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WEB.ISOD.ES CEL

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Final Report: WEB.ISOD.ES

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CEL

A London based company, WEB.ISOD.ES provides a full-service story studio for the people who hire them. That means anything from podcasts, webinars, social content, and most often, videos to capture the goal and essence of the clients. Starting my CEL with them was a new medium to explore for me. Their main media form is documentary, or webisodes, to be posted online or shown at certain events. A lot of their work is with London-based charity organizations which require their documentaries to be shown at events to increase donations and engage donators.

WEB.ISOD.ES currently has two employees. Adam Caplan is the founder and creative director. He has always been involved in the media industry and has lived in many places, most notably L.A where he was a media consultant. Other roles he has embodied include producer and creative director at other companies. He currently teaches at Western University as well. Further, Adam is very involved in the London community and previously sat on several boards including The Grand Theatre and Museum London. He currently serves on the Board of Directors for the Ontario Media Development Corporation and has also sat on advisory and economic councils for the Mayor of London City Council. Most recently, he was heavily involved with the Junos hosted in London. Through all of this experience, Adam has a vast network.

Sammy Roach is the other employee at WEB.ISOD.ES and serves as the producer and editor. Sammy holds a BA in Film Studies and Media, Information and Technoculture from Western University and a Visual Effects and Editing for Contemporary Media postgraduate degree from Fanshawe College. She is passionate about the London community as well and sits on the Board of London Fuse. She loves drawing comic strips for the magazine as well. She is passionate about being involved and loves the work that she does. Adam and Sammy have a great relationship.

The work I completed with WEB.ISOD.ES was simple but complicated. For eight months I worked on a series treatment. Initially, Adam and Sammy presented me with two projects I could work on. Both combined by love of politics and communication. However, one project was already in the works and I wanted to help with the project that had not been fully started yet. In hindsight, I probably would have learned other hard skills if the other project had been chosen such as production, editing, filming, interviewing.

The working title for the project I chose to participate in was “The By Us Economy”. This project was proposed and brought forth by the Christian-Jewish Dialogue in Toronto to talk about Basic Income. It was proposed after the Conservative government was voted into the majority government in Ontario and they decided to cut funding to the Basic Income Pilot Project for which the Liberal government had previously budgeted. This news was quite upsetting to the proposers and they wanted to create something in response to the budget cuts.

Like previously stated I worked on a series treatment for my CEL for “The By Us Economy”. This was a working title and the project recently got renamed to “Basic Instincts”. A documentary treatment is usually used for obtaining funds to produce the actual film. However, in our case it was used to create a vision and really hone in on the message we were trying to get across. Our audience is policy-makers, front-line workers, and politicians. “Basic Instincts” is a documentary focusing on exploring whether or not basic income is an appropriate path for poverty reduction through a socio-economic lens. Adam was great at providing resources so that I knew what each part of the series treatment should look like.

However, getting to the vision of a documentary looking at the viability of basic income through an economic lens was hard. All of our meetings were spent discussing new ideas, adding in notes, and revising. The notes section of my computer is filled with ideas, revisions, new

angles, etc. to explore. The series treatment taught me that nothing is ever truly finished and with no hard deadlines, work can be continued to be made because nothing will ever meet everyone's expectations because perfection does not exist.

The first section of the series treatment I was to work on was the background and context. The background and context section was probably the most time consuming part. Essentially, working on this treatment wrote and revised a 17-page essay for an entire year. Initially, I had the idea that we were looking at Basic Income as the solution to eradicate poverty and that's where my research took me. It took many meetings for me to realize that this was not the case. At first, it was hard to grasp what Adam and Sammy were saying because I think they were having a hard time communicating it as well. However, Adam ended up sending me a bunch of resources and once we talked it over many times, I understood that we were just exploring the pros and cons of Basic Income, not necessarily proposing it as the best solution.

This is interesting because there are pros and cons to every "solution". I don't think there will be a fix-all solution to poverty. During a lunch meeting with Abe Oudshoorn, a Western nursing professor, we learned some of the many benefits of the current social assistance programs we have. For example, social assistance is important because the case workers literally know most, if not all, of the resources to get a person the help they need. With basic income, these positions would no longer exist. Though unconditional money would be offered, the foundational, root causes of poverty like unaffordable housing, precarious work, mental health, or addiction would go unresolved.

This lunch meeting was very insightful, and it was nice to talk to Abe and learn about his line of work and interest areas. I was also able to share insight into the SASAH program to him as he had never heard of it before. It was nice to share information about the program with a

Western community member to put the program out there. However, initially it did startle me that he had not heard of the program. Being within the SASAH bubble sometimes makes you oblivious to another person's lack of knowledge of your program.

