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REELWORLD ANNOUNCES 2022 LEVEL UP PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

Shaftesbury and Pope Productions invest in development of racially diverse writers and directors during production of Citytv's *Hudson & Rex* Season 5

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TORONTO (August 2, 2022) – Four successful candidates have been selected to participate in the 2022 [Level UP Program](#) in partnership between **Access Reelworld, Citytv, Shaftesbury, and Pope Productions**. Now in its second year, the Level UP Program offers paid job shadowing opportunities to racialized equity-deserving communities, including Black, Indigenous, Asian and People of Colour with Citytv's #1 original scripted hit series ***Hudson & Rex***. Two writers and two directors are preparing to go to Newfoundland to gain on-the-ground experience on set and in the writers' room of *Hudson & Rex*, currently filming its fifth season.

The **Level UP Program** is a step towards creating more access and inclusion for Black, Indigenous, Asian and People of Colour in the television industry. The creation of this job shadowing opportunity allows the participants to get the necessary credits and experience that leads to more work and ultimately a diverse, equitable, and inclusive industry.

Over 100 candidates applied from across Canada who identify as Black, Indigenous and People of Colour. **Ryan Atimoyoo** (British Columbia) and **Saleema Nawaz** (Quebec) will enter the Level UP Program writers' stream and learn the collaborative ropes of a writers' room on the set of *Hudson & Rex* for four weeks. Joining the directors' stream are **Reza Dahya** (Ontario) and **Latonia Hartery** (Newfoundland), who will be immersed in day-to-day interactions with the series' directors and production crew. Each shadowing opportunity will take place between August and December 2022.

The 2022 Level UP director's stream participants are:

Reza Dahya is a South Asian director from Toronto, ON. Dahya is known for his work as a host and producer of OTA Live on FLOW 93.5FM Radio. He is an alumnus of the Canadian Film Centre's Directors' Lab. Dahya's film credits include, the short film *Esha* (2011), the crowd-funded *Five Dollars* (2013), which premiered at the TIFF Kids International Film Festival, screened internationally, and aired on CBC Television, and *Chameleon* (2015), a CFC short film created in conjunction writer Chris Cromie and producer Josh Ary. He recently secured Canadian distribution for his debut feature length film, *Boxcutter*, through Game Theory Films, with the aim to shoot in Toronto the summer of 2023.

Latonia Hartery is an Indigenous writer, director and producer from Milltown, NL, currently residing in St. John's, NL. She is an experienced documentary filmmaker who has written and directed CBC *Land and Sea* episodes such as *Rum Running*, and *Last Sardine Outpost*, as well as production managed, and line produced six other episodes for that series. She has also directed longer form TV documentaries, such as the hit series *Keeping Canada Alive*. Her production skills were honed on CBC's award-winning *DocZones*. She has written and directed several short films, including the award-winning *Sadie*, as well as *Escape Routes* and *Wind Money*. She recently produced the RBC Michelle Jackson Award-winning film *Crocuses* (2016). She is currently producing her first feature.

The 2022 Level UP writers' stream participants are:

Ryan Atimoyoo is an Indigenous screenwriter and filmmaker from Little Pine Reserve, SK, currently residing in Vancouver, BC. He holds an MFA in Screenwriting from UBC and is a recent grad of the Pacific Screenwriting Program. He recently completed a role as a script coordinator for the Netflix original superhero crime-action series, *Grendel*, based on the award-winning Dark Horse comic book series.

Saleema Nawaz is a South Asian writer based in Montreal, QC. Her most recent novel, *Songs for the End of the World*, became an instant national bestseller and was named a Book of the Year by the *Globe and Mail*, *Quill & Quire*, and *49th Shelf*. She is also the author of the novel *Bone and Bread* and the short-story collection *Mother Superior*.

"We are excited to be returning with this opportunity again this year. Last year through the program we launched four careers in this industry, and one of our participants got hired onto the show for the season! - At the end of the day that is why we do programs like these. Getting experience, credit and paid is key to leveling up our racially diverse talent."

