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THE LEVEL UP PROGRAM WITH REELWORLD AND ROGERS SPORTS & MEDIA RETURNS FOR A SECOND YEAR

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

– Applications are now open across Canada through [Access Reelworld](#) –

TORONTO (JUNE 7, 2022) – The **Level UP Program** with Reelworld and Rogers Sports & Media returns for a second year on the set of Citytv's #1 original scripted hit series *Hudson & Rex*. Two writers and two directors from racialized equity-seeking communities including Black, Indigenous, Asian, and People of Colour, will be selected to participate in the four-week, paid experience on set and in the writers' room, with Shaftesbury and Pope Productions in St. John's, Newfoundland, and Labrador. Applications are now open across Canada through [Access Reelworld](#), Canada's largest searchable hiring database for the screen industry. Applications close at 12 midnight EDT on June 21, 2022.

The **Level UP Program** was created in partnership with Reelworld Screen Institute, Rogers Sports & Media, and *Hudson & Rex* producers, to provide training to racially diverse writers and directors in the Canadian screen industries through job shadowing and on-set experience.

"I am so grateful for the opportunity the Level UP Program opened up for me. My time on *Hudson & Rex*, learning from director Deanne Foley, was invaluable. At the time it wasn't certain if I would return to the show as a director, but no matter the outcome, I knew I would benefit from the experience," shared **JJ Neepin, Director, and participant of the 2021 Level UP Program**. "When I opened the email offering me an episode in season 5 of *Hudson & Rex*, I didn't know whether to jump for joy or cry. I'm looking forward to this next fun challenge. If it weren't for Level UP, who knows how much longer I would have had to keep searching for a way into directing television."

This unique opportunity fosters and strengthens relationships between emerging talent and key crew while learning from Senior Writers and Directors. These interactions are crucial in the upward trajectory of careers as evidenced by the successes of last year's participants.

"We salute Rogers Sports & Media, Shaftesbury and Pope Productions for their commitment to creating more opportunity and access to racially diverse crew, creatives, and production staff. The Level Up Program offers invaluable professional development and helps advance the careers of Canadians who are Black, Indigenous, Asian, and People of Colour in the screen industries," said Tonya Williams, Founder and Executive Director of Reelworld Screen Institute.

“We’re very proud to see the successes of Level UP’s first year recipients and thrilled to be building on this initiative for a second year thanks to our incredible partners. Programs like these help create even more opportunities for talented new voices and perspectives on our Canadian productions, while also forging meaningful connections and growth for emerging creatives from diverse communities which benefit our industry overall,” said Nataline Rodrigues, Director of Original Programming, Rogers Sports & Media.

“Shaftesbury is committed to supporting underrepresented Canadian talent, in front of and behind the camera, and we are proud to be partnering with Reelworld again to continue that work. Last year’s program was such a success, and we are looking forward to working with this year’s recruits,” said Shaftesbury Chairman and President Christina Jennings.

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.

About Rogers Sports & Media

Rogers Sports & Media is a diverse sports and content company that engages more than 32 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, 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.

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* and five seasons of *Hudson & Rex*, which are both available in over 120 countries worldwide. Other projects include five seasons of the critically acclaimed horror anthology series *Slasher*, starring Eric McCormack and David Cronenberg, and three seasons of *Departure*, starring Emmy® Award-winner Archie Panjabi and the late Academy Award-winner Christopher Plummer. 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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