**DEAN GIBSON TALKS ALL THINGS SCREEN INDUSTRY**

NAIDOC WEEK WEBINAR TRANSCRIPT

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| **JOSH BECKETT** | G’day, Dean. How are you going? |
| **DEAN GIBSON** | Yeah, good thanks Josh. How are you doing? |
| **JOSH BECKETT** | Good man, good. So just for everyone listening, we have Dean Gibson, Guugu Yimithirr man. That's North of Cooktown. Company Director of Bacon Factory Films, Screen Queensland Board Member, Logie winner for *Incarceration Nation*. Did I miss anything? |
| **DEAN GIBSON** | I’m that classic overnight success that’s taken 20 years to get here so I've got a few, a few runs on the board in different sorts of things, but it's a pleasure to be here. I look forward to sharing a bit about myself and a bit about the NAIDOC theme of elders this year. |
| **JOSH BECKETT** | Yeah, yeah, we will get to that. But I suppose, how did it all start? |
| **DEAN GIBSON** | My story goes back to, I guess I went to film school. I went down that track. I guess I had an interest in non-fiction storytelling and people telling their stories, really. I have always gravitated to it and been interested to sit down with someone and just listen to them and hear their story. And then out of film school tried a few things here and there. |
| **DEAN GIBSON** | And I think for me, the big kicker in my career was the opportunity that came along when NITV was created. For me, that was a really big chance to really be given opportunities to author the kind of work. Up to that point, you sort of work for a lot of other people and do a lot of other stories. That really gave us the runway to get our own stories on screen. |
| **DEAN GIBSON** | And it was early days and just start to sort of learn my craft and get better and better and try and do things. And for me, that was the big thing that really got my career going. And I think for a lot of people, it represents a pathway into the industry now and opportunities that sit around what NITV and SBS offer in the space. |
| **DEAN GIBSON** | And then from there it's really just been, again, I keep telling people who ask me how I’ve got to where I’ve got to, it's about that idea of doing things really well, on time, on budget, and then opportunities will come off the back of doing things much better than, you know, delivering above and beyond and doing your best on each production to really wow the commissioning editors or the audience. |
| **DEAN GIBSON** | So, it's really not rocket science but it takes time and it takes years to sort of form those relationships and trust amongst yourself and the industry stakeholders, I guess. |
| **JOSH BECKETT** | Yeah, definitely. That's pretty good advice for emerging filmmakers, especially First Nations people. So just on that point, how would you explain to non-First Nations people wanting to work with First Nations people telling First Nations stories, you know, that sort of age-old thing of collaboration over consultation. How do you reckon non-First Nations people should approach that I guess, or approach First Nations companies? |
| **DEAN GIBSON** | Yeah, it's a big question and it's becoming ever-increasing in the film and television space and in the theatre space, is around authorship and authentic authorship. And I think we have to demand excellence and demand the highest levels of engagement. Aboriginal people have to be the authors of their own stories. They need to be telling them along with the communities, or along with the elders, along with the people, whatever the story is. |
| **DEAN GIBSON** | I think it's important that you do have that key creative driving the engagement between the community, non-First Nations producer or whatever that is. I think there's got to be a strong conduit there that binds that relationship to make sure that there's authenticity and that there's genuine willingness to tell those stories. I think it's hard when you're in the production space not to get swept up in the production to forget you still have to come back to the people who you are telling the story on behalf of. So I think that for me, it's really about having authentic authorship around the leadership. And I think more too than just hiring directors or cinematographers, I think there's a real ownership on non-Aboriginal, non-First Nations practitioners or producers to really allow First Nations professionals to get equity in the project. |
| **JOSH BECKETT** | Yeah, one hundred percent. That's a good point. Leading towards ICIP Rights (Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property) and making sure that First Nations people keep them. So do you have any thoughts you'd like to share on ICIP Rights? |
| **DEAN GIBSON** | So I think it's really important around ICIP (Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property) and what is told to you and honouring and being true to what these stories are and protecting it. I think it's one thing to say we value it and cherish it, which is absolutely true and absolutely important, but I think we have to protect it as well. And I think that's where we as practitioners need to be really aware of what we are asking of communities or storytellers to share with us as filmmakers and how we protect what they share and how we move forward and we all reap some level of benefit, be it exposure, be it financial, be it whatever it is. |
| **DEAN GIBSON** | Just the ability to actually share the story is really important around ICIP. And yeah, I think again, if you're, particularly if you’re working with non-First Nations practitioners, if they are unaware of what that is and aren’t prepared to have that conversation, that's a red flag straight away. |
| **JOSH BECKETT** | And yeah, and also if they're not aware of what ICIP Rights are and you know, the weight that they hold, do you think it's a better idea for them to reach out to communities first or reach out to practitioners, First Nations practitioners, first before coming to a state agency like Screen Queensland. |