"Shaftesbury believes in supporting underrepresented Canadian talent, in front and behind the camera. We are proud to be partnering with Reelworld to continue this work. Last year's inaugural program was a great success, so much so, one of last year's participants, JJ Neepin, is returning to direct one episode of *Hudson & Rex* Season 5. We look forward to meeting this year's participants, and discover a new wave of talent," said Shaftesbury Chairman and President, and Hudson & Rex Executive Producer Christina Jennings.

"The *Hudson & Rex* cast and crew are excited to work with this year's new crop of Level UP participants and further our partnership with Reelworld," said Lisa Porter, President of Pope Productions and *Hudson & Rex* Executive Producer. "*Hudson & Rex* is seen worldwide and it's important that our team reflects our audiences."

In 2021, the participants of the Level UP Program were [Nauzanin Knight](#), [Mark Harnett](#), [JJ Neepin](#) and [Adrian Wallace](#).

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About Reelworld

Reelworld was founded in 2000 by award-winning actress and producer Tonya Williams to advance opportunities for Canadians who are Black, Indigenous, Asian, South Asian, and People of Colour in the screen industries by providing professional development and advocating for racial equity in Canadian content and production. **Reelworld Screen Institute**, a non-profit, provides training programs and presents the acclaimed **Reelworld Film Festival**, which celebrates stories by racialized Canadians. Providing access to opportunities is core to Reelworld, and **Access Reelworld** is Canada's leading hiring platform for racialized crews and talent. **Reelworld Foundation**, a registered charity, is transforming the industry by creating mechanisms that hold systems accountable for greater equity. Visit [Reelworld.ca](https://reelworld.ca).

About Citytv

Citytv and Citytv.com offer viewers intensely-local and diverse content through its seven television stations in Toronto, Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton, Saskatchewan, Winnipeg, and Montreal, along with the award-winning Citytv app, which is available on iOS, Android, Samsung TV, Apple TV, and Fire TV Stick devices. Citytv live and video on-demand programming can also be watched on Rogers Ignite TV, Bell Fibe, and Citytv+ available with Prime Video. Citytv delivers an entertaining mix of Canadian and acquired prime-time programming, news, and lifestyle content from influential brands

such as Breakfast Television, Cityline, and CityNews. Citytv is part of Rogers Sports & Media, which is a subsidiary of Rogers Communications Inc. (TSX, NYSE: RCI).

About Shaftesbury

Shaftesbury is an award-winning creator and producer of original content for television, film, and digital, established in 1987 by Christina Jennings, Chairman and President. Shaftesbury's current primetime slate includes 16 seasons of the international hit series *Murdoch Mysteries* for CBC Television, Ovation TV, ION Plus, Acorn TV, and Alibi Channel, and five seasons of *Hudson & Rex* for Citytv, ION, UP Faith & Family, and Alibi Channel. Both series are available in over 150 countries worldwide. Other projects include: the acclaimed horror anthology series *Slasher* on Shudder and Hollywood Suite, with Emmy® Award-winner Eric McCormack starring in the upcoming fifth season; three seasons of the acclaimed six-part event series *Departure* for Global starring Emmy® Award-winner Archie Panjabi and the late Academy® Award-winner Christopher Plummer; and *SisterS*, a new Irish-Canadian co-production by and starring Sarah Goldberg (*Barry*) and Susan Stanley, for Crave, RTÉ and IFC. Visit Shaftesbury.ca.

About Pope Productions

Pope Productions is a St. John's based media production company founded by the late Paul Pope, and now helmed by producer Lisa Porter. The production company's current television project is the fifth season of *Hudson & Rex* for Citytv, now seen in over 120 territories worldwide. The company's features and MOWs include the CBC comedy *A Christmas Fury* and festival favourites *Hunting Pignut*, *Beat Down* and *Grown Up Movie Star*, which scored a Special Jury Prize at Sundance for Tatiana Maslany. Documentaries include *It's Mental*, *Heavy Weather Presents*, the multi award winning *My Left Breast*, *Legends and Lore of the North Atlantic*, and *Going the Distance*. From the historical dramatic miniseries *Above and Beyond*, to the classic comedy *Rare Birds*, and the outrageous series *Drunk and on Drugs: The Happy Funtime Hour*, Pope Productions' rich repertoire reflects its deep commitment to a vibrant production industry both in Newfoundland and nationally. Visit PopeProductions.com.

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