

The Editor's Cut - Episode 067 - "Beans"

Sarah Taylor:

This episode is generously sponsored by IATSE Local 891 Integral Artists and the Vancouver Post Alliance.

Sophie Farkas Bolla:

When you're an editor, you have the chance to tell them if you feel like something is not quite right and it's better you tell them than a critic in the newspaper after. So if you tell them and they decide not to change them, that's fine. Don't take it personal. It's their filmmaking, it's their process. But it's important to always say what you think, because in the end, you want to make the best possible movie.

Sarah Taylor:

Hello and welcome to the Editor's Cut. I'm your host Sarah Taylor. We would like to point out that the lands on which we have created this podcast and that many of you may be listening to us from, are part of ancestral territory. It is important for all of us to deeply acknowledge that we are on ancestral territory that is long served as a place where Indigenous peoples have lived, met, and interacted. We honor, respect and recognize these nations that have never relinquished their rights or sovereign authority over the lands and waters on which we stand today. We encourage you to reflect on the history of the land, the rich culture, the many contributions and the concerns that impact Indigenous individuals and communities. Land acknowledgements are the start to a deeper action.

Before we get started, I wanted to let you know that the CCE is proud to sponsor an Industry Week Panel at this year's Calgary International Film Festival. Ethics of documentary filmmaking will be happening on September 24th at 11:00 AM. Join us in a conversation between editors and directors about the ethics of documentary filmmaking and the line we draw between truth and entertainment. Today, I bring to you the master series that took place virtually on June 5th, 2021, in conversation with Sophie Frankas Bolla, editor of Beans and Roads in February. This conversation was moderated by Jessie Anthony, writer, director of Brother, I Cry. They discussed the ins and outs of editing the breakout film, Beans.

Speaker 1:

And Action.

Action.

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Podcast.

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Exploring...

The art...

Of picture editing.

Jessie Anthony:

[foreign language 00:02:04]. My name is Jessie Anthony. I'm from the Onondaga Nation Beaver Clan from Six Nations of the Grand River Territory in Ontario, Canada. I currently live, reside, work, play on the

unseated territories of the Coast Salish peoples. And I am a filmmaker, and I am super, super excited to be here today with the editor of Beans, Sophie Farkas Bolla, welcome. I'm excited to dive into this, but before I do that, I'd love for you to just do introduction and let us know of some of the work that you've done and what brought you to Beans.

Sophie Farkas Bolla:

Absolutely. Yeah. So I studied films, I went to film school at Concordia University and I graduated in 2006. And ever since then I've been editing films. I've done both fiction and documentary. And so, I've been doing this for I'd say, well, almost 15 years now. And then, I always wanted to be a filmmaker and an editor. I love the editing process because I really feel it's like the final step of a film, of the writing process, of the filmmaking process. It's really the final step before it's really... you can still change things, make the story a little better, make this, make that. It's really... so that's wonderful process to be part of, and to share with different directors. So one of the last films I edited was Beans. It was a great, great process, a great experience and really, really actually fun to work on.

Jessie Anthony:

And for those joining us, Beans, is a first featured debut... feature film by Tracey Deer that is a coming-of-age story surrounded around the historical event of the Oka Crisis. So I guess, my first question would be, because I really do want to dive into that relationship with the director. But first I'd like to jump into your first initial connection with the story. When you read the script, your first thoughts and I guess that interview process or how did you get the job?

Sophie Farkas Bolla:

How did I get the job? How did I get the job? Well first, how did I get the job? So I had edited the short film with the producer, [inaudible 00:04:23], a few years ago and it was a great experience. And so, when they were looking for someone for Beans, the producer thought that I should meet Tracey because she was like, "I think you would get along really well with Sophie." So she sent me the script, I read it. And when I read the script, there was not a doubt in my mind that I wanted to edit this film.

The screenplay was so well written, it was a classic coming of age story, but it had such a powerful purpose and all the back story obviously, around the Oka Crisis, and it gave it just that much more. And so, I went to the interview and all I remember from the interview, it was two or three days before they started shooting. So it was very hectic in the production offices. And I think I just talked a lot about how I loved the project and how I thought we could work together and bring it to where she wanted it to go. And so, that's how it went. And then a few weeks later she called, and she was like, "Let's do this". And I was like, "Wonderful." So that's how it happened, sort of, I guess.

