

# **BANFF**

**WORLD MEDIA FESTIVAL**

## **Banff World Media Festival announces first keynotes, plans for in-person 2022 event**

**Set in the idyllic Rocky Mountains, the festival is planning to safely return in-person June 12-15, 2022.**

**Pearlena Igbokwe, Chairman at Universal Studio Group confirmed as the first keynote 'Summit Series' speaker. Festival to kick off with exclusive 'In Conversation' session with the Dean of Brown University's School of Public Health and pandemic expert Dr. Ashish K. Jha and renowned philanthropist and entrepreneur Frank Giustra.**

**The renowned Rockie Awards International Program Competition confirmed for June 13.**

**TORONTO – March 8, 2022 –** The Banff World Media Festival (BANFF) is thrilled to announce plans for this year's event to safely return in-person with an exciting lineup of Summit Series keynote speakers, topical panel discussions and celebrity master classes as well as networking opportunities to connect the global media industry to ignite new projects and support business development. The 43rd edition of the Festival will take place in-person **June 12-15, 2022** at the Fairmont Banff Springs Hotel in Banff, Alberta, Canada.



**Chairman of Universal Studio Group (USG), Pearlena Igbokwe** is confirmed to participate in a Summit Series keynote conversation at the Festival on Tuesday, June 14. Igbokwe leads four powerhouse studios: Universal Television, Universal Content Productions, Universal Television Alternative Studios and Universal International Studios that produce over 3,000 hours of programming currently airing or streaming around the globe.



An exclusive 'In Conversation With' session is confirmed with leading global health and pandemic expert **Dr. Ashish K. Jha** and renowned philanthropist and entrepreneur **Frank Giustra** to discuss the impact of mis/disinformation on public awareness and the

responsibility of the media and entertainment industry to combat it.

"BANFF is back, bigger and better than ever," said **BANFF Board Chair and Lionsgate Television Group Chair Kevin Beggs**. "We couldn't think of more fitting speakers to kick off the festivities than the head of Brown University's School of Public Health, Dr. Ashish Jha, a visionary leader who has given useful and politics-free advice to millions during the pandemic; Frank Giustra, founder of Lionsgate which has grown from a start-up in 1999 to a leading content, distribution, and platform studio today, and who was recently named Co-Chair of the Crisis Group; and Pearlana Igbokwe, Chair of Universal Television Group, one of the most prolific television studios operating in Hollywood today."

"We couldn't be more excited to welcome the industry back to the Canadian Rockies this June," said **Jenn Kuzmyk, Executive Director, Banff World Media Festival**. "The BANFF Board of Directors, Content Advisory Board and our team are working to bring you the best edition of BANFF yet, and we're thrilled to be launching this year's content slate with the announcement of keynote conversations featuring global leaders Pearlana Igbokwe, Dr. Ashish Jha and Frank Giustra."

Igbokwe and her team support a slate of ambitious storytellers, including Jordan Peele, Sam Esmail, Nahnatchka Khan, Tina Fey, Seth MacFarlane, Julie Plec, Amy Poehler, Tanya Saracho, Michael Schur, Alan Yang, David Heyman, Selwyn Hinds, Tarell McCraney, Lorne Michaels, Gareth Neame, Debra Martin Chase, Nick Antosca and Dick Wolf, among numerous others. She currently oversees 129 projects across 29 platforms worldwide, including the major broadcast networks, streamers and numerous cable outlets. Notable USG projects under her purview include *Hacks*, *Never Have I Ever*, *Girls5eva*, *Young Rock*, *The Umbrella Academy*, *Dr. Death*, *Gaslit*, *Joe vs. Carol*, *Made in Chelsea*, *Clickbait*, *We Are Lady Parts*, *Making It* and longtime NBC favorite *Hollywood Game Night*.

The timely conversation between Dr. Ashish Jha and Frank Giustra will discuss the impact of mis/disinformation on public awareness and the responsibility of media and entertainment platforms to combat it.

