



**Gender Parity in Key Creative Roles**  
**Progress Report**

**January 31, 2021**

## **Introduction**

On December 13, 2018, Corus was pleased to participate in the CRTC's Women in Production Summit, alongside Canada's largest public and private-sector broadcasters.

During the Summit, all participants agreed that, although there has been some progress in recent years, current data shows that women continue to face barriers to career advancement in the Canadian film and television production industry. Gender under-representation in key creative positions must be addressed. Progress on this front is not only good for women and society in general, but it also makes good business sense. Corus is committed to finding lasting solutions to ensure more women play leading roles in our industry.

In this report, we provide Corus' 2021 progress report on our commitment to achieve gender parity in key creative roles for all big budget drama series by 2025, across our portfolio of services.

## **Diversity Matters and Corus is Closing the Gap**

Corus has been promoting diversity for many years as an important part of our content strategy. We have made it our mission to purposefully seek out projects led by women and have made important progress on expanding roles for women in our commissioned productions. Our series are populated with strong female voices, both behind and in front of the camera. We are actively developing and giving opportunities to women on our shows.

Among the big budget dramas that Corus commissioned during the 2019-2020 broadcast year, we saw increases in the percentage of women in key creative roles over those reported last year. More specifically, women filled 62% of producer roles, 44% of writer roles, and 33% of director roles. Further specifics related to women occupying key creative roles in all genres, can be found in Appendix "A".

In the past few years, we have worked to build a path for hiring more women in the director's chair, which has traditionally been a male-dominated role. Along with our production partners, we have created shadowing opportunities that have led upcoming female directors to direct episodes of established series in all genres. We are confident the experience these talented young directors have gained on successful Corus series will accelerate their development, and deepen the talent pool of female directors in Canada.

Recent examples of Corus commissioned programming that has achieved a balance of women in key creative roles include:

**Private Eyes - Season 4:** The Private Eyes creative team crafts episodic case stories that reflect strong female characters and showcase the diversity of Toronto. Our co-lead is a woman (Cindy Sampson). Shade's daughter Jules (Jordyn Negri), represents a character with a disability, her character portrays someone with vision impairment. The agency assistant Zoe, (Samantha Wan), is a visible minority. Danica, the police officer who works closely with Angie and Shade (Ruth Goodwin) is a member of the LGBTQ community. The great and diverse female representation of this program is possible through representation behind the scenes; 2 out of 5 executive producers, the co-showrunner, 6 out of 9 writers are all women. Additionally, women directed 3 out of 12 episodes.

**Departure – Season 2:** This global conspiracy thriller showcases a diverse cast that reflects the world we live in led by diverse female investigator (Archie Panjabi) and FBI agent (Karen LeBlanc) and supported by ensemble cast which includes Wendy Crewson and Kelly McCormack. The team behind the scenes is as diverse as the cast on screen. Departure comes to us through the production company Shaftesbury, owned by Christina Jennings. The program was created, written and co-executive produced by diverse writer Vincent Shiao with a majority female writing team. The producing team includes a top-notch team of diverse female producers including Teresa Ho (Producer) and Archie Panjabi (Executive Producer), as well as other female executive producers, producers and women in key creative roles.

**Family Law – Season 1:** Family Law prioritizes diverse storytelling with a strong focus on women in front of and behind the camera led by a woman creator and showrunner. In the production of season 1, three of the writers were women, four episodes were directed by women and one of the executive producers of the program is a woman. The producers of Family Law have also taken on a director shadow initiative with the DGC in BC, which has allowed us to have two shadow directors - a BIPOC director and one female-identifying member of the LGBTQ+ community, with aims of having them direct their own episodes in future seasons.

**Nurses – Season 1:** Nurses is a largely female led production; 80 percent of the producers are women including Ilana Frank, Jocelyn Hamilton, and Linda Pope. Half of the writers were women, 4 episodes were directed by women and 1 episode was directed by a visual minority.

In addition to the progress seen in the large drama series on Corus services, many of the lifestyle programs have also seen increases in the number of women in key creative roles. Examples include:

**History Erased - Season 2:** In each episode, we imagine the world without a specific country as their game-changing leaders, innovators and social-political achievements are erased. The cast of History Erased Season 2 includes visibly diverse and female talent to ensure a proper reflection of each country's true cultural representation. In addition, there were many female contributors and experts, as well as female cast in the dramatizations. This wide representation continues off the screen with the majority of the producers and half of the writers and directors being women.

**Big Brother Canada - Season 8:** Big Brother Canada follows a group of strangers living together in a house outfitted with dozens of cameras and microphones recording their every move 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Each week the houseguests competed in a variety of challenges and one by one, voted one another out of the house until a winner is chosen. Houseguests are cast from across the country and were chosen in part to reflect the vast diversity of Canadians. Half of the houseguests are women. Behind the scenes, 4 of the 9 producers and 9 of the 19 story editors are women, and Arisa Cox was named an Executive Producer in 2020.