Jessie Anthony:

Very cool. And did you have knowledge of Oka Crisis? Did you know a lot about that time in period and everything that had happened around Kahnawake and Kanasatake?

Sophie Farkas Bolla:

Well, I was young when it happened. I was seven-years old. At the time, when I thought about it, I was like, "What do I remember from that period?" And all I remember really, from that period was that the news, because I remember my parents always watching the news every day, there was the news. And it was this thing about the bridge. The bridge, the bridge was blocked, and it was mostly around the bridge. Obviously, I was seven years old, so I didn't understand much. All I understand is that some people were

upset, and they were blocking a bridge and it lasted the whole summer. For me, as a seven-year-old, that was the understanding I had of it. And the other funny thing was that, that summer, my mom had a cousin visiting from France and so, he thought it was very interesting that Indigenous people were blocking a bridge.

For him, it was very unheard of. And I remember his reaction more than anything else. This European man being a... very surprised by this situation. That's what I remember as a seven-year-old. Obviously, I saw Alanis Obomsawin's film probably, I don't know, when I was in film school, had a very, very, very deep impact on me. And then I remembered me as a child thinking of how... of those few little things I remembered from that time. And yeah, so I would say that my... what I knew about that whole situation, from my memories as a seven-year-old and then seeing that film. And then having a chance to work with Indigenous filmmakers, also, talking about land claims and Indigenous rights and all of that. So by the time I got to Beans, I was very aware and very much wanted to be part of the process.

Jessie Anthony:

Wow. It's an interesting situation to be on the other side of the bridge and then have this opportunity years later to sit collaboratively to tell this story. I got goosebumps thinking about it and I think that's the most amazing thing about film work and collaboration and those sorts of things. So do you feel or think that those experiences helped you in that process when sitting with Tracey and with the material?

Sophie Farkas Bolla:

Yeah. I think so because I think Tracey is very much... I work with another filmmaker and a new filmmaker called, Alethea Arnaquq-Baril, in Angry Inuk, and I think her, and Tracey are very much want to help have more bridges between Indigenous and non-Indigenous. And to tell stories in ways that reach out to people in emotional ways so then that we can connect to the issues. And so, by the time I got to Beans, I had already done that process once and was totally on board with it. And felt it was really important that we can... I continue in that direction. Yeah.

Jessie Anthony:

That's very cool. For me, I would love to dive into, I guess the editing process. That's what we're here to talk about. So I'd love to know that director, editor relationship. Anything you want to tell us or bring up or anything like that about that process would be really great.

Sophie Farkas Bolla:

So what we did on Beans is that... so Tracey finished the shoot and then she took a break, which I thought was great. Because while she was gone, I just dove into the material and watched everything. Watched everything, and I was seeing it from a fresh eye. Tracey wasn't there to tell me what she thought. So I was really just getting my sense of what it was, because often directors are very emotionally attached to the material and then they remember on that day what went right, what went wrong, and they have all this emotional baggage with the material, which is 100% normal. But having nobody there, it just allowed me to have a fresh start and just see the material, see the footage for what it was. So I was able to make my own idea of what was working and better than not and what wasn't working as well.

So I got to see everything. And then when Tracey came back from her holiday, she was all relaxed and she had taken time off and she had stepped away from the material. So she was really ready to dive in also with a fresh new perspective from the shoot. So what we did at the beginning is that I would assemble some scenes during the week and then, every Friday she would come and we would go

through the scenes together. And then this is where we started collaborating. So we would go through the scenes, through the sequences, she would tell me, "Oh, my intention here was to do this. Or let's do that, and let's try this." And so we would do that. So we did that for maybe, I would say, two months. And then, eventually, I'd gotten the whole sequences shot and we put the whole thing together and we watched it for the first time.

