

**Fantasia**  
OFFICIAL SELECTION 2022

P O L A R I S

# P O L A R I S

## **PRESS**

**IXION Communications**

Judith Dubeau · 514.495.8176 · [judith.dubeau@ixioncommunications.com](mailto:judith.dubeau@ixioncommunications.com)

## **SALES/DISTRIBUTION**

### **CANADA**

**Filmoption International**

Isabelle Legault · 514.931.6180 · [ilegault@filmoption.com](mailto:ilegault@filmoption.com)

### **US & WORLD**

**Epic Pictures Group**

Kalani Dreimanis · 213.842.2710 · [kalani.dreimanis@epic-pictures.com](mailto:kalani.dreimanis@epic-pictures.com)



# P O L A R I S

AN ALL-FEMALE SURVIVALIST FANTASY THRILLER  
SET IN A FROZEN WORLD

## SYNOPSIS

A young girl raised by a polar bear pursues her destiny after escaping capture by brutal warriors' intent on killing her mother.



## SUMMARY

Set in 2144 against the harsh backdrop of a frozen wasteland, Sumi, a human child raised by Mama Polar Bear, narrowly escapes capture from a brutal Morad hunting party and sets out across the vast winter landscape. When Sumi stumbles across Frozen Girl, an unlikely friendship is forged and together they race ahead of the vindictive hunters towards the only guiding light Sumi knows, the Polaris star.

# P O L A R I S

## POLARIS STORY WORLD

The world has upended and we find ourselves in a remote part of the world, during forever-winter, where women endure a vicious lifestyle, reflective of a brutal environment, inherited from the cruel disregard of generations prior. This is a world where toxic green goo runs thicker than blood in fish and wild animals. The women number few within a massive territory, where everyone labors to survive. But, there are factions of marauders (Morads), who band together and use their collective brutality to raid, hunt, and remain formidable from attack. To be a Morad requires a relentless work ethic, enforced by peer accountability. In return, one might live longer because there is strength in community. To be other than a Morad is to risk attack from them - and requires an uncommon aptitude for survival.



# P O L A R I S

## WRITER/DIRECTOR - KC CARTHAW

Writer/Director KC Carthew's multiple-award winning debut feature, *The Sun at Midnight* (2017) starring Kawennáhere Devery Jacobs (*Reservation Dogs*), sold worldwide and was released theatrically in Canada, the USA and Australia. Recognized for spectacular world-building in her visual storytelling, Carthew excels in bringing forth award-winning performances, cultivating innovation and pushing both technical and narrative elements to new heights in her work. *Polaris* is her second feature film.



## DIRECTOR'S NOTES

*Polaris* tells the origin story of a world gone to shame that builds from themes of environmental stewardship/horror. It is inspired by eco-feminism and the need for significant cultural and sustainable change. The film portrays these themes with an entirely female cast – including the Polar Bear.

It is a dystopian world viewed through the lens of an extraordinary 10 year old girl, Sumi, who offers a different perspective. As someone raised by an apex predator, Sumi has an intimate relationship with nature and extraordinary survival skills: she can speak with animals and trees but has not yet learned to speak with people. Other humans speak fictional languages to represent this gap in understanding. This creates a primarily non-verbal experience that is strengthened by not having subtitles. My intention is to place audiences in the story world and encourage an emotionally immersive type of film-watching that is more empathy-based, intuitive and universal.

## CAST BIOS

### VIVA LEE [SUMI]



Viva is a Canadian actor, who was born in Seoul, Korea. She knew she wanted to be an actor on the set of the Russo Brothers' production of *Deadly Class*. After days of running, screaming and crying, there was no doubt that acting was going to be a part of her life, forever. Viva enjoys challenges like taking on things that she isn't good at. Which explains why she is currently learning three languages, plays multiple instruments like ukulele, guitar, and electric guitar, as well as being a martial artist training in TKD, boxing, BJJ, MMA, and weapons.

Viva enjoys learning about all aspects of performing arts, from vocalizing, dance, screenwriting, and recently produced and acted in a short film. In her limited spare time, Viva focuses on advocacy work especially when it comes to social injustice and fair representation in the media. She is currently working on a production that will be released next year. Viva hopes to one day work all around the world and if the fates align she would love to focus on action films and doing her own stunts.



## CAST BIOS

### MURIEL DUTIL [DEE]



In 1967 Muriel Dutil entered the Conservatoire d'Art Dramatique in Montreal and since graduating in 1970 she has never stopped working in theatre, television and cinema. She also taught acting for a few years at the National School of Canada.