**Fire Masters - Seasons 1B and 2A:** This competition series features 3 chefs pushing their grilling talents to the limits as they battle through a series of culinary challenges. In these two seasons of the program, half of the judges are women with at least one, if not more, female judges in each episode. Behind the scenes, 6 of the 6 producers and 3 story editors are women.

**Hot Market - Season 1:** Hot Market follows top real estate agents Odeen Eccleston, Rizwan Malik, Rana Khaled, David Cinelli and Stephanie Adams as they navigate the high-stakes world of one of Canada's most competitive housing markets. These agents are always hustling to land the biggest listings, find their buyers the most luxurious dream homes, and earn their clients top dollar through transformative renovations and staging. In order for these agents to make it in this hot market, it is all about the buy, the sell and the hustle. Over half of the featured real estate agents are women. Behind the scenes, 7 of the 8 producers and 2 of the 3 directors are women.

**Island of Bryan - Season 2:** In this second season of the hit show, Bryan and Sarah Baeumler continue to work on their biggest renovation project to date. They have moved to the Bahamas with their four children, all to overhaul a run-down resort and turn it into a booming business. Despite the stunning backdrop of Bahamas' white beaches and crystal blue water, in Season 1 they quickly discovered that this was no vacation. Faced with daily hurdles and unforeseen challenges due to construction delays and design limitations, Bryan and Sarah must continue to work together to turn their embattled piece of paradise into the stunning dream of the Caerula Mar Club. Island of Bryan is

filmed on South Andros, in the Bahamas. The show features dozens of local Bahamians over the course of the series, from skilled tradespeople to business owners who make their home on South Andros. Behind the scenes, 2 of the 2 producers and 1 of the 3 directors are women.

**Junior Chef Showdown - Season 1:** Small cooks display extra-large talent in this culinary competition series that showcases extraordinary young chefs. Many of the young chefs take pride in creating dishes that feature their cultural backgrounds. 2 of the 3 hosts are women. Eight of the fourteen competitors are female. Behind the scenes, 4 of the 5 producers are women.

**Top Chef Canada - Season 8:** This season of Canada's most prestigious culinary competition was one of the most exciting to date featuring several stories that highlighted the diversity of Canada's culinary scene. Of the 12 competing chefs, 5 were women, 2 of the 4 resident judges were female, and the show was hosted by Eden Grinshpan. Behind the scenes, 3 of the 5 producers and 1 of 1 director were women

### **The Women in Production of Corus**

Corus continues to be committed to fostering a strong, vibrant and sustainable media industry that is both domestically successful and globally competitive.

We are extremely proud to count talented women among our internal team in charge of our commissioning strategy, which is led by Corus' Senior Vice President of Corus Original and Corus Studios Lisa Godfrey. Lisa's team includes three female executives who are advocates for the advancement and inclusion of women and diversity in our industry and in our shows. This team is purposeful in its approach to bring gender balance to all of our commissioned properties and encourages our production partners to hire women in all key creative roles. Together, they work with producers to ensure we continue to train, hire and promote women and diverse peoples. We work to ensure that our scripts reflect the world around us, and do not exploit or condone violence, racism, or sexism.

Corus is equally proud of the talented women who lead Nelvana, Canada's premier animation company and a world-leading producer and distributor of children's content distributed in more than 169 countries worldwide. The Nelvana team led by President Pam Westman, also has women leaders in the roles of Head of Nelvana Enterprise, Head of Studio and Head of Development.

Nelvana, continues to ensure that there is gender balance and cultural diversity on every writing team, and gender balance and cultural diversity with every program/series produced and on-screen. This includes ensuring

non-human characters have gender balance with particular attention to assumptions and stereotypes (i.e. robots always perceived as male).

The efforts in assigning director positions to women have been very successful at Nelvana. In 2020-2021, women directed 33% of animation production, including two series. In addition, over the past year, efforts in expanding opportunities for female composers has been a success with a number of new female composers hired for Nelvana series.

### **Initiatives**

Corus' ongoing initiatives to address the gender gap in the past year have included:

- **Women in Communications and Technology (WCT)** - Corus continues to support WCT, by sponsoring the Corus mentorship program, which is designed to help women advance to senior roles within the communications industries. Cheryl Fullerton, Corus' Executive Vice President, People & Communications, sits on the Board of WCT.
- **Corus Chair in "Women in Management"** - Corus' commitment to the career progression of women of all cultures and backgrounds is recognized through its support of the Corus Entertainment Chair in "Women in Management" at the Richard Ivey School of Business at the University of Western Ontario. The Chair was established by Corus to develop innovative research, teaching materials and outreach programs on Women in Management and to broaden the impact of the school's unique teaching and research programs. This research explores culturally related themes such as the impact of race on perceptions of fairness in promotions and methods of evaluating the effectiveness of organizational diversity issues.
- **Women in Film and Television – Toronto Chapter (WIFT-T)** – Corus continues to be an active member of WIFT-T as sponsor of the Corus Media Management Accelerator program, which is designed for screen-based professionals and entrepreneurs with less than five years of management experience. Developed in conjunction with the G. Raymond Chang School of Continuing Education at Ryerson University, this program focuses on essential management principals required for future leaders. Susan Alexander, Corus' Production Executive, Original Content, Scripted, sits on the Board.
- **Banff World Media Festival** - Every year at the Banff World Media Festival, Corus continues to co-host the Global Women in Power Lunch