And so we had an assembly. And then from the assembly point on, we were spending much more time together. And so I would say Tracey was there almost every day or whenever, two days depending on what we were working on. Sometimes she would say, "Okay, we would work on the scene and then I would work on it by myself." And then she would come back the next day and we'd watch it again and then we'd move on. So we did that until Christmas and then we had a Christmas break, which was great. So we took three weeks off and then we came back at the end of January and we just had another three weeks, and we just fine tuned the film until the end.

And I remember the day we finished this film, I think it was like midnight. We were in the cutting room, and we were like, "Okay, we are happy. We've gone through every single thing". And the fine-tuning process was really great on that film because we really went deep into the performances. We really went to see how we could... how every single scene, every single sequences, how we could just really go get the perfect rhythm and create the film. So that's how we worked with Tracey. So it was very collaborative, very collaborative.

Jessie Anthony:

I guess, with that being said, watching some of the scenes come to life and assemble. So initially, this clip is the family has left the reserve and they've gone into town to get some food, and ultimately the racism here shown hugely in terms of they've been kicked out of the store. So no supplies are coming in and no supplies... it's hard to get supplies when they leave the reserve to go. How was it for you editing the scene and what was the intention in this scene? For me, I'll say that moment that they're walking out and everybody's clapping and the edit back and forth between the main character and the cashier lady. Yeah, if you want to speak a little bit on that, that'd be really great.

Sophie Farkas Bolla:

I think it's a great scene because there's lots going on in that scene, actually. There's the interaction with the mom's friends with the cashier. And then there's also what's going on with Beans and her little sister and how this, benign grocery shopping thing, that we do every day, becomes really, really dramatic. So I think what we did is that we focused primarily on the main action, which was them behind the counter trying to negotiate to get the food. And what was really interesting about that scene is that Tracey didn't want to just... she wanted to nuance it even though it's really horrible what's going on in the sense that... she wanted to nuance it in the sense that there's the main cashier but then there's the manager and the manager refuses to sell them the food. Yet, the younger cashier sees that this is not going to go well for Beans and her family, and she sees that they're not going to get the food they need. And she sees Beans putting the little roll-ups in her bag and just letting her go with the food, anyways, she doesn't tell on her. So I felt that we had to sort of make sure that all the different lines were happening at the same time and that we got all of them. So I feel like in the end the overall impression is that it's a terrible racist moment for Beans in their family. So I think that is the main impression that goes on, but yet the way the scene plays out, Tracey wrote it in a way so that there were still some subtleties and nuances, and it wasn't just a blank racist moment, there was a lot going on.

Jessie Anthony:

Yeah. It's a pretty powerful scene. I mean, here's the thing about this movie, is that every single scene is so powerful and it's constantly moving you forward, which is like, "Job well done, of course, it's been very successful." And is there a difference working with a director that is taking somebody else's script and putting it together than more of a true event experience that the director has gone through? Can you tell that there's a different connection with the director in the material when you're going through the editing process?

Sophie Farkas Bolla:

You know, it's interesting that you ask that, because for Tracey it's obviously, so inspired from what she lived as a young girl. I'm trying to think of other fiction films. Roads in February, which I did a few years earlier is also a fiction film. But you know when directors write something, usually, it comes from them and usually there's always something of them in the film. And so, in some ways it's more direct than others. But for Tracey it was very obvious. But even Roads in February, it's all about the director and her relationship to having immigrated and being from somewhere but living somewhere else. And so, I think even the character in that film is very much inspired by her even though it's not a direct conversation that we had in the editing room. So I feel that like it's always there and that ultimately when you write a script, you're the one that has all the answers.

Jessie Anthony:

That's true. Do you find that it's harder for directors to, I guess, cut certain things, they really want to make it fit. How do we make it fit, but in the edit it's just not fitting. Because there's always the story that's written or there's the... the story that's written, the story that's shot and the story that's edited, right?

Sophie Farkas Bolla:

Of course.

Jessie Anthony:

So initially, there's always three stories to this. So when you're in that editing process, have you come across, I guess, any directors where it's been a real challenge and try to make it work but ultimately you have to make that-how do you have that discussion with the director?