The background and context was broken down into quite a few sections. We focused on poverty statistics, the current social assistance program and its barriers, pathways to poverty (like precarious work and unaffordable housing), the working homeless, charitable organizations, and the economic climate. Adam and Sammy also wanted to focus on the difference between rural and urban communities because there are vast differences relating to ease of access to social assistance programs including lack of public transportation, small town gossip and influence, and feelings of shame brought on by the need to hide poverty in these small towns. Other sections of the treatment included a logline, executive summary, notes on style and tone, other possible media productions, audience, interview subjects, and team-member biographies.

Working with Adam and Sammy on the series treatment was eye-opening because I am used to handing in essays and receiving comments back but not necessarily having the ability to revise them. With the series treatment, we were all editing my initial work. I loved seeing everyone's voice, opinions, and ideas be heard (on the Google document and in person). It was refreshing to get feedback and to be able to do something about it.

Skills I gained from this experience include bettering my writing skills by being clear and concise. Further, with academic essays I'm used to taking a stance and defending that claim; however, this writing was different as I was trying to remain neutral by highlighting the pros and cons of Basic Income while also catering to a specific audience of politicians, front-line workers, and policy-makers. This type of writing means every word is carefully chosen, every source is triple-verified, everything has to be near perfection. Moreover, someone at the Christian-Jewish

Dialogue read over the treatment and said that it needed to be put into an executive summary because it was too long to read. Adam did not necessarily agree but I learned to cater to the people initiating this project which is also something I have not had experience doing. At first, I thought the project would have a lot of creative leeway but towards the end I realized that was not the case.

I had hoped to gain some other skills relating to documentary making such as editing, producing, filming, transcribing, and interviewing. However, life tends to have different plans. Originally, the treatment was meant to be done at the end of December and it was. However, in the new year Adam and Sammy took on a new project so my work really just consisted of revising the treatment. We were supposed to have a couple of episodes already being made by now but again life does not always work out.

On top of the very busy schedules Adam and Sammy had, one afternoon Adam got into a car accident, everyone was fine, but he was very shaken up and that set back our communication as well. I was still able to log hours even though we did not meet because of the revisions on the series treatment. These revisions did not require weekly meetings. I am grateful that my CEL allowed me to log hours outside of my meeting times, on my own schedule. With working full-time and going to school full-time this method was appreciated.

Honestly, I am disappointed in the lack of hard skills I was unable to learn. However, I am understanding. Plus, the project that Adam and Sammy took on is so important. This project was initiated by Canada 2020 and essentially is a documentary interviewing all female political leaders that Canada has ever had. It is titled “No Second Chances” and the trailer looks amazing. It combines my love of feminism and politics so when they showed me the trailer I was very proud and happy.

A question I am asking myself is: what difference did I make with my work at WEB.ISOD.ES? My work isn't tangible in the sense that many people cannot access it. Since the actual documentaries weren't made, there's nothing really to share with the general public. Further, will this background and context information on Basic Income really help to enact change? The affects are not immediate, and I don't think I'll ever know for sure. I don't think my work made a difference in London, especially because it mainly deals with poverty in Ontario. However, instead of reaching our intended audience members and creating something to share with the general public, I only did research.

Research isn't a bad thing as it lays out the groundwork. However, I wish I had made more of an impact on at least one person. To be honest, sometimes I question whether or not I was actually helpful to Adam and Sammy. Is my work going to be used further in the project? Was it necessary or useful to do? Who is going to read it besides stakeholders? Was my direction with the project correct?

I know that the CEL is about engaging the community, and I think I did that. However, I don't think I made a difference to the people I engaged with, even though they made a difference to me. I believe that relationships (no matter the authority dynamic) are a two-way street and that every party has a lesson to share with the others. I'm not sure if I contributed anything to Adam and Sammy in the sense that I don't know what they took away from it. I don't know if I shared a lesson with them.

On another note, my CEL was important to me because it also allowed me to build relationships with Adam and Sammy. Our meetings were never about business first, we spoke candidly. They are some of the most hard-working, dedicated, passionate people I know. They truly love what they do, and it was inspiring to see because in many jobs I've had, you do not see

the same level of commitment. They kindly brought me into their world by sharing tips and resources. I never felt out of place because Adam and Sammy are kind, welcoming individuals. Even signing me up with my own WEB.ISOD.ES email and inviting me to the Slack channel was important to me because I was treated as part of the project and as an equal. I was never afraid to ask questions because they were always there to help.

I believe that Adam and Sammy make for great mentors because they opened up my mind to different viewpoints. For example, with the series treatment I would never have thought to look at it through an economic lens. They offer a lot of independence but are always there if you need a hand. Further, they made it an important mission to take me out into the London community and for that I will always be grateful. I was able to go to many local cafes and eateries which really just exposed me to London's culture. As well, Adam is well connected so I was able to meet a lot of different people on our outings as well. That being said, I think the community connections I made were related to places, not people (besides Adam and Sammy).

