

**Leonie Sandercock**

Conversation with Gabriela Gámez

February 19<sup>th</sup>, 2018

Leonie Sandercock joined the School of Community & Regional Planning at University of British Columbia (UBC) in July 2001 and served as Director of the School from July 2006 to November 2007. Her main research interest is in working with First Nations, through collaborative community planning, using the medium of film as a catalyst for dialogue, on the possibilities of healing, reconciliation, and partnership.

Jon Frantz introduced me to Leonie Sandercock, Jon's former teacher and the professor with whom he had started the idea of making a film in collaboration with the Haida people.

**Gabriela** – Well, should I explain you how we are doing this before we even get into the interview?

**Leonie** – Sure.



Leonie Sandercock

**Gabriela** – There are two kinds of projects going on – one is the Haida project which has the digital media component for the film where we upload: all of the behind-the-scenes; the making of; all of the footage that we can get of the acting rehearsals; anything filmed about the script making; anything filmed on the land; and interviews with people. The Digital Media component mostly focuses on language

and all of the efforts that were done with the film in language, culture revitalization, and showing community organizing and why do we do these films. Why feature films? Why is Isuma interested in transferring the model to other communities?

Within this website we are uploading some of the interviews. Dana has been interviewing people participating in the film and, on my side I have been interviewing Norman, Sam, Zach, Jon, Dana, and yourself. So we are trying to get a better idea of what this film was about, how it started, who participated in it. Get a bit of the story behind it. Not in an academic way, but more in an organic, spontaneous kind of way.

**Leonie** – Yeah, it was very organic...

**Gabriela** – [Laughs] And on the other side of what I'm doing – that Jon (Frantz) asked me to share with you – or just talk about, is that I have been working with Isuma for more than 11 years. I coordinated the creation of IsumaTV: coordinated the screenings; been involved in the digital media projects; in the Digital Democracy project. I myself have studied Sociology, so I'm more involved in the projects that are on the community side, not so much on the actual filmmaking. I got sick last year and spent a month in the hospital, when I came out I felt, 'What is this? What is life?...etc.' I wanted to re-evaluate all of the past decade that had happened and what Isuma was about. I always wanted to document the project, but at that moment it was more of a personal quest. What was all of this? So I started having these conversations with colleagues of mine, a lot of them with Norman. I started to inquire into how it all started, remember stories from 2006 and 2007, but also remember stories he had told me back in the 1960s and 1970s.

So I have been doing that, again not from an academic point of view, and not following any precise path, but just following my own interest, intuition, remembering stories, projects, people, trips to the Arctic or other communities that we have worked with. Writing stories about that. So that's coming together. I'm working with my colleague Gillian Robinson – who is the editor of the Isuma books – and it has helped to bring some clarity, because the world of Isuma is very vast as you know...and can sometimes be confusing, so many people, so many projects, so many things going on. So a lot of people are not aware of the history of things, of why we take some decisions, why we say yes to certain projects and not to others, what is behind these things. I've been writing about that and sharing some of it with my colleagues when I find it pertinent. Maybe we will publish some of it along with the Venice project, but maybe we won't. We don't really know what is going to happen with what I'm writing. I'm just writing and keeping those conversations going. Within the projects, Haida is there, whatever I'm doing with the Haida is going to be published on the website, because we find that is pertinent. But everything else is still...we are still trying to find out what is the best way of sharing that.

**Leonie** – Ok...

**Gabriela** – So that’s what I’m doing on my side. [Laughs] And I know that on your side you have actually accessed some financing to evaluate the impacts of the movie in the Haida Nation, right?

**Leonie** – That’s right, yeah.

**Gabriela** – That’s fascinating, that’s really good.

**Leonie** – Yes... Well ah, we haven’t even started yet. I went up in December and then I was there again last week. You know it takes a while to sort out the protocol. To make sure that you’ve got permission, and you’ve got community partners, and who is going to do the work, and so on. So now I’ve actually hired Dana and Graham Richards – who is one of the scriptwriters – so they are my co-researchers now in this new project. Then I also set up, I didn’t have to but I chose to set up, an elders’ advisory team of three people, to give us guidance from a Haida perspective so that it is the Haida who are defining the terms of the research rather than me. Because it’s their community and it’s their project. Trying to asses.... evaluate the impact, and the success or failure, and anticipate the benefits – or the disappointments – it’s really ethically important that that all happens from a Haida perspective, and not from my outside academic perspective.