Sophie Farkas Bolla:

I think it's a process. I think it's a long process. I think at the beginning of this... I always tried to remember how I felt the first time I watched the dailies, the rushes, because I feel like people that go to the movies, they see the thing for... they see the film for the first time and so that impression is what counts. And when you're editing a movie, obviously you're going over and over and over and over and over the stuff, so it's hard. It's really important to keep an emotional connection. But eventually, obviously, it's hard because you just don't have it anymore. But you have to trust that the one you had at the beginning is the right one. So I always try and remember exactly how I felt at the beginning, so I can just focus and move forward and make sure that we're making the right decisions.

So early on in the process I'll notice if something is working less than it should and I'll address it right away with the director. I'll just say, "Well I'm not sure this is working or maybe we will get it to work." But I'll usually say it early on in the process because I know that it takes time for directors sometimes to come to terms with this scene or that scene because they're so attached to it and it's super normal. So I say it early on and then I just let time go and eventually, I think it makes its way to the director. And

eventually, by the end of the process, usually, those scenes have organically been removed from the film or edited or arranged differently. So it usually, happens pretty naturally. It just a process, you have to be patient.

Jessie Anthony:

Right. Patience is key.

Sophie Farkas Bolla:

And sometimes you're wrong as an editor, sometimes you think, "Oh this is not it" but it's not that scene that's the problem, it's another one that's sort of similar. But then when you remove that one then the one that you felt was problematic ends up working. So it's important to be really listening to the directors because they know the film more than anybody ever will and it's important to listen to them, because sometimes you'll realize, "Oh, my solution to this issue was not necessarily the right solution." So it's always important to know where we want to go and depending on the path we take, as long as we know where we're going. If the path changes a little bit doesn't matter, as long as we get to where we want to go at the end.

Jessie Anthony:

With that being said, do you prefer, having worked on my first feature film with an editor and not ever being taught how to communicate what's in your head in a certain way with the edits. Is there certain things you like to see like references or I would say references or pictures or things of how a certain cut, maybe if they can articulate the type of cut they want. Is that something you invite into the editing room?

Sophie Farkas Bolla:

I feel like when there's... I feel like I need to know what the director wants right from the start so we can go in the same direction. And so, usually, we'll talk a lot about the film, what movies she likes as references and why, and what she was trying to do in this scene and if it worked, or if it didn't work. Usually, you'll see in the style of the way it was shot, what they're trying to do with the scene. So I'll look at the rushes and I'll be like, "Oh I think I know what she wants to do there." And so, I'll go ahead and try to do that. Usually, if the intention is clear, then I see it right away. And then if it's not clear then we talk about it. But we talk... there's a lot of work before, we just talking about other films and what she was trying to do in this, and in this scene.

And usually, we manage to figure out what we want and what she wants. But it's always finding the best way to communicate, that is the key to good editing, I find. And it always takes a week or two for me to understand that when Tracey uses this word, what she really means is this. And so, I have to just pay attention to what she's saying and to be able to understand what she really means, because every director communicates in different ways. And so, I feel like it's the editor's job to translate what that means in editing terms and in editing language. And that's why I have to do that, not theirs.

Jessie Anthony:

So do you have any advice for any first time feature editors or somebody who's taking that leap into editing and working with a director, whether the director is inexperienced or experienced? Do you have any advice for those people?

Sophie Farkas Bolla:

Yeah. I think if you're going to cut your first fiction film, the best thing you can do is really just, if you just talk with the director, try and understand what their vision is, what they're trying to do and if you feel like you understand what their ultimate goal is, then just try and always work in that direction. That doesn't mean don't be critical of certain things. If you feel some scene or something is not working or the rhythm is off or there's something, it's important to say, but it's always important to say in a way that's constructive and that's respectful. Because it takes time to see things in different ways and not the way you imagined it as a director.

So it's important to always talk about it and just be open. Because ultimately, I think that when you're an editor, you have the chance to tell them if you feel like something is not quite right. And it's better you tell them than a critic in the newspaper after. So if you tell them and they decide not to change, that's fine, ultimately. Don't get upset about it. Don't take it personal, it's their filmmaking, their process. But it's important to always say what you think because in the end you want to make the best possible movie.