The value I gained from participating in a Community Engaged Learning project was learning the importance of community. Before my CEL, I had no idea what WEB.ISOD.ES was. After learning of my placement, I still had no idea what they did from their website. Only after working with Adam and Sammy did I get a true sense and appreciation of their work and the value of community. Both are so heavily engaged and passionate about the area they live in and I realized that this was a valuable lesson to take away because your experience is only what you make it. As someone who is not from London, I was having a hard time connecting with the city, but Adam and Sammy showed me the value of being immersed in the city of London to make for a better lived experience.

An interesting question that I haven't asked myself until now is: what value did I bring to the London community? I'm not sure I brought any. Though I engaged with the London community by visiting all of these places, I didn't contribute anything. Even my teas were bought for me, I never added anything of value (not saying that money is the only value I could have added). I guess I have knowledge about London and certain places to visit and I can share this knowledge. Sharing this knowledge might encourage one person to visit these cafes or eateries. I'm not sure I did anything else for the London community and that is something I felt I could have worked on during my placement.

For my CEL, previous knowledge that I applied came from my university career in general, nothing specifically related to SASAH. To complete the series treatment, I needed communication skills and research skills. Both of these I've learned through SASAH and my political science major. These skills and knowledge were gained through essay writing and assignment completions. However, in first year, Professor De Looze did share with us the archive room at Western which did not help for this project, but it opened my mind up to the different possible resource centers.

That being said, without SASAH I would never have gained this opportunity for which I am grateful. However, it would have been helpful to have a run-down of WEB.ISOD.ES before meeting with Adam and Sammy; however, to my knowledge I was the first placement there. In general, I would have liked to be better prepared with my CEL by getting information from SASAH. I'm not sure if it's because I was on exchange in third year, but I felt very lost and confused relating to the CEL project versus a creative project and what my options were.

Relating back to WEB.ISOD.ES, from my understanding, Adam and Sammy are open to have another placement next year which is wonderful. For that student I think it is important to

outline that there is a time commitment outside of meetings, a lot of work is done independently, and that Adam and Sammy are very busy people, so things are constantly changing. I think these main points would set the expectations clearly for the student.

In regard to lessons that I learned, again, a big one is that things do not always work out the way you think. I was disappointed that the project did not go as far as we had planned, but I am grateful for everything I did get to experience. Further, communication is key. Adam, Sammy, and I were pretty good at communicating meeting times, expectations, questions, clarifications, etc. They were wonderful at understanding that I go to school full-time and work full-time. However, once that communication broke down, I started to feel really lost. Even in my busiest times, if we were communicating I was okay. However, once that broke down it was hard to get back on track.

Another lesson I learned is the value of connections. As aforementioned, Adam is well connected and at one of our lunch meetings with a nursing professor, we were told about all of these people we should contact for the project. Turns out Adam knew most of them and had just not thought about asking them. With being so well connected, it really helps Adam's business and projects. I never really realized the true power of networking but working with Adam and Sammy definitely showed me. Even at cafes and walking on the street, Adam was always saying hi to someone.

As for the impact of my CEL on my future career, I'm still trying to figure out if it has one. All year I've been trying to figure out my future. I thought of everything from law school, to teacher's college, to master's programs only to realize that I'm not ready to jump right back into school come September after graduating. I will be working for a year and apply to law school this fall for admission next September.

However, my CEL has taught me the value of communication and media so as I look for full-time jobs I hope to focus on that industry. I've had a few hits back but nothing concrete yet. I currently have a full-time retail job but am hoping to use my communication skills in a more permanent position where I will be able to enact change. So, I guess the communication skills I learned are very important in my most immediate future career plans.

Also, this is not to do with my future career, but my work with WEB.ISOD.ES helped me in the process of making a documentary with the fourth-year SASAH cohort. Though for this documentary, I took on a promotion's roles, I was able to offer insight based on my experience with Adam and Sammy. The class did things a bit differently, but I was able to offer resources and tips. Further, I also took on a transcribing role and I had learned about formatting from reading transcribed interviews that Sammy and Adam sent to me.

CEL's are very valuable to SASAH students, especially if they are located in London, because they get us out of the Western bubble, and more than that, the SASAH bubble. Since most people come from out of town, it's very easy to get caught up in the university life and not branch out to the actual city the school is located in. Our CEL's are a way to engage with interest areas and engage with a city that we live in for four to five years. That is a significant time to only spend on the university campus so the CEL's are a great way to combat that. Moreover, they allow us to make connections and reflect on some work we've done that (hopefully) contributes to a great group.