Let us mention some outstanding roles in theatre: *Le temps d'une vie* by Roland LePage, *Albertine en 5 temps* & *Thérèse et Pierrette à l'école des Saints-Anges* by Michel Tremblay, *Félicité* & *Ennemi Public* by Olivier Choinière, *Sacré Cœur* by Alexis Martin and Alain Vadeboncoeur, *Avec Norm* by Serge Boucher, and in 2005 she won the Best Actress Masque Trophy Award for her role as Grace in the play *Grace & Gloria* by Tom Ziegler (translated by Michel Tremblay).

On television, her notable roles include *Graffiti*, *Les girouettes*, *SOS j'écoute*, *Tandem*, *Virginie*, *Portrait vidéo*, *L'Amour avec un grand A*, *La promesse*, *Nouvelle adresse*, *File d'attente*, and for the past 3 years in the ongoing role of Francine Bérubé in *5<sup>e</sup> Rang* airing on Radio-Canada.

At the first Gêmeaux Gala, in 1987, Muriel Dutil won the Best Actress Award for the role of Mary in the series *L'Amour avec un grand A* by Jeannette Bertrand. She was later nominated for many of her performances including *Portrait vidéo*, *Graffiti*, *Le gentleman*, *La promesse* and in 2015, she won a second Gêmeaux Award for her role in *Nouvelle adresse*.

On the big screen, she can be seen in *Curling* by Denis Côté, *Idole Instantanée* by Yves Desgagnés, *Ressac* by Pascale Ferland (nominated for a Jutra Award for her role of Dorine) and *Sous la neige de la Floride* by Sylvio Jacques in which she was cast as mother with Alzheimer's. The latter won four awards including Best Canadian Short Film in 2018.

In 2020, she was cast in the webseries *Claire & les vieux*, produced by Ugo Media, which won numerous awards at CannesSeries the Berlin International Film Festival and the Toronto International Film Festival. In 2021, Muriel won her third Gêmeaux Award for Best Actress in a Digital Series for her role as Pauline.

Her upcoming projects include *Niagara* by Guillaume Lambert (to be released in fall 2022) and in the role of Dee in *Polaris* by KC Carthew (World Premiere at Fantasia 2022 and set to be released in 2023).

## CAST BIOS

### KHAMISA WILSHER [FROZEN GIRL]


Born and raised in Vancouver, Khamisa found her love for performing through musical theatre as a teen, and has since established herself as a sought-after actress, model, & singer/songwriter in the Canadian market.

Some of Khamisa's notable network credits include her recurring roles on CW's *Charmed* and Netflix's *Wu Assassins*, and she can also be found on hit shows such as *Firefly Lane*, *The Flash*, *The Twilight Zone* & *Supergirl*. She got her start on the big screen starring alongside Valter Skarsgård in horror flick *Funhouse* and is proud to be on the cast of *Polaris*, a dystopian fantasy thriller shot in the Canadian Arctic, in the role of Frozen Girl. Most recently, Khamisa shot a supporting lead on *A Royal Run Away Romance* (Hallmark) and is currently filming season two of AppleTV+'s musical parody, *Schmigadoon!*

Aside from acting, Khamisa has modelled for brands such as Native Shoes, Londre Bodywear, Bahhgoose, KSLAM Clothing & Forever Yours Lingerie. She also showcases her musical talents by performing all around Vancouver and you can find her debut single "One More Time" on Spotify & Apple Music.







## KEY CREATIVES BIOS

### Max Fraser – Producer

Max Fraser is an independent Yukon filmmaker with experience in digital media, TV drama and TV documentaries. *Polaris* is his first scripted feature, a Yukon-Quebec-Ontario co-production.

Max is President of Little Dipper Films Inc., the company formed with Kirsten Carthew to produce *Polaris*. He is also the President of Hootalinqua Motion Pictures Inc. (his holding company, which owns his interest in Little Dipper Films).

### Paul Cadieux – Producer

Paul Cadieux is one of Canada's leading and most active film and television producers. Among numerous other accolades, he has won a Genie Award for Best Motion Picture for the two-time Oscar nominated *Les Triplettes de Belleville* (Cannes Film Festival).

In his more than three decades as a producer, co-producer, executive producer and distributor, Paul has often preferred to operate out of the limelight while remaining centrally involved in dozens of major Canadian and international projects ranging from children's animation series, thriller feature films, romantic comedies, travel shows, reality programming, international co-productions, feature documentaries and TV series in both English and French.