Jessie Anthony:

Absolutely. Because I'm learning a lot in terms of being a director who has sat with an editor on my first feature, and I'm learning different ways of, "Okay, how do I communicate?" And I'm sure every movie is that learning experience, right? You're going to get better at it. And I guess, what are some dos or don'ts, do you have... feel free to answer it, if not, we can pass on to my next question. But if there are some dos and don'ts in terms of, I guess, from an editor's perspective, if I was coming in as a director, what are some dos or don'ts in the room?

Sophie Farkas Bolla:

Don't ever take the mouse from the editor.

Jessie Anthony:

Oh my goodness.

Sophie Farkas Bolla:

Don't ever take the mouse. I think that's... unless you ask them, and they say yes or no problem. I feel like that's a barrier that should not be crossed, because it's a way... that's a don't, definite don't for me. Don't take the mouse. That's my only don't. I think anything else if you... I think this whole thing about not taking the mouse is also about communication. And if you can't communicate what you're trying to express is like, "Don't take..." and your only way to communicate is to take the mouse from the editor. That's not a good sign.

Jessie Anthony:

That's a really good don't. That is a very good don't. Because you would never, hopefully, take a camera from a camera operator or the DP, right? So do not take the mouse. I do have a question here. (Audience Question): "Hi, Sophie. I've not seen the film yet. Very eager to finally watch it. I'm wondering if there were scenes in the film that had improvisations or if everything was scripted, how did you approach the improvised bits?" Good question.

Sophie Farkas Bolla:

Great question. Most of it was scripted. There is some scenes that were improvised... there's one scene I can think about in the film, which was, it was one line in the script. That was basically, just before the SQ attacks the pines where, where the Mohawks were protecting their land. The little girls are in the cemetery in the pines and they're picking up the golf balls, that they find in the cemetery, because it's right next to a golf course. And so, it's basically, one line in the script, it says, "Beans and her little sister are in the cemetery having fun in the woods. And then they find all these golf balls and they decide to pick them up." So it's basically, one line.

And so for that scene, Tracey just, she didn't have a choreograph like, "Okay, you're going to go here and you're going to find these ball and then you're going to go there." It was just sort of, she just told the girls to do what they want and wanted it. And so, we had all this footage. It was shot on steady cam, so there was lots of footage. It was just a bit of a free, more like a documentary style shooting. And then, so I just looked at the whole... all the footage and I was like, "Okay." And so I just cut it in an emotional way and then that was it. I was actually... one of the scenes that I cut once, and we never changed.

Jessie Anthony:

Oh wow.

Sophie Farkas Bolla:

Yeah. So Tracey saw it the first time and she was crying and she was like, "That's good, let's not change that." And then we moved on. So that was a scene that was improvised, but there was no dialogue. Dialogue [inaudible 00:25:50], there was none in this film. It was all very much scripted.

Jessie Anthony:

Wow. Is that rare to have? Again, I can only go by what I've done in terms of what actors just go, have free range of it. Is it normal mostly, for things to be very on point scripted or do you tend to come across... I know you've done the doc that would be a little bit different. But with feature I guess scripted... yeah, do you find that often?

Sophie Farkas Bolla:

In the films that I've done, no. Most of them, I've always been very much scripted. There hasn't really been any improv in the films. I think it's because also of the shooting restrictions, they had a certain amount of days. And they didn't necessarily have the luxury to just go on these big improv scenes and when you're working... yeah, no. So the films that I've cut, I really haven't had any improv except for that one scene, just saying. Documentary, there's lots of that. It's totally different approach, obviously.

Jessie Anthony:

The next question I have is from Jennifer. (Audience Question): "When you disagree about a scene and you offered solutions and the director is still passionate about their decision, what are some ways you navigate around that if you truly believe your decision as an editor is better than the course for the film?"

Sophie Farkas Bolla:

It happens a lot. I feel like we have to try it with, we have to try it without. We have to give it time and see how the film evolves because sometimes I'll be like... early on I'll be like, "I don't think this scene is going to make it in the film," but it's too early for the director to actually agree with me. So I just let it

pass. And we tried with and tried without and then eventually it will stay or not in the film. But I must say that it's never happened to me ever that I was like, "This scene should not be in the film," and it still is in the scene... in the movie, sorry. It's never happened to me. So I think we always end up finding, either, I go with on the directors side or the director comes on my side and we always end up agreeing in the end if the process is done properly. Yeah.

