



[At Home with Jennifer Holness & Sudz Sutherland](#)

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By Terri-Lynne Waldron

What is a young man to do when his father fails to see any future prospects in his creativity? If that young man is Canadian director and writer Sudz Sutherland, he sticks to his vision and pursues his dreams.

“My father considered writing to be lazy man’s work and not a stable career,” laughs the successful Scarborough-born filmmaker. With his wife, writer and producer Jennifer Holness, he created the production company Hungry Eyes Film & Television Inc. Its debut feature film, 2004’s *Love, Sex & Eating the Bones* won Best Canadian Feature at the Toronto International Film Festival (Perspective Canada) and Audience Award for Best Feature at the American Black Film Festival, just to name a couple. Some of the couple’s other collaborations include *Doomstown*, *The Way the Ball Bounces*, *Speakers For The Dead*, and *My Father’s Hands*, a story about Sutherland’s relationship with his father.

The couple and their three daughters, Rayne (9), Daeja (7), and Ciele (4), reside in a home accented with many personal touches. The house, located on a residential Toronto street, was purchased four years ago. Before they moved in, Holness had been taking the kids to a nearby park on a regular basis, and fell in love with the area. Her brother, a real estate agent who also has a window cleaning business, had spent time at the house, cleaning the windows for the previous owner. The house was up for sale, and the couple made the purchase with no hesitations.



Despite being drawn to the charming property, Holness and Sutherland learned that it had a bit of a dark and intriguing past. “The house was owned by a guy who was a doctor for the mob,” says Holness, whose latest collaboration with her husband is the VisionTV comedy series *She’s the Mayor*. “There’s a sauna downstairs that holds 20 people. He also built a panic room behind the library upstairs. He closed off one part of it so that you can go into the room, but never come out.”

Today, the home is much more welcoming, especially the spacious kitchen in which pale yellow cupboards are a striking contrast to the green tiled walls. The glass door in the kitchen looks out onto the backyard where the pool is located. This allows the couple to keep an eye on the kids.

But the kitchen looks nothing like it did before major renovations took place. “This was a big box,” says Holness of the kitchen area. “There was a garage door and that was it. Everything else was concrete, and all the fixtures that





they put in were industrial. I wanted to have an eat-in kitchen and we had this dining room table, so I wanted to have a space that was just for the big table. It was about bringing light into the space.”

The kitchen isn't the only part of the house that had a facelift. The rock garden, located at the side of the house, had previously been a deck. “Underneath the deck was asphalt and under the asphalt was concrete this big,” says

Holness with outstretched arms. “We were thinking that we might find a dead body underneath.”

Stained glass windows can be found in many of the rooms and African art and family photos adorn some of the walls. The pastel colours of the kids' bedrooms evoke the innocence of their youth. But the bed (big enough for five) in the master bedroom proves that the girls are welcome in their parents' room as well.

With items sourced locally, in Jamaica and the U.S., the Sutherland-Holness home is a mixture of all of their influences, which was important for Holness. “Decor is a personal thing,” Holness says of their house filled with Caribbean and African accents. “I think that as filmmakers and creators we are always trying to have our voice out there and our home is a part of that.”