Through his umbrellas, Megafun Productions Inc. and Filmoption International Inc., along with his extensive in house equipment rental company and state-of-the-art post-production facilities, Paul has long prided himself on being well-positioned to be able to have a significant impact on projects he feels are both creatively and commercially viable and to provide the missing elements to advance a worthy production.

Among his many productions, we can find Danae Elon's award-winning documentaries *P.S. Jerusalem* (TIFF and Berlin), *The Patriarch's Room* (Doc Aviv) and *A Sister's Song* (Doc Aviv, Dok Leipzig and Berlin), as well as Shimon Dotan's *The Settlers* (Sundance) and, more recently, *Left Behind America* for PBS/Frontline, as well as *Advocate* and *Gaza*; both screened at the 2019 Sundance Film Festival.

Anyone looking for a pattern in Paul Cadieux's varied production and distribution work will invariably note that quality, high production value, respecting budgets and matching the marketplace's needs are consistent qualities of his overall creative and commercial output.

In a field where the dual elements of creative passion and experienced production know-how almost always go hand-in-hand, Paul Cadieux brings a wealth of both to any and all productions he puts his full commitment, heart, experience and resources behind.



## KEY CREATIVES BIOs

### Alyson Richards – Producer

Alyson Richards wrote and produced the thriller *The Retreat* which was named a Globe and Mail CriticPick, released by Quiver Distribution and sold to Showtime and Hulu. Other work includes producing the award-winning dark comedy *Don't Talk to Irene* starring Oscar-winner Geena Davis (TIFF, Austin Film Festival), the dark comedy *Guidance* (TIFF, New York Times Critic Pick, Netflix); feature documentary *Quality Balls* (Hot Docs, Showtime) and *Docking* (Sundance, TIFF Canada's Top Ten). She has directed two award winning short films (*A Birthday Story* and *Trashed*) and is co-writing a pilot for New Metric Media (*Letterkenny*, *Bad Blood*). She is currently producing the second season of *Children Ruin Everything* for CTV and the Roku Channel.

### David Schuurman – Cinematographer

David Schuurman shot his first feature film *What Keeps You Alive*, which had its 2018 world premiere at SXSW to glowing reviews, and has followed that up with numerous other narrative driven works in the comedy and drama genres including the thriller *The Retreat* released by Quiver Distribution in 2021. In addition to his feature work, he's shot dozens of music videos, commercials and short form.

### Geoff Klein – Editor

In 2017, Geoff Klein was nominated for Best Editor at the Canadian Screen Awards for his work on CBC's ground-breaking television show *Interrupt This Program*, which follows the lives of artists in oppressed, war-torn countries.

Klein's road to the CSA's started in 2011 when edited the award-winning feature film *Pinup Dolls on Ice*, which he also co-directed with Melissa Mira. Klein's editing work on the film earned him the Best Editor Award at the ShockFest Film Festival in Los Angeles. By 2013, Klein was editing various docu-series for the likes of Discovery Channel and the History Channel, which led him to edit an episode for the acclaimed series *FrontLine* for PBS in 2018.

In 2019, Klein jumped back into the realm of fiction with Jeremy Torrie's *The Corruption of Divine Providence*, which was nominated for Best Feature at the Whistler Film Festival, and then followed that up in 2020 with the slow-burn *Woodland Grey*, followed by the endearing *Pink Lake* by Emily Gan and Daniel Schachter.



## KEY CREATIVES BIOS

### Judith Gruber-Stitzer – Composer

Judith Gruber-Stitzer is a film composer with an eclectic style that is as varied as the films she's scored. She's a member of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, having scored three Oscar nominated films and one Cannes Palme D'or winning film. Working in both English and French, in Canada and internationally, her scores grace over 80 live action and animated films and TV productions, including two films for the legendary director Robert Altman. In 2018 she was one of 12 film composers invited to Sundance's Composer Spotlight. Equally at home recording an orchestral soundtrack in Prague or an electronic EDM track in Montreal, her music retains a distinctive emotional core.



### Christian Rivest - Sound Design

Christian's journey into the world of sound design began in 1994. His debut as an assistant sound editor allowed him to learn the basics of the trade with several top sound editors / re-recording mixers of Montreal's local scene. He rapidly emerged to supervise and sound design his first feature film in 1999 *My Little Devil*, part of the series *Les contes pour tous* (which started in 1984 with the original release of *La Guerre des Tuques*).