| **DEAN GIBSON** | If it's a non-First Nations producer who's done all the legwork by purchasing the rights to a book or something and they don't really, haven't really engaged with the community, it might be a case of, you know, talking to practitioners or agencies to understand exactly what this is and how it works and why it's important, because you probably will find there can be a lot of people out in the community who don't really know the legal structure that sits around our industry. |
| **DEAN GIBSON** | You know, it's about taking them along for the ride and making sure that they're empowered and really familiar with the process, how it works and how their rights are protected and stand strong in this creation of this film or this series or whatever is being produced. |
| **JOSH BECKETT** | Definitely. This next question is mostly pointed to the younger mob who have maybe seen *Incarceration Nation*, maybe know who Dean Gibson is and say, “You know what, I’ve got a story to tell. I want to be in film.” So obviously they've got to go through the journey, whether that's film school or you know they do it off their own back. |
| **JOSH BECKETT** | But the end result is the story that they create. What's your opinion on how that will empower them? |
| **DEAN GIBSON** | Oh well there's no doubt about it. If you can find your voice in making films or you can find your identity or your voice in singing songs or dancing or doing your job, day to day. Whatever you do in life, in whatever position it is, be it the most senior position or the most junior position, I think that when you start to find value in what you do and what you contribute to society in terms of expression or storytelling, I think it's empowering. |
| **DEAN GIBSON** | I mean, I don't think you underestimate the empowerment or the power of being given a platform to share a story or tell someone about an experience that you've learned and you want to share it with them. You know, my 20-year filmmaking career has not just been about making content. It's been about me learning about my story and my own history and my own background. |
| **DEAN GIBSON** | And I'm the first to admit, you know, I didn't know a lot about that coming into it, but it's been an evolving thing and sure, I might fall short on things and say the wrong things from time to time but I'm the first to put my hand up and say that I'm learning. It's an evolving process for me. |
| **DEAN GIBSON** | And, you know, I probably never will get to the finish line or know what that ultimately looks like but you just keep trying and you just keep finding your voice and learning more about who you are and learning about how you as a professional practitioner can work with people to help them find their voice. I'm not sharing anything new. As they share, you'll see them grow and evolve. |
| **DEAN GIBSON** | And I think for me that's the way I've done it and I think people helped me do that and I'll try to do my best to help other people do that as well. |
| **JOSH BECKETT** | Yeah, yeah, I can share a bit on that front. So I mostly come from a background of writing - Diploma, Advanced Diploma of Writing. You know, I don't know, I barely knew how to work a C-Stand to be honest. But on the indie projects it is like that. It's like, okay well you can do that, you can do that, I can do this, and then you all come together. |
| **JOSH BECKETT** | So it's a very good point that you said before, you just keep going and something will happen. I think that's very empowering what you just said. |
| **DEAN GIBSON** | Yeah. And so you'll get it wrong, right. We all get it wrong. We all make mistakes. And don't pound yourself if you do. Just know that you can, you can go again and you'll learn. You know, *Incarceration Nation*’s got all these accolades and awards, but it wasn't the first thing I made. It was Number 45 in the queue, really. |
| **DEAN GIBSON** | And if you can get it first time, congratulations. And that's like, you're a genius and all credit to you. But it might take 35 runs of a different, of working on a bunch of different things that get you to finally get to a point where you go, I'm ready to tell this story and fully drive it myself off my own bat. |
| **DEAN GIBSON** | And author it the way I want to do it. And you know, that's just a process of creating capacity and courage and all the things that matter in making a film. |
| **JOSH BECKETT** | Well, so we mentioned Elders before and we’ve got NAIDOC Week. So what’s your plans for NAIDOC Week and maybe we'll speak on some Elders. |
| **DEAN GIBSON** | I'm lucky enough to, I got an invite to the ball. The national ball here in Brisbane. So I'm looking forward to going to that evening to celebrate that. And I've been lucky enough to go to one previously before and it was a great night. I remember just to hear, coming back to that idea of people sharing their stories and the voices being empowered, and it's just great to hear what's going on in the country. |
| **DEAN GIBSON** | I'm in my own little production bubble here, in my own little office and I kind of forget that there's all this bigger world going on out there. So I find it, I love the night where you can hear that you know, there's a kindergarten program being run out of Central Queensland, which is kicking goals or there's a program in health being run out of WA and you learn these all these, again, this is as a filmmaker, you know, this is a big thing that I would suggest for budding filmmakers is keep your ear out and your eye out for stories. |
| **DEAN GIBSON** | I'll go to these awards on Saturday night and go, hmm that's an interesting story. There could be something about getting some cameras in around that story. So I think for me, that's why I love going to the awards and seeing everyone dressed up and celebrating these stories that sort of come in from all across Australia and are put on the big screen, on the big stage, to sort of celebrate what's been achieved. |
| **DEAN GIBSON** | I mean there's a few things going on for me during the week, but really for me I'm looking forward the most to going to that and just letting my hair down and just enjoying the company and enjoying the achievements that have happened across the country in the last year. |