The renowned Rockie Awards International Program Competition is one of the world's largest program competitions of its kind, with participation from more than 55 countries annually including an international jury of 150 industry professionals. Category winners, including the Grand Jury Prize, the Francophone Prize and other special prizes, will be announced during the Festival on June 13th.

Now in its 43rd year, BANFF is the international conference and marketplace where new business partnerships are forged and new TV, film and digital media projects are ignited. With delegates from 50+ countries, the Festival attracts the world's top creators, producers, showrunners, talent, networks, studios, streamers, press and media companies. In addition, BANFF continues to deliver important fellowships and initiatives including The BANFF Spark Accelerator for Women in the Business of Media, supported by the Government of Canada which empowers and trains Canadian women entrepreneurs to launch and grow their own sustainable businesses within the screen-based industries as well as the Netflix-BANFF Diversity of Voices Initiative, a program that jumpstarts and accelerates the careers of up to 100 Black, Indigenous and People of Colour producers and creators.

#### **NOTE TO EDITOR:**

#### **ABOUT PEARLENA IGBOKWE**

Pearlena Igbokwe is Chairman, Universal Studio Group (USG), where she leads four powerhouse studios: Universal Television, Universal Content Productions (UCP), Universal Television Alternative Studios and Universal International Studios that produce over 3,000 hours of programming currently airing or streaming around the globe. Igbokwe reports directly to Jeff Shell, CEO NBCUniversal.

In her capacity as Chairman, Igbokwe and her team support a slate of ambitious storytellers, including Jordan Peele, Sam Esmail, Nahnatchka Khan, Tina Fey, Seth MacFarlane, Julie Plec, Amy Poehler, Tanya Saracho, Michael Schur, Alan Yang, David Heyman, Selwyn Hinds, Tarell McCraney, Lorne Michaels, Gareth Neame, Debra Martin Chase, Nick Antosca and Dick Wolf, among numerous others.

Igbokwe currently oversees 129 projects across 29 platforms worldwide, including the major broadcast networks, streamers and numerous cable outlets. Notable USG projects under her purview include *Hacks*, *Never Have I Ever*, *Girls5eva*, *Young Rock*, *The Umbrella Academy*, *Dr. Death*, *Gaslit*, *Joe vs. Carol*, *Made in Chelsea*, *Clickbait*, *We Are Lady Parts*, *Making It*, and longtime NBC favorite *Hollywood Game Night*. Universal Studio Group also houses NBCUniversal Formats, the original podcast platform, USG Audio, and its graphic novel imprint, USG Graphic.

From 2016 to 2020, Igbokwe was President, Universal Television, where she oversaw creative development, casting and production and led the division to new heights with record production output. Some of her development highlights include *Russian Doll*, *The Good Place*, *New Amsterdam*, *The Bold Type*, *Good Girls*, and Dick Wolf's successful new franchise, among numerous other notable projects. In a highly competitive landscape, Igbokwe was able to secure pickups for her projects on every major streaming service, a variety of premium cable outlets and every broadcast network.

Before her studio role, Igbokwe served as Executive Vice President, Drama Programming, for NBC Entertainment, where she developed the top-rated new broadcast dramas for three out of her four years in the role (*The Blacklist*, *Blindspot* and *This Is Us*). Previously she worked at Showtime for 20 years, where she was involved in developing the pilot and overseeing the first five seasons of *Dexter*, Showtime's most popular series ever. She also developed and supervised the Emmy Award-winning and critically acclaimed original series *Nurse Jackie* and developed the pilot for *Masters of Sex*, starring Michael Sheen. In addition, she shepherded Tracey Ullman's *State of the Union*, Damon Wayans' *The Underground*, Kirstie Alley's *Fat Actress* and the television adaptation of the hit feature film *Barbershop*. She was also instrumental in the five-season run of the hit Showtime series *Soul Food*, a two-time NAACP Image Award winner for Best Drama Series.

She currently serves on the boards of the Hollywood Radio and TV Society (HRTS), National Association of TV Programming Executives (NATPE), Television Academy Executive Committee and the Friends Board of the Saban Community Clinic.