For me personally, my CEL did everything listed above and more. The placement also helped me with my time management skills as I had to balance school, work, and my placement. Further, it was an independent project, probably the most independent that I've been a part of so keeping track of assignment dates and such was a bit harder for me. It was a lot to do and keep

track of with everything else in my life, but it's just helped my organizational skills and shown me that I can ask for help and that most people are accommodating.

Unfortunately, I do not have an onsite photo. However here is my testimonial:

Working with Adam and Sammy at web.isod.es not only enhanced my communication and research skills, but also showed me the value of community engagement. I was able to explore the documentary/media world of London while also learning about important issues such as the poverty crises in London and beyond. My passions were combined, and I am grateful for the welcoming natures. The experience was truly valuable.

In delivering my final presentation, a lot of preparation went into the PowerPoint and figuring out what to say. I asked myself questions such as: what is web.isod.es? How do I explain it to a group? What was my role? What were my expectations? Were my expectations met? Who are Adam and Sammy? What did I enjoy most? What were the outcomes? Unfortunately, I was unable to reflect on what I did for the community and for Adam and Sammy in my presentation because this reflection started to occur while polishing the final report.

For my report, I decided to talk about what WEB.ISOD.ES does and I was grateful for the question from Patrick that asked how they obtain funding. I was unable to include that in my presentation and it is an important factor in the work Adam and Sammy do. Funding usually comes from the people who hire their services and most of the time these organizations are charitable or are trying to lobby politicians. This means much of the curated content is not creative and instead of spending time on interesting aspects, Adam and Sammy have to be sure the message they originally got hired for is getting across.

Adam and Sammy speak of interviews being some of the hardest things to let go. They are able to get great content from people they interview such as personal anecdotes about the effects of poverty, what it does to spending habits, and just real lived experiences relating to pathways to poverty. One man worked at a factory for 30 years before it went under and because he had worked there for so long he didn't have transferable skills to other jobs. Another story is that a person experiencing poverty tried to use their social assistance money to take computer classes to gain this skill. They couch surfed instead of paying rent so that they could learn a skill we take for granted to get a job. Their case worker told them to stop using the money for things it is not mandated for. These people have different lives, but poverty still impacted them due to circumstances out of their control. It's cliché, but it could happen to anyone.

Back to funding and interviews, something that Adam and Sammy expressed to me was that when they come across interesting stories, the only people that usually get to hear of them are Adam and Sammy. Unfortunately, many people who hire them are not looking for these candid looks into people's lives. They need donations, they need a video to get across the good they do. It's so unfortunate but I'm glad to at least be a bit more informed on precarious paths to poverty.

For my presentation, I also described Adam and Sammy as a culmination of their accolades and roles. I do wish I had spoken more to their characters and amazing qualities. However, I wanted the presentation to be professional. Plus, I think their accomplishments are very impressive and they deserve recognition for all that they do.

I was also really keen on showing one the most recent projects that Sammy and Adam have worked on. The Canada 2020 trailer, "No Second Chances", inspired me when I saw it. I fell in love when Adam showed it to me because it means so much in terms of addressing and

discussing systemic barriers to entry of politics for females. This trailer encompasses everything I am passionate about and I am so proud to know the people who put it together. This is another important point because I truly believe in all work that Adam and Sammy have put out. They do not sacrifice their ethics, morals or values for work. This is inspiring and heart-warming as it gives me hope that sacrifices of your identity do not need to be made for work.

The next part of the presentation was delving into the work I did. I wanted to fully explain what a series treatment was because I had never heard of one before. Further, in our fourth-year SASAH class we are making a documentary and decided that we would create the message and story from the interview footage we received. In reality, Adam and Sammy need to set the message and story from the beginning to make the interviewing process smoother. This doesn't mean that interviews don't go places they didn't intend, just that they lead interviews in a way that works for the documentary.

I finally discussed the different places Adam, Sammy and I met. This was probably my favourite section as these places are the memories I will remember most. These places included Innovation Works, the Bicycle Café, Wich is Wich, and the Plant Matter Kitchen. Innovation works was probably one of the best places to go because the idea of a communal space warms my heart. It is a great semblance of what working together looks like. Plus, you can pay it forward with coffees which is really important in communities, especially with those communities that experience a lot of poverty. Small tokens or gestures like a coffee can be significant to someone.

This was my process for the presentation, which I have attached to the dropbox separately. A succinct summary of my presentation would be as follows:

I wanted to share all of the places that Adam and Sammy took me, not only to highlight my CEL experience but also showcase that they helped me delve deeper into the London community. Not only did I learn how to write a series treatment, including tone, audience, style, etc. I also got an immersive experience into the media world of London and I got to glance into the lower income crisis that London faces. Though everything didn't work out how we initially thought it would, I'm still very grateful for my experience and I met some wonderful, caring, passionate people.