

Reelworld and Rogers Sports & Media announce the 2021 Level UP program participants.

July 27, 2021. Toronto: The final four participants have been chosen for the [Level UP Program](#) in partnership between Access Reelworld, Rogers Sports & Media, and Shaftesbury Films and Pope Productions for a paid job shadowing opportunity with Citytv's hit series *Hudson & Rex*. Two writers and two directors are now preparing to head out to Newfoundland and Labrador to gain on-the-ground experience on the set of ***Hudson & Rex***, now shooting its fourth season.

Out of hundreds of writers and directors from across Canada who identify as Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour, Nauzanin Knight (Alberta) and Mark Harnett (Newfoundland and Labrador) 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 between August and November, 2021. Joining the directors' stream are JJ Neepin (Manitoba) and Adrian Wallace (Ontario), who will be immersed in the day-to-day interactions with the show's directors and key crew. Each shadowing opportunity will be 4 weeks long and take place between September and December, 2021.

[Nauzanin Knight](#) is a biracial Caribbean/Middle Eastern writer, director, and producer based in Edmonton, Alberta. Her written works include the short film *My Lyric I Never Knew* (CBC GEM) and the documentary *Precarity* (TELUS Optik on Demand). Knight is a published writer with the 2015 book *State Terrorism in Iran*.

[Mark Harnett](#) is an Indigenous writer and comedian living in Lewisporte, Newfoundland and Labrador. Harnett's "suggestive" style comedy is rooted in his personal experiences and opinions, culture, political views, relationships, and being a dad. Holding certificates in Writing and Performance from Humber College in 2001 and Script to Screen Writing from Centennial College in 2014, Harnett continues to pursue his writing career while completing workshops with organizations like TODOS for Play writing, and the PEI Screenwriter Bootcamp.

[JJ Neepin](#) is an Indigenous director based in Winnipeg, Manitoba and a member of Fox Lake Cree Nation. Neepin's directorial debut was on the Sinking Ship web series Lockdown in 2020; prior to that she credits much of her learning to her role as Associate Producer for the *Trickster* series, where she received guidance from Sienna Films producers. As a member of the DGC, Neepin has gained invaluable knowledge through the Women in View Five in Focus: Indigenous program as well as their Directing for Episodic Workshop.

[Adrian Wallace](#) is an award-winning director, screenwriter and actor from Toronto, Ontario, with multi-disciplinary training in film and television. Wallace has a ferocious appetite for storytelling and life-long learning. He won a Canadian Screen Award this year for "Best Direction in a Documentary Series," where his film *Black Sun* was part of a collection of documentaries in the *Being Black In Toronto* Documentary series.

"It's critical for us to seek out diverse talent, both behind the scenes and in front of the camera in order to continue telling authentic stories that represent our audiences across the country, so we are incredibly



proud of this dynamic group set to take part in Level UP,” said Nataline Rodrigues, Director of Original Programming, Rogers Sports & Media.”

This program follows a successful Technical Training Bootcamp that launched in June 2021 where 17 people were selected out of 67 applicants to participate in a 3-day intensive training program on the set of **Hudson & Rex**. The application was only accessible to Access Reelworld members. The training included working in various crew departments like grip, electrical, and camera. Paul Pope from Pope Productions created the bootcamp to provide opportunity to racially diverse talent pursuing a career in television production. Access Reelworld partnered with Rogers Sports & Media and Citytv, Shaftesbury, and Pope Productions to reach racially diverse communities in Newfoundland and Labrador and get talent applying to these opportunities through its platform.

“The bootcamp turned out to be more successful than I had hoped for,” said Paul Pope, Executive Producer, Pope Productions. “9 participants have been selected for the daily list, 3 have been offered term contracts that will become permanent, 1 has been recommended for the IATSE 667 camera trainee program, 2 will get daily work in grip/electric, 2 in the art department, and 1 in the AD department.”

The Level UP Program and the Technical Training Bootcamp are a step towards creating more access and inclusion for Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour in the television industry. The creation of training and shadowing opportunities allows the participants to get the necessary credits and experience that leads to more work and ultimately a diverse, equitable, and inclusive industry.

“Coming off the success of our ‘technical bootcamp’, the Hudson & Rex cast and crew are excited to work with the four Level UP participants and further the partnership with Access Reelworld,” said Paul Pope, President of Pope Productions Ltd. “Hudson & Rex is seen worldwide, so it’s important that our team reflects this audience. It will only make our show better.”