So I have just been putting those things in place and now everything is set up as of last week. I think we are actually going to share... Dana showed me last week some of the interviews that she and Graham have been doing for the digital media side, and I think what we are going to share – we are just going to exchange interviews really. They are doing interviews with more or less the same people, the cast and the crew. They are going to interview all of the Haida participants and I’m going to interview the non-Haida participants, who are mostly – I don’t even know where they are now, scattered all over the place, I guess. So we are just getting going on that.

**Gabriela** – That’s great. And when you say that you are going to share the interviews, that means that whatever interviews you do we can add into the digital media component?

**Leonie** – Yes absolutely.

**Gabriela** – Oh that’s fantastic. Yes, because the idea is to have as much information as we can on the website precisely for the community, and to share with other communities as well. The original idea was to show as much as possible of this model of transferring the knowledge from Isuma to the Haida community, and also from your group to the Haida community. And second, what is it to make a feature film, what does it take, how could other communities in Canada or elsewhere, learn from that experience.

**Leonie** – Yes, exactly. I hope eventually we can travel to Australia or New Zealand and share with some of the aboriginal and Maori communities there. But that’s a ways away.

**Gabriela** – That would be beautiful. There is someone from Australia or New Zealand – that has been trying to come to Canada for a very long time to see the model that we have been doing with the Inuit in Nunavut. It would be interesting for that person to talk to you as well. She has been following what we have been doing for a long time, and she was gathering money to go to Nunavut this year. But yes, we’ve been in conversation with people in New Zealand and Australia to expand the model, but not on the feature film side.

I was going to ask you – you have been working for a decade around film and video as planning intervention. What does planning intervention mean?

**Leonie** – [Laughs] Well from the point of view of community planning and working with indigenous communities, planning interventions can have various purposes. The documentary that I made previously that was finished in 2010...the purpose of that was to tell the story of two First Nations, up in the north central interior of British Columbia, who had been treated very badly over the last 50 years – well more than 50 years through some specific aspects of ongoing colonization in the last 50 years – and one of the two Nations is right in the middle of what is now a settler town. And the town was experiencing a sort of economic crisis, with the decline of the logging industry with the pine beetle, and they were trying to think about how to plan for the future in terms of community economic development. I was invited up there and when I learned about this sort of divide – this major kind of apartheid between the indigenous communities in the area and the settler town, I realized that the region itself couldn’t move forward. To them the challenge was economic development in the future, and to me the challenge was in the past – which has never been dealt with.

So I saw the purpose of making that film – there were a number of purposes – but one of the main purposes, was that by telling the story from the indigenous perspective, it may help the First nations as well as the settlers to go through some healing to deal with the past. So that they could then start to ask ‘Where are we now?’ ‘What needs to change before we can actually move forward together as a community of Native and non-Native?’ So I’ve written a bunch of... I’ve written quite a few journal articles and book chapters about that experience, which I refer to as a ‘therapeutic planning intervention’. Because my argument was that before the people who call themselves ‘planners’, or ‘economic development planners’, or ‘community planners’, before they could actually do anything about the future they have to come to terms with...they have to face the past, and work through that. I saw film as a way of being a catalyst for that kind of acknowledgment and recognition of what had happened and re-evaluating where they are now, and the fact that colonization is

ongoing. And what were they prepared to do about it in order to try to do sort of better relationships across these...you know what I call the two solitudes of Native and non-Native Canada. Before they could move forward together in terms of planning the future. You know planning in western terms is always thought of as a future oriented activity by definition, but in indigenous communities they think of planning as going back 7 generations and going forward 7 generations. But in this specific situation, as I just said, you couldn't really talk about planning in future terms before you dealt with the past.

They were other motivations that the two First Nations had for wanting me to tell the story. They wanted their story to be known. They thought that they were completely misunderstood, because people – non-Native people in the area – didn't understand the whole history of colonization, and the history of specifically what had gone down in that town. They thought that 'maybe telling our story, from our perspective might help to change things, maybe it won't. But at least getting the truth out there.' They really wanted the story to get into the schools, into the school system, and to have the younger generations be more educated about what happened in the past.

And why things are as messed up as they are right now – given that legacy. So, one of the ways that I worked together with the First Nations was that – once we made the film – I said, 'What kind of distribution do you want?' 'Do you want this to be shown in Film Festivals?' 'Or is it more important that I get it into high schools?'

So we actually chose a distributor for the film, Moving Images, a non-profit company, who had a reputation, whose strength was in getting films into the school and college systems. And that's been working well.