with A+E Networks which brings together a panel of women in the industry to discuss the challenges and triumphs they have faced in their careers. With very candid conversations, the lunch is geared to women in the screen-based industry. Athena Georgaklis, Head of Development, at Nelvana, is a member of the BANFF Content Advisory Board for 2021.

- **BANFF Corus Writer’s Apprentice Program 2020** - Corus’ approach this year was to focus on underrepresented voices from a wide range of backgrounds with unique and diverse stories to tell. Five writers were chosen from a wide variety of backgrounds and brought a fresh perspective to the program. The 2020 cohort received a premium pass to BANFF 2020 Virtual Edition with access to panels, keynotes, master classes and networking opportunities from May to September, virtual mentorship opportunities with key development executives, placement in the story department of a Canadian primetime series and complimentary registration to BANFF 2021.
- **Forward Together** – Corus is a founding partner of Forward Together which is a movement forged out of a vision to bring companies and professional women together to share best practices and resources internal to one organization with all women, to enable best in class learning across industries. Whether it is world-class training, top-notch speakers, or excellent facilities, companies leverage their internal resources that, when shared broadly, are used to benefits and impact significantly more women in our greater community. Corus is the only media organization among its members.

**Mentoring and Industry activity** -Members of the Original Production team have always participated in industry initiatives that support diverse talent through festivals and programs such as Reelworld, imagineNATIVE, Hot Docs, National Screen Institute’s Totally Television, Banff, Whistler Film Festival, among others. This year we have expanded efforts to provide more opportunities for direct mentorship specifically focusing on diverse and BIPOC creators. Several team members are partnered with diverse talent through mentorship programs from Reelworld, WIFT, Whistler Film Festival “Women in Focus” and the Banff Netflix Diversity of Voices Initiatives. Corus team members also participated in the Creators of Color Incubator this year, which focused on Women of Color, as well as attended pitch meetings through BIPOCTV Mentorship Mondays a BIPOCTV Kids' TV Writing Bootcamp

- **Building Resilient Communities with Corus** -Corus collaborated with Women in Communications & Technology on a “Building Resilient Communities” webinar in May 2020 that focused on the importance of community in a physically distanced world. Moderated by Sangita Patel, host at *ET Canada*, the webinar featured Cheryl Fullerton, EVP, People & Communications and Alexandra Henderson, VP, Global News, discussing the significance of connectivity and cohesion within the company and their teams.
- **Wednesdays with WIFT - Development: An ANIMATED Discussion!** - As part of Women in Film & Television’s *Wednesdays with WIFT* sessions, Corus facilitated the “*Development: An Animated Discussion*” webinar that was hosted by Nelvana’s Head of Development, Athena Georgaklis, and featured women in leadership roles at Canada’s content creation studios discussing the animation space, staying connected, pitching IP and sourcing new content to the WIFT-T community.

**Corus’ Voluntary Goal to Work towards Gender Parity in Key Creative Roles for all big budget drama series by 2025**

Our company is extremely proud of the work it has done and continues to close the gap for women in our industry and we know we have made tangible progress. We recognize there is more work to be done, however we are making progress towards our goal. This is clear when you see that the percentage of women producers in our big budget dramas already exceeds parity. Progress on this front is not only good for women and our industry, it also makes good business sense.

**A Whole-of-Industry Approach to Gender Parity is Needed**

Corus remains committed to closing the gap for women in our industry, and we will continue to work towards achieving gender parity in key creative roles for all big budget drama series by 2025 across our portfolio of services, including Director, Writer and Executive Producer/Showrunner. We will exert our decision-making powers to affect change in Nelvana programming, continue to support the development of new creative talent through a range of initiatives like our director-shadowing program, and use our power/influence to approve key creative talent in commissioned properties as a means to affect change in Canadian independent productions, but we cannot do it alone.

While we will continue to do our part to drive the decisions we can control, we must not forget that CRTC regulations require us to purchase the vast majority of our high budget programming from independent Canadian producers, over whom we have limited control. We also cannot forget that large, unregulated Internet-based broadcasters now commission a significant and growing percentage of film and television productions in Canada.

We hope these other parties will join us in this important effort. Only together, with a whole-of-industry approach, which includes Canadian independent producers and digital media broadcasters, can we achieve lasting change for women in our industry.

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