pink and chum salmon in her area in the Broughton Archipelago. I called her and asked if the declines in my area could be from the fish farms. And she thought that it might be the case. So, when I realized the issue might be much more widespread I wanted to make a film about it.

ME: Who did you choose to work with on *The Pristine Coast*?

SCOTT: My editor Maja Zdanowski and I worked together on my last film "Who Killed Miracle?". Maja is a terrific creative editor and she helps me bring the emotion into the story. And I need that because my topics weave through a lot of science. This film is the second time I've worked with my Director of Photography

Mark Noda. Mark and I know each other well and I think we make a great team. He knows the angles I like with interviews and quite often I will be shooting underwater footage while he gathers above water shots at the same time.

ME: Tell me a little about Juggernaut Pictures Inc, the company you have founded.

SCOTT: I formed Juggernaut Pictures close to 20 years ago. I formed the company because I wanted to make documentaries and independent films. It is now getting known for the man versus environment stories I like to work on.

ME: When did you first get into film directing/making and why did you choose this topic avenue (wild populations of fish stocks in B.C./ the environment) to focus upon?

SCOTT: My first directing gig was on a project called *Project Cougar*. It was a one-hour documentary for Discovery Channel on cougar attacks. I really began, though, as a writer and struggled to get projects into production. So, I started producing and finally directing. I enjoy wearing all three hats now.

ME: Are you going to see any other films at the festival? What are they and why?

SCOTT: Yes, I will take in as many films as I can. I've seen the opening gala films *Wild* and *October Gale*. And I've also seen [Just Eat It: A Food Waste Story](#). I would like to see more documentaries. I have a soft spot for them for obvious reasons.

ME: What are your next plans for a film? Do you plan to further extend the issue of fishing/ conservation or are you going to explore different ideas?

Well, I have four other projects already underway. Two of them are on fish issues, one on human health, and one on the economy. I guess the next project is a short series that I'm putting together about the Cohen Inquiry. I was lucky enough to have been given permission to film the inquiry and I did so almost from the beginning to the end. I think it will be a very unique project and give Canadians a peak into how inquires work in Canada.

[About Imogen Farren](#)

Imogen Farren grew up in the U.K. and completed her masters in Environmental Law at Edinburgh University. She then moved to B.C where she is currently volunteering for several organizations including CPAWS-BC and loves engaging with environmental outreach programs. Imogen's enthusiasms lie in environmental management and consultancy, particularly that of Species at Risk and Environmental Impact Assessments. In her spare time, Imogen enjoys mountain biking, hiking with her puppy and swimming in beautiful B.C. lakes.