So I learned a lot from that experience, about how powerful film could be in all sorts of unanticipated ways. And then, when I started working with the Haida on community planning through our new master's degree program – that I created in indigenous community planning. So we started partnering with First Nations in BC to host our master's students. And the master's students in the second year of their program, they spend about 400 hours on reserves with various Nations, working on comprehensive community planning with the Nation. So, at the end of the first year – this program started back in 2012 – and the Haida were one of the first two Nations that we started to work with, through this master's degree program. So I went up there, at the end of the first year, to witness the students giving a presentation of the work they've done. And Dana [Dana Moraes], at that time, was just hired during that year –she was hired as the community planning coordinator for the Skidegate Haida. She hadn't had anything to do before that with community planning. She was doing a whole bunch of other things. But she is a very fast learner Dana. It's very impressive.

**Gabriela** – Yeah she is.

**Leonie** – [Smiles] She is also a great chef, by the way.

**Gabriela** – Oh yeah?

**Leonie** – So, I went up there for the students' presentations and I started talking to Dana and to her boss, the Chief Administrative Officer of the Skidegate Band Council. And I – as a gift – gave them a copy of this previous documentary called, *Finding Our Way*. They looked at that and they said, 'Oh, you should make a film about us!' And I said, 'Well yeah...let's talk about that.' So that's actually how this project emerged. Before I knew it, they were taking me in to meet the Chief and Council and saying, 'Well you know, Leonie is interested...Leonie has made these films...she is interested in doing a film about us.' And the Chief said to me, 'Well, what would it be about?' And I said, 'Well that would be entirely up to you. We would talk about that and it would be whatever you wanted it to be about.' And then he said, 'Well, who would own it?' And I said, 'Well you would, of course.' And he said, 'Ok well, that sounds good.'

And then, I called Norman [Norman Cohn]. Because they said, 'Ok, what's the next step?' And I said, 'Well I have to raise some money.' And I thought about... the previous project that I just described, I had had a SSHRC grant, that funded most of the film – not all of it, I got some other money, the two First Nations [the Cheslatta Carrier Nation and the Burns Lake Band] raised some money locally, through a local development fund. And then I failed, a couple of years in a row, to get ongoing SSHRC money to go back to those communities and do training with the youth. I wanted to do video training so that they could go on to make their own films, do what you've been doing – with the digital story telling, just record the elders before they die, not making films but just having them talk. So Jonathan was actually a student of mine in our master's program – Jon Frantz – and then he went to work with you, at Isuma. And he had shared my documentary '*Finding our Way*,' with Zach and Norman. And Norman was very interested in how I was using film in a kind of proactive way.

So that the film I just described, *Finding Our Way*, what we did with that – to initiate this sort of therapeutic healing process – was once the film was finished, I put an Advisory Committee together of local people, from the RCMP to the high school principal, to organize a community screening of the film. In fact, two screenings – we did one for the high school youth, and we did one for the community at large. With the idea being that Native and non-Native would come together to watch the film, and for the first time they would each sort of hear each other stories. And that immediately following them watching the film, we would then facilitate a discussion, and we would ask people 'What is your response to this film?' 'Did you know this history?' To which most of the answers was, 'No.' They had no idea. And they felt guilty and ashamed and whatever. So we had these three questions that we asked after the screening. One was what I just said, and then there was, 'Is the past still present?'

'Is it still like this here?' And they would all say, 'Well, actually yes.' And then the question was, 'What are you prepared to do about it?' 'What do you think should be done?' I mean, that's what planners do, what social planners do. We design these 'dialogical processes', or I could call it a 'therapeutic planning intervention', which is creating a safe space where people can come together and have a really difficult conversation that they haven't been able to have before. And so that was what Norman was really interested in, how I was imagining ways of using the film once it had been made, so the making of the film and getting it into film festivals was not really the point. The point was just to use the film in more activist ways.

So, Norman and I had already – before the Haida project came along – Norman had visited me here at my home in Vancouver, because his son was at UBC at the time, so he wrote and said he was going to be in Vancouver and we should get together for coffee...so I invited him over for dinner...so we had a number of dinners, and I explained more about how I conceived of being able to use film in these planning ways. And so, once the Haida said that they were interested in me working with them on a film, I thought 'Ok, so now I have to raise some money.' I really did not want to write another SSHRC grant application because I had just failed in the two previous years to get money, even though we had this really successful documentary, 90-minute film (Finding Our Way) now made. I didn't get the money to go on working with that community. So I was really pissed off with SSHRC. And so I called Norman one Sunday afternoon and I said, 'well...I might have another project to start working on with Haida...but I'm wondering if you have any advice where I might raise money for this rather than writing a SSHRC application.' And Norman said – this was the fateful conversation – he thought for a minute and he said, 'You know, it's actually easier to raise money to make feature films these days than it is to make documentaries.' And I said, 'Are you kidding? Like really?' And he said, 'Yeah, would you have any interest in working on a feature film?' And I said, 'Are you kidding? Here is something that you don't know about me Norman, I actually interrupted my career as a professor to go back to school and did a master's degree in script writing.' And he said, 'Well that's pretty interesting.' I said, 'I sure would be interested in working on a script.' [Laughs] So he said, 'Well you better go back and talk to the Haida and see if they are interested in a feature film.'