“At Reelworld Screen Institute we are very focused on getting our Canadian Black, Indigenous, People of Colour in the screen industry into paid shadowing experiences,” said Tonya Williams, Founder and Executive Director of Reelworld Screen Institute. “We are so happy that Rogers Sports & Media and Citytv, Shaftesbury and Pope Productions were the first to step up and create these life changing opportunities for our talent. We hope this will be the first in many more similar opportunities”

See the list of participants in the Level UP Technical Boot Camp and connect with them on Access Reelworld to see their skills and hire them for your projects:

[Richard Bradford](#), [Jessica Brown](#), [Wei Xin Chin](#), [Azal Dosanjh](#), [Amanda Gear](#), [Mark Harnett](#), [Robert Hicks](#), [Kennedy King](#), [Amoy Hutchinson](#), [Jay Brandon Lee](#), [Lydia Makaga](#), [Simbarashe Stephen Matoushaya](#), [Mayowa Ogunyemi](#), [Mayra Sanchez](#), [AbdelRahman Shaalan](#)

About Access Reelworld www.accessreelworld.ca

Launched in July 2020, Access Reelworld is fully transparent and the largest searchable, hiring and job posting platform in Canada for racially diverse talent in over 100 job categories (above-the-line and



below-the-line). It is a valuable tool for all production companies, broadcasters and streaming platforms looking to hire racially diverse talent, creatives, crew, and production staff for their projects.

We believe that creating a space for authentic voices at all levels of the film and television industries is crucial to building a better and more respectful world. Hiring diverse talent helps to tell well-rounded and informed stories and attract additional audiences.

About Reelworld www.reelworld.ca

Founded by Tonya Williams in 2000, the Reelworld Screen Institute (non profit) formally Reelworld Film Festival and Reelworld Foundation (charity) are groundbreaking initiatives in Canada that draw attention to the lack of racially diverse and indigenous talent in mainstream media - both in front of and behind the screen. Reelworld is the largest national platform dedicated to changing the face of the media landscape by empowering and showcasing Canadians identifying as Black, Indigenous, Asian, South Asian, Middle Eastern, and Latin American talent in the screen-based industries.

About Rogers Sports & Media

Rogers Sports & Media is a diverse sports and content company that engages more than 30 million Canadians each week. The company's multimedia offerings include 54 radio stations, 29 local TV stations, 23 conventional and specialty television stations, podcasts, digital and e-commerce websites, and sporting events. Rogers Sports & Media delivers unique storytelling through its range of powerful brands: Citytv, OMNI Television, FX, TSC, 680 NEWS, 98.1 CHFI, KiSS, Breakfast Television, Cityline, CityNews, Sportsnet – Canada's #1 sports network, and the Blue Jays – Canada's only Major League Baseball team. Rogers Sports & Media is a subsidiary of Rogers Communications Inc. (TSX, NYSE: RCI). Visit RogersSportsandMedia.com, and AllInForEquity.ca

About Pope Productions

"Pope Productions has always been an inclusive and diverse company, advocating for rights of marginalized groups, including the LGBT+ community and supporting gender parity initiatives," says Paul Pope, President of Pope Productions Ltd. "In light of recent events, we are reminded that there is much more that we can do. We are directly reaching out to Black and Indigenous Persons of Colour (BIPOC) who have an interest in working in the television production industry."

About Shaftesbury

*Shaftesbury is an award-winning creator and producer of original content for television, film, and digital. Shaftesbury's current slate includes 2 seasons of ratings hit *Departure* for Global/Corus Entertainment, Peacock and NBC Universal, 14 seasons of fan favourite *Murdoch Mysteries* for CBC, Acorn TV and UKTV, four seasons of detective drama *Frankie Drake Mysteries* for CBC and UKTV, four seasons of critically acclaimed horror series *Slasher* with the current season being produced for release on Shudder, three seasons of *Hudson & Rex* for Citytv/Rogers Sports & Media, *Dead Still* for RTÉ, Acorn TV, and Citytv/Rogers Sports & Media, and *The Sounds* for CBC, Acorn TV, and Sky NZ. www.shaftesbury.ca*



Contact Info:

Alison Cosgrove, Director of Communications

Reelworld Film Festival and Reelworld Screen Institute

media@reelworld.ca