His passion for sound and music always guided his career and earned him a Primetime Emmy Award for Best Sound Editing in 2010 for his work on the TV series *Pillars of the Earth*. Since then, Christian accumulated nominations and has now started his own sound design business and continuously oversees several feature film projects and documentaries, in addition to creating the sound design with his team.

His work can be found in projects such as: *Bon Cop Bad Cop*, *Polytechnic*, *The Young Victoria*, *Surviving Progress*, *Pillar of the Earth*, *Apocalypse: World War One*, *Piranha 3D*, *What If*, *Devil's Gate*, *Bad Blood* miniseries, *Transplant*, *Devil's Gate*, *Sgt Stubby: An American Hero*, *Goon: The Last Of The Enforcers*, *Jonathan Strange* and *Mr. Norrell*, amongst numerous others.



## KEY CREATIVES BIOS

### Mercedes Coyle - Production Designer

Mercedes Coyle is an exciting production designer whose work has spanned many formats and genres. Mercedes designed the very popular (and hilarious) digital series *The Adventures of Goyl Pile* and CBC's *Bit Plays*. Mercedes first feature was a period horror film called *The Family* which is currently making its way around the festival circuit. More recently she designed the charming film *Miracle in Motor City* starring Smoky Robinson and the ripped from the headlines *Stolen by Their Father* starring Sarah Drew with both Cineflix and Lifetime.



### Monika Onoszko - Wardrobe

Monika Onoszko graduated from The Academy of Fine Arts in Poland and, as the only European student, from the kimono design faculty in the Onoe Fashion Institute in Japan. Her career begun (with success) in the fashion industry. She is the author of 14 authorial collections, which she presented during almost 100 fashion shows in Poland, Germany, Japan, Spain, Belgium, Italy, Czech Republic and Slovakia. From the very beginning though she engaged with theatre projects designing costumes for the most famous Polish scenes, including the biggest as National Theatre and National Opera and Ballet in Warsaw.

She kicked off her movie adventure with working with the best professionals on creating costumes for the movies of a well-known Polish director Jan Jakub Kolski. In her portfolio there are also numerous TV commercials, fashion videos and music videos including many international productions. Four years ago, she moved to Canada, and has since been working in the Canadian film industry creating costumes for Canadian and American productions.



## KEY CREATIVES BIOS

### Blood Brothers – Practical Effects (Puppets/ Pyrotechnics / Weapons)

The only way to truly understand something is by starting from scratch and that's exactly what co-founders Jean-Mathieu Bérubé and Carlo Harrietha did. In the early 2000's, they were producing their own B-series movies and did not have enough money to pay for effects, so they decided to learn on their own. Both continued working professionally through the next decade in directing, camerawork and editing and continued perfecting their FX techniques while learning everything they could behind the camera. This knowledge now permits them to use a different approach than other effects companies when dealing with practical effects since they can pinpoint exactly what needs to be done for the lens. They now implicate themselves into projects as early as the writing stage so they can help productions maximize their production value from the very beginning. They have both stopped their side careers and focus only on bringing the magic of practical effects back to the screen and turning Blood Brothers FX into a reference in terms of innovation, pyrotechnics and safety.





## DIRECTOR Q/A

### What are the origins of *Polaris*?

The origin story of *Polaris* combines the massive role nature has played in writer/director KC Carthew's upbringing alongside her love of stories, both real and fictional, about humans and animals (e.g. *The Jungle Book*, *Romulus & Remus* and the work of Jane Goodall) as well as a fascination with the starry night sky and Greek mythology. Inspiration for the characters of Mama Polaris Bear and Sumi come directly from the Latin terms for Big Dipper (*Ursa Major* – the big water/polar bear) and the Little Dipper (*Ursa Minor* – the little water/polar bear). It is an entirely fictional work that belongs to a larger fantasy tale.

From the outset of the film, the North Star (Polaris) is on the move. Long since a guiding light for explorers of all terrains, the North Star's movement demonstrates a tremendous global shift in direction. In the same way, *I believe we need a massive global shift in politics and practices to combat climate change*. Sumi's immersive life experience in nature perfectly positions her to perceive, adapt and ultimately adopt this realization.

The story world and colour palette are inspired by the winter landscape where KC grew up in the Canadian subarctic. The characters and magical elements extend from her award-winning short film *Fish Out of Water* that was shot in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories as part of the Dead North film lab. The intention for setting the film in the future, Year 2144, is for audiences to appreciate that the world has upended due to environmental neglect and appears, for the most part, to be frozen. Regardless of the shooting location, buried beneath the ice and snow could just as easily be what was once New York or New Mexico.