And so that's what I did, I went back and met with the chief and Council and said 'Here is another idea.' And they again asked me, 'Well, what would it be about?' And I said, 'Well I would go through like a community story gathering process, and I would ask the members of your community what story they want to tell.' 'Oh...ok well that sounds great.' And so then I had to go and get permission – or approval – from the Council of the Haida Nation, and that's when the idea of the three-way partnership came up. Because as Norman and I talked about this idea of a Haida feature film, and well you know...the Haida don't know anything about making a feature film and I know about script writing but I don't know about production and funding of feature films. And he said, 'Well what an incredible opportunity for Isuma

to share their learning with another Nation. How exciting would that be?’ So it’s just kind of all... we just went wow... we all just thought this was such a great idea.

So I then I wrote the grant application and six months later we got the full amount of the money. And Jon was very helpful, he read pretty much every draft of every piece of the application. Then I started to work, pretty much the first year was the year of the script. In the meantime, Norman had gotten 30 something thousand dollars from Telefilm – so even while we were waiting to see if we got a SSHRC grant or not, which was about a 9-month period – Norman got these funds and he said, ‘Well you could start a story development process with the Haida with this money.’ So we put that together with the \$200,000 that I got from SSHRC. Well a chunk of that 200,000 was of course for the Mediaplayer stuff – was about \$70,000 for that.

And I then went up there – and I only had a relationship with the people in the Skidegate community – and there are two Haida communities – Skidegate and the Northern one – the Old Massett community. So I didn’t have any relationships there, so I had to start from scratch building relationships there. So it’s what I did for the first 6 months of that grant – fortunately I had a sabbatical year, so I was able to be up there a lot of the time. So I worked with Dana in Skidegate and another woman, Lucy Bell, up in in Old Massett. We set about organizing...we did some film screening nights to sort of start...we just started to try to put some publicity out there...here is an opportunity to make a Haida film, do you want to be involved? And we tried to get the word out through Facebook and stuff, and through movie nights. And we had a movie night where we showed the *Fast Runner* [*Atanarjuat, the fast runner*] and *Before Tomorrow*. I just set about organizing two sets of workshops. I organized a community story gathering workshop in both of the villages. So Dana helped me with the Skidegate workshop and Lucy helped me with the Old Massett workshop and about 30 came – maybe I’m repeating now what was in the article but .... So the idea of the story gathering workshops was to get Haida community members thoughts, about what story or stories they would like to see if we were able to come up with the money. If we could come up with a script, what story would they want. So we did those two workshops. With my then film partner – who was an Italian guy, Giovanni Attili – who I worked with on the two previous films, he was with me and he shot some footage of the whole of those workshops. So at the story gathering workshops we also digitally recorded the conversations at every table – because we had maybe 8 tables in the room, with half a dozen people at each table and a facilitator – I used my students as facilitators. So we then had a bunch of material.

**Gabriela** – Wow... people would just go there on their own time? Was it during the week or the weekend? Did you pay them to go to the story workshops, or were they just interested in giving their ideas?



**Leonie** – Ah... We didn't pay them. We fed them. And we organized, I think they were on weekends and in the evenings... yeah the one in Massett was in the evenings...

**Gabriela** – Because you got a lot of people! I mean... is that because the Haida have a lot of energy for this kind of projects? Or?

**Leonie** – Well... It was actually really hard to get people involved. I won't say it was easy. And certainly I wouldn't have been able to do it without... I mean Dana was so helpful at the last minute in getting people to come to those workshops. She would phone people up... we did all sorts of things... like you know putting things in the newspaper and posting stuff on Facebook, leave flyers around town, and God knows what! And still I think nobody would have come if Dana hadn't got on the phone at the last minute and called people. She called some of the elders and some of the young people. We had the movie nights so you know... we started to get a little bit of interest. Well, I mean, people are interested in film... everyone... pretty much everyone is interested in film, right? So when people – who are already active in the community – heard some talk that there might be a Haida film. People were curious and they were like well you know, 'Who is in charge here? What is this white girl doing here?' And, you know, there was some suspicion... other people would come out of suspicion... that this was not going to be ok. But because we had the elders on board, and because we were in a partnership, right? Because it was supported by the Council of the Haida Nation and by both Band Councils it had local... authenticity, I guess. So people came out of curiosity and out of interest and out of making sure that this was going to happen in a good way.

