



A crew filming in Listuguj on July 8. From left to right, J.D Morrison, Emmet Walsh, Simon Trepanir, Derek Condo, and Mark Morrison.



Simon Trepanir syncing audio and video for Mark Morrison's music video Teepees on the Highway. PHOTO: ADAM HODNETT/TRIBUNE

Film

Wapikoni mobile studio returns to Listuguj

ADAM HODNETT
THE TRIBUNE

Mark Morrison visited the Wapikoni mobile studio last year. It was parked in Listuguj for a month. And now it's back. The metal trailer reflects the neighbourhood. It has a meeting room, a sound booth and soundboard, and an office with everything you need to make great looking films – from start to finish. With a staff of three, the studio travels around and helps people tell their stories. There are two others somewhere in Canada doing the same. Six projects are on the go in Listuguj.

"Silence on the set!" Derek Condo yelled.

Condo is the director of a short film inspired by his childhood, called, *The Life of Dexter Harding*. He has a crew of kids together, who are learning every aspect of filmmaking. Simon Trépanir and Emmet Walsh are guiding them through framing and audio.

"They're filming in Morrison's house – he's playing the father.

The scene has six-year-old Sage Sorbey hidden in a closet. In the film, his parents are yelling at each other. The father has been drinking too much and he's tired of hearing the same old complaint. A boom microphone angles through two door-frames, and there's a big light across the room.

Morrison does two completely different takes and always keeps the argument going until he hears "cut."

"There are no dialogue lines that are scripted," said Trépanir. "We just improvise the script."

This loose way of doing the dialogue allows untrained actors to be natural. Although, Morrison demonstrates remarkable ease while performing in front of the crew and camera. He's a musician.

The story line was also constructed in a natural way. Condo went up the stairs to the sound booth of the mobile studio and spoke freely about the story he wanted to tell. He recorded 30 minutes of audio, which was cut down to five minutes of narration.

"This is my childhood and upbringing ... and how I was able to grow out of alcoholism, become a teenager and kind of, at the end, how I helped other kids get away from alcohol and drugs," Condo said. "My emphasis now is to kind of direct this film and show people that it's possible for people to quit drinking and fight the disease of alcoholism, you know. That's the strongest point of my film. I believe it's important for our communities – Listuguj, Campbellton, Cross Point, Matapedia – for any youth that's having a hard time."

Morrison wasn't originally going to be acting in this movie, but he said he would, if no one else could be found. He ended up offering his house as the main set as well.

"We're all supposed to be doing this together as a community. Why not keep it that way?" he said. "Everybody's doing their parts. He's my friend. And he's doing something that, to him, is very important. And I can see that."

The subject matter hits close to home for Morrison as well.

"A lot of us grew up that way – and not only in the aboriginal communities," he said. "Anybody who deals with an alcoholic parent or grandparent, or somebody who is an addict, you're going to have these hard times."

A personal story that means something to the creator can be a scary endeavour. Francis Desroches is in charge of community outreach with this studio. He was here last year, and is also a sound engineer who helps the musicians that



The crew setting up a shot outside of Mark Morrison's house for a scene in Derek Condo's movie. PHOTO: ADAM HODNETT/TRIBUNE



A Wapikoni Mobile Studio parked in Listuguj is helping members of the community make films. PHOTO: ADAM HODNETT/TRIBUNE

visit.

"I feel that a lot of people, when they come here, it's their first experience making a movie, and they often come up with something very personal," he said. "And in the process, they get shy, because they know they have to present it to the whole community, it's going to be on the website, it's going to be shown at the end of the stop over, every time ... it's challenging to say, 'I'm going to go in front of everyone I know, and present a movie that is very personal.'"

And while it may be challenging, or uncomfortable, a lot of people have found significant, continued success with work started by a Wapikoni studio.

Raymond Caplin, from Listuguj, is one of those people. The visual artists created an animation that required 2,166 drawings in 2012.

The short film earned him a prestigious internship at the Gobelins School of the Image in Paris, whose students have gone on to careers with major studios, like Walt Disney, Pixar and DreamWorks. And even without graduating high school, Caplin has been accepted into the film program at Concordia University. He starts in the fall.

The work Wapikoni fosters has certainly been attracting attention. Their website states that its work has gathered nearly 70 awards and mentions at national and international film festivals since its launch in 2004, during the Montreal First Peoples Festival. It has even received an Honourable Mention Award from at Plural + Festival of the United Nations.

Pierre Lesage, a man with white hair and round glasses, has been watching over Condo's set. He's a program developer at École des métiers du cinéma et de la vidéo in Rivière-du-Loup. The school is planning on developing a program with Wapikoni.

Lesage says the work they're doing is important. He believes it's important for people to see their own communities as worthy subject matter for films and other forms of art.

"Cinema is just a medium," he said. "The most important is what is happening with the community."

Aside from all the benefits of giving people the tools to tell their own stories, Lesage thinks the quality of films developed with Wapikoni are impressive.

"I'm really surprised by the quality of the movies that are made," he said. "It's a short time, I think the movie makers are good people, but those you work with are very good. It's very hard to make a movie."

As hard as it may be, people don't seem to be backing away from stories they think are important.



Inside the Wapikoni mobile studio parked in Listuguj on July 8. It contains everything needed to create a film. PHOTO: ADAM HODNETT/TRIBUNE

Morrison recorded a song with Wapikoni last year, and he's making the music video this year. It's called *Teepees on the Highway*.

It is about a blockade on the highway near Listuguj in 1998, when two giant teepees were put up. The song is about his personal feelings, in light of the 1981 raids in Listuguj over salmon.

"Why are these people doing this again?" Morrison remembers thinking.

He was ten years old during the 1981 raids, and remembers his school bus zig-zagging through police cars on the bridge and the batons being banged against the side of the bus. He was old enough to be personally invested in 1998, when the tensions surrounded wood. He was making his living in the woods.

"So it just came from that," he said. "But also finding the spiritual part of me to forgive what's going on, and forgive what happened in 1981 ... I can't hold on to this forever – the animosity of it. Just leave it be, and write a song about it, and put something positive in your mind. And the chorus is – we are the people from the dawn from the east."

Morrison is a musician, but he has done some film work in the past. He's done enough to appreciate the earnestness of the Wapikoni projects, like Condo's film.

"To help him out and just to see the



A crew shooting a film by Derek Condo in Mark Morrison's house on July 8. PHOTO: ADAM HODNETT/TRIBUNE

appreciation in his eyes and his face, and that honesty. It's nice – you don't see that all the time," he said. "There are times when people are just honest – honest with you. And you can tell, you know."

The crew finishes up their day with a final shot that Walsh thought would add a nice touch. Trépanir agreed. The son runs to catch up with his father as they walk down the trail on their way to go fishing.

"You're a great friend," Derek said to Mark, standing in the tall grass after finishing the final shot.

"I appreciate you asking me," Mark answered.

Condo is genuinely appreciative, and is visibly enjoying the process.

"I feel like I've done it before," Condo said. "It's a wonderful feeling."

Be the first to know. This story was posted July 14 on tribunenb.ca with more photos.