Jessie Anthony:

Right. (Audience Question): "Hi, Sophie. Very excited to see the film. I feel like the beginning of the project is always the most daunting. How do you like to start your edit? You have the rushes organized in your bins, then what? Select reel, assemble scenes by scene, a full first cut right away, string outs by beats or by line or some other way?"

Sophie Farkas Bolla:

I watch everything and then I'll just start by cutting a scene that I feel like cutting. I just want to make it fun. So I'll just... usually, I'm by myself at that stage too. So I'll just start with a theme that I feel like cutting and when I'm happy with it, then I move on to another one that I feel like cutting. And then eventually, I go through all of them. Start with something that's fun that you feel like doing. Don't start with the first one because it's the first one and you feel you have to go in the chronological order. Don't do that. Just start with something that you feel like.

Jessie Anthony:

Right. Do you normally cut to music? Do you temp music? Do you...

Sophie Farkas Bolla:

Yeah.

Jessie Anthony:

...Yeah?

Sophie Farkas Bolla:

Yeah, Yeah. I'll cut it once without music, obviously. And then I feel like this needs music and then I'll choose the music that I feel is appropriate with the director or without the director. And then, some directors have very clear ideas on the music they want and then others have no idea. So I suggest things and then we go from there.

Jessie Anthony:

There's so many amazing scenes in this movie and one of the reasons I really connected to that is growing up on my territory, you know, Six Nations and growing up here and knowing that feeling that Beans is going through when it's... your group of friends, because a lot of people who live on the same street as you, that's the kids you grow up with. That's the people you have around you. So what type of emotions or what type of conversation happened around this particular scene with Tracey?

Sophie Farkas Bolla:

I think what particular about that scene, honestly, it was a lot. We wanted to make them look like cool playing... We wanted them to be good playing lacrosse. So I remember that was... at the beginning of

scene, they're playing lacrosse just for fun and they're sort of not too serious about it. And I felt like that was something that Tracey really, really wanted to have in the film, like just two girls playing lacrosse for fun, not like, because she felt that it was always, if you see girls in films doing sports, they're always on soccer teams or it's a sports film. And she was like, "No, girls hang out and do sports just for fun too." So there was a lot of discussion about the lacrosse, actually.

And then just getting the timing to work, like teenagers talking and trying to get one's attention versus the other one's attention. And trying to relate to Beans, who sort of trying to fit in, who wants to fit in and not saying anything and not wanting to disappoint her friend because she's sort of the one that's letting her into this new group. So she doesn't want to disappoint her, but she have to say something cool and she's sort of intimidated by this guy and...

So we were just trying to convey all these emotions that Beans is going through in that scene once those guys show up. But even before that, when she burns the book because she wants to go to this other school and April is like, "No, you're not going to stupid school." So there's all these conflicting emotions all the time in that scene. And I felt like Tracey really wanted to convey all these emotions. And also, just a general vibe of like kids growing up, like you said. I think that was something that just like all around the scene. It's like the...

Jessie Anthony:

Very universal. Yeah.

Sophie Farkas Bolla:

Yeah. I think that's what she really wanted. I think everybody relates to that. I think we've all been in more situations, similar situation when we're growing up, when we just really want to be the new cool kid. We really want to be part of this new gang, and anybody can relate to that scene.

Jessie Anthony:

That's very, very true. And I think that's what makes it so lovely, so universal that I wish I could have seen this in the theater and had that collective experience of coming of age. Oh, so I do have another question here from Sophia. (Audience Question): "Hi, Sophie. How much are you referring to this script once you have already read it many times and are editing? Are you keeping that handy on your first pass and following order, direction or mainly watching, gathering and editing a scene based on instincts, emotions first?"