**Gabriela** – And how did you... Or what do you think... I mean... Of what you are saying, the initial-initial idea was actually from them like, 'You should make a film about us', after watching your film of *Finding our Way*. And then it's like, you go back to them and you say you want to do a feature, and the Skidegate people – after posing some questions to you– they are open to the idea right away. And then you go to Old Massett for 6 months and again they are open to the idea of it. And you basically get the trust from both sides, to trust you in the process and commit to that feature film and later on even commit money to it... That's not an easy task! [laughs].

**Leonie** – No. It was very challenging at the time. It was probably the most stressful year of my life. The whole year.

**Gabriela** – Yeah! That's what I wanted to hear.

**Leonie** – [Laughs]

**Gabriela** – [Laughs] It took...I imagine... a lot of the time for you to be there. And show who you were and how committed you were. And, as you are saying, you are white, you are not from there...How did you make that happen?

**Leonie** – Well... I think that the longer you hang around, the more people come to appreciate that you are serious. I think there was a lot of skepticism initially. I mean, the Haida people would say this to me now, they would say, 'Well...we didn't really think this would ever happen.'

**Gabriela** – [Laughs]

**Leonie** –They would say.... 'One thing is to have workshops, and story gathering workshops, but you know...actually making a movie, really....?'

**Gabriela** – [Laughs]

**Leonie** – So it was a very gradual process of the community buying into it. There are some activists in that community who, if there is anything going on, they want to be part of it. And so this would be true of Gwaii and Jaleen, the brothers who became the co-writers. They had already done a play together. They'd written a script for a play and then they had got the elders to translate it into the dialects, and they worked with locals...and they put it on, I think they only put on like one performance, maybe two performances, maybe one in each village of that play. And then that was it, they didn't have the resources to continue to take it anywhere, or anything. But, I mean, once I went, once I got the grant and went back there, and said, 'Ok, I've got the money. So goal number one is that in a years' time we would like to submit a script to the Canada Media Fund for funding. So, our first target is that within the next year we want to go through some kind of community process that creates a script that's written by Haida, just with my support, with my kind of mentoring. And here are some steps, here is how I think we are going to get there, we will do this community story gathering...' And so you know, some of the people like Dana were really keen to be involved from the beginning. And a bunch of people...you know I was then given names of people that I should go and talk to, and so I would have all these one-on-one meetings with different people and some were skeptical. Yeah...I did a lot of one-on-one stuff in coffee shops, and at the language center in Skidegate...it was a gradual process over a period of six months of spreading the word... I started working in April and then it was October. So that was like 6 months, yeah, the workshops were in October, both the story gathering and the script writing workshops were in October. And then we had the writing contest at the end of October following on the heels of the scriptwriting workshop. We got about 16 entries for the writing contest. We then chose the two winners [the two winning scripts], the two brothers and Graham. So it was a lot...I mean, when I look back...and then I worked with them, I worked with the three of them, for the next six months on the story development.

**Gabriela** – Basically re-writing a third story. Right?

**Leonie** – Yeah creating a whole other story. Because we couldn't...the two winning story ideas that were submitted, that we really liked a lot, Jonathan and I liked a lot, interestingly both of the two winning stories were reincarnation stories – because reincarnations are really a big part of Haida cosmology – but, after one very quick conversation with Jonathan, about the feasibility of getting funding for a reincarnation story, Jonathan said, 'No we can't go with that, because it would be way beyond...' Jon was imagining that the biggest budget that we could get would be 2 million, maybe we could only get a million. And he already, by just doing very simple math, I guess...knew that to do a reincarnation story you need...so you are already in 2 or 3 different time periods, so you are in 2 or 3 different costumes and sets and all of that. So he said that that was out of the question. So the three Haida writers and myself, we then sat down over a period of a couple of weeks, and when we announced that they were the winners, we handed over to them all of the material from the story gathering workshops that we've recorded, the digital recordings, and the typed-up notes from the flip charts, and all of that. And we gave them a couple of weeks to do their homework on what ideas the community had put forward, about what stories they would like to see.