| **JOSH BECKETT** | Yeah, Yeah. Now that's the beautiful thing about NAIDOC Week. You know, you've got your thing, over here’s got something completely different, which you've never seen or maybe you've heard glimpses of, and it's just really nice to see the entire First Nations community celebrate the First Nations community and what, you know, what they're doing in specifics. So the theme of NAIDOC Week this year is For Our Elders, would you mind explaining what an Elder is and what exactly, why are they important and what do they do for the community? |
| **DEAN GIBSON** | Over my journey of, and I'll bring it back to film, you know, Elders play a key role in story for me. When I think about Elders, they play a key role in bridging the stories from the past to where we are today and, you know, I don't have the, I don't know the Elder sort of handbook on what it's like to be an Elder but I know, I love the fact that you can get some Elders will really take you on a journey back thousands, hundreds of thousands of years, 50 years, 20 years, 10 years, whatever it is. |
| **DEAN GIBSON** | And some elders have the really strong capacity and the ability to take you and think forward. And I think for me that's a really exciting thing that we don't think about Elders. We always think, Elders naturally take you on the trajectory back, which is great and it gives you an insight into things that you’ll never hear ever again potentially. |
| **DEAN GIBSON** | But I also think that Elders have that capacity to take you forward and empower and I think that's a really strong, for me, I love spending time with Elders who have the capacity to look back but then really think about where we are today and think about as what opportunities lie or how to engage and look, |
| **DEAN GIBSON** | I think Elders would be the first to admit they don't have all the answers and no one does. I think they come with a really strong foundation and a strong footing. |
| **JOSH BECKETT** | I've always found them a great source of education, of obviously knowledge that they know a lot. But yeah, education. A couple of the Elders I’ve spoken to, even a couple of the Aunties who aren't classified as Elders, you know, when they're not getting up me for doing something, they do have that capacity to make you think and educate you on what has happened, what's happening now, and what can happen in the future. |
| **DEAN GIBSON** | And don't forget the humour right. Don't forget the humour with that, you know, clearly life is about light and shade. They've probably seen some significantly dire situations in their life but yet they can come to situations and, you know, tell stories that get you enrapt with laughter or take you on these journeys. Like Elders as serious and business as they are, don't forget they love to laugh. They love a laugh. They love to share. Go on the journey with them and see where it goes. Because you might be surprised. |
| **JOSH BECKETT** | I mean, just listening to them sometimes is all I need. And it makes you feel better and as I said, it makes you learn things that you never even thought about before. Well Dean, I think we're coming to the end but do you have any last-minute thoughts, any things you’d like to share? |
| **JOSH BECKETT** | What are you working on? |
| **DEAN GIBSON** | Yeah, I'm excited by what's coming out for NAIDOC Week. Looking forward now because I directed a series for the ABC called *First Weapons* for Blackfella Films and Inkey Media and that's a really, that's a different, exciting, fun and enjoyable way to look at weaponry, First Nations weaponry. And we really put that through the screws of what modern science is. |
| **DEAN GIBSON** | And we try and break down the stigma that science is a new Western concept and we showed that these principles of science existed timelessly prior to any European involvement here in Australia. So we have some fun with it. I think that's a really big part of the show is we take the audience on this really exciting, fun and hopefully insightful journey across Australia to understand weapon-making, the value, the link between the country and the weapon and the weapon-maker and the weapon, and then understand the principles of science that sit around the weapon. That's coming out for NAIDOC Week on ABC. And then I'm just in development on other productions and that's the ongoing thing where you have lots of productions at different stages, trying to get things up and ready to get made. So it's the constant slog of getting things ready and market ready and pitching and all that sort of stuff. |
| **DEAN GIBSON** | So it's exciting. It doesn't get any easier. You hope it will get easier as your career progress but it doesn't. You still need to do the hard work, you still don't get favours, don't expect favours. You still gotta do the hard work and break through. And once you get through, you got to do it and try and be sustainable to try and make it work. Hopefully through that the opportunities will come and that's where I'm sort of at this next little chapter where I'm just putting things forward and hopefully someone will come on and partner up or work on productions. So it's exciting but I am looking forward to NAIDOC Week and enjoying this week of celebration. |
| **JOSH BECKETT** | Definitely. Well, with that, thanks for your time Dean. And thank you for all you've done for the community and look forward to your future productions. |
| **DEAN GIBSON** | Let's keep doing it hey. Let's keep going hard, Screen Queensland and all our Queensland practitioners. It's a great opportunity to tell our stories and let's really keep working hard and and getting our stories on screen and really make it really world-class storytelling. We can do it. We've shown we can do it. Let's keep it up and let's keep giving people opportunities to tell those stories for Queensland. |
| **JOSH BECKETT** | Sounds good brother, thank you. |
| **DEAN GIBSON** | Take care. |