Sophie Farkas Bolla:

Yeah, I usually only read the script. I read the script once and then that's it. Unless I'm mixed, that's it. I mean I'll never read it again honestly. Unless there's a comprehension thing, like I don't know, it's written in another language or something like that. But otherwise, no, I just read it once. I have a general... I get that feeling of reading it once that was very strong in case of Beans. And then I just sort of bring that with me in the editing room and I just work from the new material. Because I don't want to be influenced by something that was written and that doesn't exist in the footage, which happens because obviously, all kinds of things happens on shoot. So I just try to work from the footage as the new material. And I don't really go back to the script.

Jessie Anthony:

So do you work highly... do you work heavily off of script notes as well or the scripty notes?

Sophie Farkas Bolla:

Not really. I'll look at the script notes, let's say I'm by myself... let's say when I'm screening the rushes for the first time and I feel really strong about one take for some reason, I'll go to the script notes, especially, if the director's not there, and I'll go through the script note and see if in the script note that too was the best take for the director. Or if there's something... if I feel really strong about a certain take, I like to go and validate that feeling just to see if I'm on the same wavelength as the director. So when I'm screening, I'll go back to them.

And then the only other reason I'll go back to is like the classic situation, you're in the cutting room with the director and they're like, "I'm sure we shot an insert shot of this." And I'm like, "I never saw it. It's not in the bin. Where is that shot?" And then we go back to the script notes and then we're like, "It is in the script notes or it's not in the script notes." So sometimes, you think you did something, and you didn't, and sometimes you did and it's not there for some reason and then you have to go back in the footage and maybe the assistant editor didn't put it there for some reason. Anyway, so then you go look hunting for clips that are not where it should be. And then that's where I would go back to script notes. Honestly, I don't really go back to them either for other reasons because then you're working with the director. And...

Jessie Anthony:

Right. Well, we got a few minutes here left and would really... there was something we had talked about around the feelings, the feelings of the edits and what you were trying to portray, you and Tracey, with the images and the edits. So something really you unique and pretty cool about this film is that there's actual archive footage, correct? That is throughout the film, and that propels the story forward or it helps you. I guess, I'll have you dive more into this with the emotion. So if you want to talk about that a little bit and then we can show the final clip and answer any last questions before we call it a day.

Sophie Farkas Bolla:

Absolutely. So we cut from archival footage. There's four moments in the film where there's archival footage. Some of them are for context, some of them are to accentuate an emotion, something that we were trying to convey. So what we did for the archival footage is we looked at all this footage. I don't remember how many. So we cut the film first with no archival. We didn't have any of the archival. Once we had a first cut, we knew what we wanted to... how we wanted to use the archival and where we wanted to put it in the film. We had a big idea, but then it got really precise. So we looked at all the footage and then we sort of put them in on timelines where there was this emotion, this idea, this emotion, this idea. And then we went from there.

So interestingly enough, all the archival footage, except maybe for the first one, is really focused around one emotion that we were trying to convey, rather than making it like validate historically. I mean it does that, but we didn't want to give information in those sequences because they were archival. We weren't like, "We're going to give information, we're going to..." so we weren't looking to do that. We were really more looking to bring out one emotion in this archival footage. And I think it works because it's real. So then it just lifts everything up.

Jessie Anthony:

Yeah. It's a very powerful clip. And then what comes after that as well is quite an interesting moment. And I'll talk for myself, it's very triggering. It's very triggering and heartbreaking for me when I watch that, because it ignites a lot of anger and sadness.

Sophie Farkas Bolla:

Yeah. We were really trying to go for anger, and I think it was... it's the most intense emotional archival sequence that we cut. We were going for anger and rage because there was just such a huge frustration in that moment, because the moments that follow after that was when the army decides to step in. And then the last one is a hopeful one, we tried to do something that was hopeful where people were trying to listen to each other, and some sort of hope was on the way. So there was anger, there was tension with the army. And then it was really hope at the end.

Jessie Anthony:

Well, I definitely bravo on the emotional parts of that because, especially, the beautiful transition when it ends to her coming into screen. It makes my heart stop, almost like a breath, right? The breath has been knocked out of me and I couldn't imagine watching that footage over and over and over again. What kind of experience was that for you to be able to... and I guess maybe I'm not speaking for Tracey, but maybe just your experience with Tracey during some of this really triggering, reliving life experiences. How did you guys take care of each other or yourselves?