So although they were very keen on their own reincarnation stories, they accepted the verdict from Jonathan, as the producer, that that was not do-able. So it didn't take us very long as the writing team then, to decide that the story that, in English, is usually referred to as 'The Wild Man', offered us the greatest possibility of meeting both the language demands and coming inside the budget framework. And the language demand, what I mean by that is we were talking about the two dialects, the northern and the southern – the Massett and the Skidegate dialect. It turned out that what we really weren't aware of at the time was the Alaskan (Haidaburg) dialect, so there are actually three dialects.

**Gabriela** – So there were actually 3 dialects? Or was the Alaskan one replacing the Old Massett one because it was hard to get that one?

**Leonie** – Ah...well, yes, we had a problem finding the translators for the Old Massett dialect. So I think that the people that ended up doing that part of the translation were the Alaskan Haida who know the Old Massett as well as the Alaskan dialect.

So when we started on the script development, I was told by the person who runs...have you heard of...

**Gabriela** – SHIP? [Skidegate Haida Immersion Program]

**Leonie** – Yeah, ok so Kevin who has been – I don't know what his job title is – but he is the person who manages the whole SHIP language work, he warned me that there is a lot of rivalry...that the Massett folks and the Skidegate folks are each very proud of their dialects, and they are not interchangeable, but they are mutually intelligible. So we couldn't just do a script in one dialect. And what he warned me, was that there is so much rivalry between the two that we would have to come up with a script that really had more or less an equal number of lines in each dialect. What he said was, 'You can't have more than a 60/40 difference, you'd be in big trouble with the community that has the fewer lines.' And that seemed like a huge obstacle when we started. But the way we solved that, in terms of the story development was, 'Ok, we'll have this summer fishing camp where a Northern and a Southern family meet every year. And so we'll have equal number of characters from the North and the South. So that the language issue and the need to preserve both – what we were then calling the two dialects – shaped the whole story development...and the language itself...

Now to go back a few steps, to why this is a planning project, and why this whole thing is a planning intervention, and the title of the grant that I wrote was 'Film as a catalyst for indigenous community development,' and sort of the subtext for that was the works that our students had started to do through our master program with the Skidegate Haida, working with the Skidegate folks on developing a community plan. And the end of the first year of that process – which then went on for another 3 years of more detailed development of that plan – but, what came out at the end of the first year, were the community planning priorities and there were three priorities that they had. One, one was culture revitalization, specifically language revitalization. Second was jobs, sustainable jobs – specially jobs for youth. Third, protecting the lands and waters.

So the idea of making a feature film just seemed to be one way of addressing these three community planning priorities. The challenge around language revitalization was that the only fluent speakers who remain are all over the age of 70. And they've been pretty much unable to interest the youth in learning the language. So what we speculated about was that maybe if there is a film, and it is a feature film, and it is in the Haida language, and there is a bunch of youth in the film – people of all ages – they'll have to at least learn their lines in Haida and maybe that will inspire them and a whole bunch of other people to want to learn more language. And maybe when members of the Haida community see their language spoken in this film they'll just go 'Wow! We have to learn. We have to start learning.' So that's of course what I'm now setting out to find out, whether that is happening or not, in the aftermath of the film's production.

Then the idea of creating jobs... Well the film certainly has brought I think \$800,000 dollars worth of employment.

**Gabriela** – Yeah! That’s what I was reading. And so that’s people preparing the costumes, the food, the actors themselves, etc..

**Leonie** – Yes, all of that...local transportation...house billeting... you know people staying in different peoples’ houses, because there is not enough accommodation there...during the shoot. So clearly there is short-term job creation but then a larger aim of the project is that this needs to inspire...like we never thought of this as a one-off film, so the bigger purpose was that this would energize members of the Haida community. And, through the training that Isuma was going to be offering in setting up a Haida Production company and beginning to understand the financial side and the production side, that the Haida themselves would then want to take that up and make more films.

And with the script writing workshops I sort of made that clear I’m like, you know, ‘Whatever idea that we go forward with for this first film, there is clearly any number of stories – wonderful stories – that could be told.’ And I hope that with the grant that I’ve got now ...going back and talking to people who’ve been involved, I really want to see...if there is the motivation now to go on and get another script developed. You know Jonathan is really keen, and I’m keen to support them in that... but both Jon and I are saying ‘it’s not up to us, it’s up to them’. We kind of got it all going in the first place and honestly, between you and me, I don’t think the film would have ever been made if it was not for Jonathan. Not just because he wrote the CMF grant application but because, once the co-directors were hired, I mean they were unsure about how to go about pre-production and so on.

