

MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release

SIX SASKATCHEWAN-BASED SCRIPTWRITERS ACCEPTED TO SASKFILM'S FIRST SCREENWRITER IN RESIDENCE PROGRAM

New SaskFilm program is designed to provide aspiring scriptwriters an opportunity to prepare scripts for the Canadian and international market

February 7, 2004 (Regina, SK) – The Saskatchewan Film and Video Development Corporation (SaskFilm) is pleased to announce the six successful applicants to the new Screenwriter-in-Residence program. Administered by SaskFilm, the Program is designed to develop, train and increase the profile of the screenwriting community in Saskatchewan.

The Screenwriter-in-Residence program met with overwhelming response from Saskatchewan's writing community. An independent jury selected the six aspiring screenwriters from a total of 38 applications.

Veteran screenwriter Bill Boyle will lead the group of Saskatchewan-based screenwriters through the stages of development, story consultations and script editing over a 10 month period in both Regina and Saskatoon. He will work with each of the successful applicants to deliver completed scripts within pre-set time limits and teach them the intricacies of packaging and selling a script.

"What I found most exciting was how many applications came from writers already established in other disciplines," noted Bill Boyle, SaskFilm's Writer-in-Residence. "The fact that novelists, playwrights and poets are now showing an interest in screenwriting bodes well for the program as well as for the future of screenwriting in the province."

"By providing Saskatchewan's writing community with access to a veteran screenwriter, we hope to leverage our talent by producing more market-ready screenplays for the Canadian and international marketplace," says Valerie Creighton, C.E.O and Film Commissioner of SaskFilm.

The successful Writer-in-Residence participants and their projects are:

- **Teri Armitage, "Time to Reap":** Raised in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, Teri Armitage studied Journalism and Comparative Literature at Carleton University, and the University of Saskatchewan. Her first feature, *Exposure*, was selected by the Praxis Centre for Screenwriting in 1998. Her short films include *Jon's Online Suicide Diary* (2001 NSI/SaskFilm What's Next Award) and *Big Mother* (2003 ZeD Drama Prize). She graduated from the Alliance-Atlantis Film Resident Programme, Writers' Lab, at the Canadian Film Centre in 2003.

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About “Time to Reap”: When a farm accident leaves Jessie Grassick stranded in the middle of nowhere fighting for his life, he must come to terms with the chain of events that have bound him to a struggling family farm and reap the lessons of his past in order to save his own life

- **Maureen Bradley, “Fear of Landing”:** Filmmaker, educator and writer Maureen Bradley has directed 27 short films. Her award-winning productions have screened at galleries and festivals around the globe including the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Many of her productions have been broadcast in North America and abroad and retrospectives of her work have screened at festivals across Canada. This summer she releases a half-hour drama entitled *What Remains Human*.

About “Fear of Landing”: Set in Regina, *Fear of Landing* is a black comedy about the cycles of life seen through the eyes of reclusive Jackie. She thought her mother's death would bring her estranged siblings back to the fold, but long-buried secrets explode when the family reunites for a very unusual burial.

- **Trevor Cunningham, “Rocket Road”:** After working in the assistant director department for eight years, Regina based writer/director Trevor Cunningham wrote and directed his first feature *The Pedestrian* in 2003. He is currently writing *Bride of the Grave Robber* and is developing a television series with Noel Baker titled *Hook Man Speaks*, based on the novel by Matt Clark.

About “Rocket Road”: Johnny and his crazy Uncle Ollie head out on the roads of Saskatchewan to sell a priceless Rocket Richard hockey card, in hopes of getting rich. Comedic high jinx and strange characters populate this story of love, responsibility and what appears to be the ghost of an old hockey player.

- **Joadie Jurgova, “Channel 64”:** La Ronge-based writer Joadie Jurgova has worked as an actress in theatre and film in both Canada and Europe. Her first screenplay, *Rabbit Fall*, won the 2002 WIFT–T/CBC Emerging Screenwriter's Award and has been optioned by Kahani Entertainment. Her first feature-length screenplay, *Crime and Punishment*, won a Praxis 2003 Fellowship and is under option in Los Angeles. *Channel 64* will be her third feature-length drama.

About “Channel 64”: In a small northern Saskatchewan town, there is a camera that sits above the three-way stop, running a live feed to the local cable channel Channel 64. It keeps a careful watch over the comings and goings of all the town's residents. When a local man mysteriously disappears, the lonely, the bored, and the restless viewers of Channel 64 want to know why. And nobody is above suspicion...

- **Lois Simmie, “The Secret Lives of Sgt. John Wilson”:** Saskatoon-based writer Lois Simmie has written adult novels, short stories, radio dramas and seven children's books. Her novel, *They Shouldn't Make You Promise That*, has been in print for 24 years. Her latest novel is *What I'm Trying to Say is Goodbye*.

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About “*The Secret Lives of Sgt. John Wilson*”: Based on the novel written by Simmie, this true story chronicles the life of a passionate man who risks everything for love, the tale of a lawman gone terribly wrong. A handsome rogue, a crime of passion and a piece of RCMP history all play out against the backdrop of WWI, an apocalyptic flu epidemic and a wave of immigration.

- **Jason Young, “*The Prisoner’s Millions*”:** Saskatoon-based Jason Young has been writing for several years in a variety of genres, including short fiction, poetry, and screenplays. In 2002 he served as head writer on *Powderkeg*, a live comedy series, and in 2004 his award-winning short film *How to Disappear Completely* premiered at the Cannes Film Festival.

About “*The Prisoner’s Millions*”: *The Prisoner’s Millions* is the story of Benny Limbauer, a prison guard who writes fake love letters to a prisoner in order to find out where he's stashed his loot. Things take a twist when the prisoner breaks out, and Benny hires an ex-soap opera actress to pose as the woman he invented on paper. Hilarious twists and turns ensue as the trio hits the road in desperate pursuit of the prisoner's hidden millions.

About Bill Boyle, Writer-in-Residence:

Originally from Saskatchewan, Bill Boyle received his university education at the University of Saskatchewan. Over the past twenty-five years he has been involved in various capacities of the film industry. For six years he was the Executive Director of the Toronto Film Makers Co-operative and sat on the executive board of the Council of Canadian Film Makers for three. He was in charge of the ‘alternate film’ programming series for the first two years of the Toronto Film Festival and has been a juror on the Canadian Film Awards. As a screenwriter, Bill Boyle has received a Harold Greenberg Fund grant and was nominated for an ACTRA Award for his 90-minute CBC drama, *Crossbar*. After a lengthy detour as a Talent Manager, he returned to screenwriting in 1994. In 1999, he completed his third screenplay *Now & Forever* which was optioned by WIC Entertainment and produced in 2001 in Saskatoon. Directed by Bob Clark, it starred Mia Kirshner and earned the Outstanding Canadian Feature award at the ReelWorld Film Festival in Toronto in 2003.

SaskFilm and Video Development Corporation (SaskFilm) enables the film, television and interactive industry in Saskatchewan to continually enhance the quality, quantity and marketability of its products and resources. SaskFilm was established to stimulate and foster the development of an indigenous film, video and interactive industry through the administration of the Saskatchewan Film Employment Tax Credit Program; managing the state of the art Canada/Saskatchewan Production Studios; and by providing financial assistance to qualified production companies for purposes of developing, producing and distributing film, video and interactive products.

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