Sophie Farkas Bolla:

Yeah. I think... Well, the hardest scene in the film, and maybe, we can talk about that scene, is the rock throwing scene at Whiskey Point. So for those of you who haven't seen the film, it's basically, Beans, her mom and her little sister are leaving the community to go and stay outside in the hotel because it's become too dangerous with the army. And they have to cross the bridge and on the other side of the bridge... so they open the bridge to let the people go. And on the other side of the bridge, there's just these mobs of people that are frustrated and angry about the whole situation, and they just start throwing rocks at all the cars of all these families that are leaving. And it's a really, really hard scene... it's very difficult, but it was even more difficult to edit because that's a moment that Tracey actually lived through when she was 12 years old.

So what we did to edit that scene is that I edited it once and then we would watch it and it was really hard for Tracey to watch those scenes because it was just brought her back to that moment. So we would watch it once and then we would talk about it and I would go on my own and recut it, and then maybe a week later we would rewatch it again. But we really... we spaced it out as much as we could.

We just took our time, we didn't want to rush it because the first time Tracey watched it, obviously, she cried a lot and it was a very difficult moment. And you know I'm just there, obviously, it's very emotional. So we just tried and listen to each other. And we knew it wasn't going to be an easy moment, so we were just gentle with ourselves. Let's just take the time we need, and it'll take the time it takes. And that's that's how we approached it. So that was the hardest scene to cut in terms of emotion and because it was very intense. There's a lot of intense scenes in that movie, the archival footage, but that one was the hardest.

Jessie Anthony:

And I just want to say what an incredible... to Tracey, an incredible film, to you for taking on this project, being able to be a part of that journey and capture it from your own lived experience, your own communication with the director. And I guess, for me, this is completely out of story context, but when you're editing, what program do you like to use, and does it matter what program an editor uses?

Sophie Farkas Bolla:

I don't think it matters. I think it's just whatever the editor is comfortable with, that's the most important thing. Everybody has a little, "I like this function in this program versus that program, they don't have that function." It's like little things, but I can work with any really, basically. I work with Avid Premiere and recently I actually cut a film on Resolve, which was the first time, DaVinci Resolve, which was the first time I did that. So I'm really flexible. They all have their little pros and cons, but I think if I had a choice, I would say Avid. But they're all fine, they're all good. If somebody asks me, I'll say Avid. If I don't have, if it's more complicated for whatever reason, I'm good with the other two. They all have pros and cons.

Jessie Anthony:

I want to say thank you so much for having this conversation with me. I think that sometimes the editing process... something I wish I knew as a first-time director was that, that it doesn't stop after production. That you really have to dive and continue to dive in through all of the postproduction. And in film school, they don't focus enough on postproduction, it's just how to get your movie going, how to shoot it, and then that's it. So...

Sophie Farkas Bolla:

We'll fix it in post.

Jessie Anthony:

Yeah. Oh, that's something like, "If we can do it on set, let's do it on set." But it's so nice to have conversations like this to dive into, listen to, and understand some of that someone's process in feature films. I'm sure editing docs and television are a different beast on their own, but in such an epic feature film, it's beautiful. It's absolutely beautiful. Congratulations. All of the success that it's getting as well, it's really great. Thank you, Sophie.

Sophie Farkas Bolla:

Thank you, Jessie.

Jessie Anthony:

Yes. It was a great conversation. And I hope that you enjoy the rest of your day.

Sophie Farkas Bolla:

Me too. Thank you so much.

Jessie Anthony:

Thanks everybody.

Sophie Farkas Bolla:

Bye.

Jessie Anthony:

Bye.

Sarah Taylor:

Thanks so much for joining us today, and a special thanks goes to Jane MacRae and Alison Dowler. The main title, Sound Design was created by Jane Tattersall, ADR recording by Andrea Rush. Original music was created by Chad Blain and Soundstripe. This episode was mixed and mastered by Tony Bow. The CCE has been supporting Indspire, an organization that provides funding and scholarships for Indigenous postsecondary students.

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Speaker 2:

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