**Gabriela** – Yes, Jon was kind of the personification of the knowledge transfer, right? When we talk about the model and the knowledge transfer of Isuma to the Haida, or as I was reading in your article ‘from Nation to Nation,’ I was wondering what does that really mean? Because you know, I’m very interested in this project because I have been trying to do it, to do the transfer of the knowledge to other communities. I’m in contact with filmmakers in Bolivia, in Chile, in Ecuador, in Mexico... and I know how hard it is to transfer the knowledge of this.

**Leonie** – No, you are right. That it really is personified in the person of Jonathan. I mean, Norman and Zach made one visit. And the grant I wrote – I wrote a subsequent grant after the first one, the partnership development grant – I wrote a grant that had a huge amount of money built into it, to bring Isuma folks to Haida Gwaii for the training of the actors, for training around finance and so on. And I didn’t get that grant. So, there was a whole chunk of knowledge exchange that should have happened in a much better and bigger way, and it has all been kind of on Jon’s shoulders. So yeah...

**Gabriela** – And he is the one who has been also receiving, on the one hand, the experience of Zach and how he coordinates things with the Inuit in Igloodik, and how

the whole filmmaking happens. And, from Norman, how the whole financing happens. And it is through him that people got this experience, right?

**Leonie** – Yeah, Jon brought both the artistic work of Norman’s cinematography along with Norman’s financial model of how to raise money for indigenous filmmaking. And it’s all there in the person of Jonathan now. And then he had to be a very special kind of a person to be able to work with the Haida, because once we hired the two co-directors, there was a bit of an attitude on their part like, ‘Well, we are going to do it now. This is a Haida project now.’ So Jonathan and I – and specially because I didn’t get the grant it sort of put me out of the picture anyway – we pretty much felt that they didn’t want us around. Maybe I felt that more than Jonathan, because he obviously had the role of producer. But I know at first he felt that he should be pretty hands-off. When we conceived the whole thing it was in terms of empowering the Haida to do this themselves. But clearly you’ve got to walk them through the entire process for the first time. And I think it was only when things weren’t coming together in terms of even just organizing a casting call and casting workshops and stuff... and then the language workshops... everything was falling way behind the original schedule, the schedule that the CMF wanted, that Jonathan realized he needed to step in and be more directive, in a way. But you know that’s tough. It’s a hard role to play with the Haida that are very proud and wanting to see this as a Haida project.

**Gabriela** – Yeah, when I talked to Jon Frantz, one of the things that he reflected on was... How much is it useful for everyone for this to be a horizontal process of making decisions, at all times, in every single aspect of the film? And how much you are wasting time because there is certain decision that is made by the money you have and the time you have. You know, they went to all of these locations and some of them were very beautiful but just impossible to afford. And they lost a lot of time discussing all of those things. So he himself, I think, has learned a lot about how much you have to be... what does it mean to empower people and you know... or be pushy... but at the same time... this line between how much do you participate and how much do you let things grow organically.

... when you say in that article ‘capacity building,’ what do you mean by that?

**Leonie** – Well, what we have just been talking about. Building their capacity to do it for themselves next time. In every aspect: the technical, the financial, all the pre-production logistics, writing the grant applications. I mean, I think there is still a ton of work to do around all of that. Because Jon did have to do this. Jon has done all of the fund raising himself. Most recently he had to write another grant application to Telefilm, because they ran out of money – they used all of the money on the production. And they had no money left for editing, right? I think Jon even predicted that that was going to happen, even before the shoot started. And he started to work

on that Telefilm application. So he's just been brilliant, I don't know that the Haida will ever really appreciate how much he is responsible for making this happen.

**Gabriela** – Well he is also very humble.

**Leonie** – He is very humble, exactly!  
He has kind of no ego apparent at all.

**Gabriela** – Yeah, he is an amazing man to work with.  
And he is an amazing father, and husband.

**Leonie** – Yeah, he is an exceptional person.

**Gabriela** – And tell me something Leonie, are you personally more interested in kind of getting deeper into this experience with the Haida, and develop more film stories, and kind of have a larger impact in the revitalization of the culture and language, and creation of employments, and self-determination? Or are you interested in expanding this model to other communities?

**Leonie** – Both, definitely both. Part of the new grant that I've got is to disseminate what we learned, whatever we learned about the impact of this project on the Haida community, we want to share, we want to take it to other communities, other First Nations. And think about what is transferable and what isn't. So that would be some of the reflecting that we will be doing.