Igbokwe has a Bachelor of Arts degree from Yale University and an MBA from Columbia University. She was born in Nigeria and resides in Los Angeles with her husband and two children.

## **ABOUT DR. ASHISH K. JHA**

Ashish K. Jha, M.D., M.P.H., is recognized globally as an expert on pandemic preparedness and response as well as on health policy research and practice. He has led groundbreaking research around Ebola and is now on the frontlines of the COVID-19 response, leading national and international analysis of key issues and advising state and federal policy makers. Dr. Jha has published more than two hundred original research publications in prestigious journals such as the *New England Journal of Medicine*, *JAMA* and the *BMJ*, and is a frequent contributor to a range of public media. He has extensively researched how to improve the quality and reduce the cost of health care, focusing on the impact of public health policy nationally and around the globe. Dr. Jha is currently the Dean of the School of Public Health at Brown University. Before that, he was a faculty member at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health and Harvard Medical School since 2005. He was the

Director of the Harvard Global Health Institute and also served as the Dean for Global Strategy at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health.

## **ABOUT FRANK GIUSTRA**

Mr. Giustra is President and CEO of the Fiore Group, a private firm managing a broad portfolio of private investments and companies, focusing on natural resources, entertainment, art, food and lifestyle.

Frank Giustra shares the love of film. In 1987, he co-founded the International Movie Group and was executive producer of a number of films including the 1988 hit *Buster*, starring Phil Collins. By 1997, Frank's entrepreneurial success also included the founding of Lionsgate Entertainment, now one of the world's largest independent film companies. Today, Mr. Giustra is a major shareholder of Thunderbird Entertainment, a creative-driven, pure play content production studio that creates and owns global and award-winning scripted, factual and animated programming.

Mr. Giustra brings an entrepreneurial approach to philanthropy to catalyze new ideas and innovations that can be scaled and shared. He co-founded Acceso, a social business builder that brings entrepreneurial solutions to global poverty. Acceso manages agribusinesses in Colombia, El Salvador, and Haiti.

For over two decades the Giustra Foundation has supported innovative solutions to some of the most pressing humanitarian and economic challenges -- focusing on women and children, homelessness and refugee resettlement. The Giustra Foundation is a founding partner in the Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative.

In 2020, he became co-chair of the International Crisis Group, an independent non-partisan source of analysis and advice to policymakers on the prevention and resolution of deadly conflict.

Frank is passionate about philanthropy, quantum physics, and the odd wild adventure.

# # #

## **ABOUT BANFF**

The Banff World Media Festival and the Rockie Awards host one of the world's most important gatherings of entertainment industry executives and creators, dedicated to content development, production, broadcast and distribution within the screen industries. BANFF provides a platform for the evolving global media industry to develop its creative and business objectives. It serves as a leading destination for co-production and co-venture

partners and is an unparalleled marketplace for international decision-makers to connect with new partners, learn from industry leaders and execute new business deals.

BANFF respectfully acknowledges that the territory in which the festival takes place is located on the traditional lands of the Treaty 7 Territory, comprised of the Stoney Nakoda Nations of Wesley, Chiniki, and Bearspaw; three Nations of the Blackfoot Confederacy: the Pikani, Kainai, and Siksika; and the Tsuu T'ina of the Dene people. Treaty 7 territory is also shared with the Métis Nation of Alberta, Region III. This area was also used by the Ktunaxa and the Maskwacis people. BANFF's office is on the Treaty Lands and Territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit and the traditional territory of the Anishinaabe, the Wendat and the Haudenosaunee. Toronto (also known as Tkaronto) is home to First Nations, Métis and the Inuit peoples from across Turtle Island.

**For more information on the Banff World Media Festival, click [here](#).**

@banffmedia

#BANFF2022

#BANFFRockies2022

**For media inquiries, please contact:**

Pam Wilson

Ink Media PR

Tel: +44 (0)7397 841841

Email: [Pam@inkmediapr.co.uk](mailto:Pam@inkmediapr.co.uk)