I'm interested in both. We've still got students working now with the Old Massett community. You know, once you start working with a particular First Nation it's very hard to walk away. You spend so much time developing these relationships, and then people become incredibly generous. Like every time I go there now, they send me back with this big bag of salmon and you sort of become part of the community. People are very appreciative. Yeah, you can't just sort of walk away and say 'Oh! I'm going to work with the Anishnabe (or any other) Nation...now.' Though I do, I very much hope that the film work continues there. People like Graham are really eager to start working on another script.

When the film premieres on Haida Gwaii it's going to be so exciting. I think that we are in a little bit of a lull now with people...the experience of the film shoot itself was very powerful – according to what people are telling me. But that gradually fades, but it will all come back when the film premieres. And then I think that the impact will be of course not just on the cast and crew, but then on the whole community who would just be so proud of themselves and of their Nation. I hope that creates the next kind of groundswell of energy to launch into another film project – that's my hope.

**Gabriela** – And you are planning on doing the types of screenings that you did, with these dialogues afterward, and all of that?

**Leonie** – That is a good question. I just started talking to people there about this last week. We definitely want to be interviewing people, both participants in the film and members of the community who weren't involved in the film. We want to grab them and interview them immediately after the screenings, in the same evening. I think that we need to follow up with workshops. I don't know whether we will be able to do it on the same day, because probably we need to have a bunch of screenings. There isn't a big venue there. So we probably –given that there is a population of a couple of thousand – we may need to do more than one screening. So we haven't thought that through yet, about having a conversation with the community – apart from of course having a camera person there. With Dana and myself running around frantically trying to interview people and get their responses. That's actually a very important thing that we have to start thinking though very quickly.

**Gabriela** – Yes definitely, that's a big part. Especially because I don't think there was any sort of moment where the community was involved in the film completely. What Jon tells me on *Searchers* – the last feature film done with Inuit – the community was invited to come to the set. School buses came and everyone saw the set, and everyone was part of it, and whatever else. So the community was a little bit part of the film. But in the Haida film, they didn't really have time, everyone was super exhausted...

**Leonie** – And it was out there in the wilderness. So there is no way you can take lots of people out there.

**Gabriela** – Exactly, so it's going to be the first kind of exposure to the community, to the magic of this film.

**Leonie** – Well, you know what we started to talk about last week? What I started to talk about with my little advisory team – one of whom is Nika Collison who is the director of the Haida Heritage Museum there in Skidegate – she suggests that the museum have an exhibit running in parallel, or just before the film premieres on Haida Gwaii. And exhibit all of the props.

**Gabriela** – That's a great idea.

**Leonie** – Yeah, I just emailed Jonathan about that. We've been talking about that over the email in the last couple of days and he thinks it's a great idea. Will tie in with the Venice thing, and so on. Dana seems to be willing to write another grant application just to get a little bit of money to pull all of that together. Cause that would include the costumes, the bent wood boxes, the fishing gear like halibut hooks...and that would prepare, sort of build expectations around the film. We could have photographs up from the film shoot. That would be happening very soon, in



May and June – which is when the museum has the space available for that. That is something that has to be organized very quickly.

**Gabriela** – And you were also talking about creating a one-month language module of education?

**Leonie** – Well...Kevin at SHIP that's what was he was thinking. He and I were talking about that years ago. It was his idea. And he has been supportive about the potential of the film for increasing peoples' desire to learn the language. We were talking about how somebody could put together a one-month module for the schools, using the film and using the script. Students might choose their favorite character in the film and learn those lines or whatever. That would be up to language teachers to figure out how exactly to do that.

**Gabriela** – We created one in the past, you can look at and get some ideas. It's called the EICC (Exploring Inuit Culture Curriculum). It's a whole package where teachers can work with the curriculum based on the films of Isuma, on different films, not only *Atanarjuat*. Some of it is online and some of it is printed. I have found that's one of the best tools we have ever had, of educating people afterwards. The schools love it, and not only the Inuit schools. It was actually built by Norman's daughter who is actually a teacher. I'm going to send you the link, it's an interesting example that you can build on.

Well this has been great Leonie. I think we kind of went through all of my questions in a very organic way. Thank you very much for your time.

**Leonie** – You are very welcome. I love to talk about this project. It's very precious and very special to me.

**Gabriela** – Yeah, it is a very special project. You must feel very proud about it because I'm going to tell you something – after talking to everyone – what you did was crucial. Had you not built all of those trust relationships, this would have not happened. And I know that because we have tried to do this in other communities, with a fantastic script, getting the money and all of that and it didn't go through. Because you need someone like you to be thinking of all of the things you've been thinking, listening to people, and reacting to those things that they tell you – taking them seriously. Like having the two dialects and all of that. You know, congratulations to you.

**Leonie** – Oh, thank you!