### After the success of your short film *Fish Out of Water*, when and what made you decide to adapt the story to a feature film?

Feedback from fans! *Fish Out of Water* premiered at Fantasia in 2015 and from there went on to screen the world over. A few years later I wrote a treatment for a feature that I turned into a script in 2019. I took an intuitive approach to writing the script, which somehow always seemed destined to be a primarily non-verbal story. The process was liberating. To my mind Sumi's character embodies ways of relating to nature and people that is well suited to the screen, where it can be visually and audibly role modeled.



## DIRECTOR Q/A

As someone raised by an apex predator (polar bear), Sumi has an intimate relationship with nature and extraordinary survival skills: she can speak with animals and trees but has not yet learned to speak with people. The people she encounters speak a fictional language to represent this gap in understanding. And yet, each character's motivation is clear and simple. This creates a primarily non-verbal experience comparable to many a silent film. I believe this approach encourages a more emotionally immersive type of film-watching that is empathy-based, intuitive and universal. This was all part of the excitement (risk) and motivation (faith) to develop *Polaris* as a feature film.

### **Can you speak about some of the films or filmmakers that influenced you while writing or directing *Polaris*?**

The writing felt channeled and connected to the story world of *Fish Out of Water*. I took added inspiration from Greek mythology and directly from the Latin names for the Big and Little Dippers, *Ursa Major* & *Ursa Minor*.

In terms of directing, reference films include *The Bear* and *Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* for the non-verbal aspects and genre sensibilities. Tonally, I love *Border* and *Let The Right One In*. For production aesthetic, energy, and themes I really tried to pay homage to *Mad Max* (especially *Road Warrior*). I am captivated by the ingenuity of story worlds that feature a DIY aesthetic. *Turbo Kid* and *Tank Girl* are also good examples. To me these are stories, like *Polaris*, that lend themselves to images. My wish has always been to extend the *Polaris* transmedia story world to tell the prequel and sequel stories via graphic novels.

### **How did you tackle the challenges of genre filmmaking with a limited budget?**

*Polaris* is the achievement of a pan-Canadian team. It is a Yukon-Quebec-Ontario co-production with support from the Northwest Territories, where I was raised. For me, the locations convey the epic-ness of the story world, which is a credit to Mother Nature manifest in the Yukon - where we had an abundance of snow, which despite the subarctic location, is no longer a given due to climate change. We were very fortunate.

The rest owes to the ingenuity of our crew. Production designer Mercedes Coyle worked with a Whitehorse-based team accustomed to working with salvaged material. Under her leadership they were able to make a little go a long way. For locations like the Morad outpost, we explored junk yards and dumps for parts and created several set pieces and sets. Our Costume Designer Monika Onoszko, was also supported by a Whitehorse-based team, who were key to building the Morads' armour and sourcing materials for the costumes. The Blood Brothers (*Turbo Kid*, *Blood Quantum*) are pros at figuring out how to literally get the most bang for one's buck. They made all the weapons, the blood, smoke, pyrotechnics, and puppeteering. They are creative collaborators who rigorously researched the story and matched their expertise with passion and follow through.





## DIRECTOR Q/A

### Can you tell us about the dystopian world-building in *Polaris*?

I describe the story world as “Mad Max in the Arctic”. The landscape is a key character and needs no dressing up. The winter wardrobe created by Monika Onoszoko takes inspiration from *Road Warrior*, *Star Wars* (*Empire Strikes Back*, *Return of the Jedi*) and my short *Fish Out of Water*.

Sumi was raised in a frozen desert with no trees. Her outfit and claw-weapons are made from animal parts and the clothes which Mama Polar Bear found her in. By contrast, the Morads also have fur from animals in their clothes, but also salvaged metals from wrecked cars, appliances, and other junk of civilization. The difference in the materials relates to the environments each inhabits. It was always important for the sound design for the Morads to have a metallic tone. I imagined they would use their metallic parts (e.g. chest plates) to make sounds for greetings, or warnings across a distance. By even greater contrast, Frozen Girl’s wardrobe is completely different. Her costume represents technologies and resources not seen in this part of the world; revealing there is more to her – and more to the story world – than what we see on screen.

### How was the casting process? How did you decide on an all-female cast?

*In the film, we don’t see males... so we don’t know about them.*

An all-female cast allows for the examination of power dynamics outside of divisive gender roles. This allows the audience to appreciate power dynamics as sociocultural constructs. For example, the marauding antagonists (the Morads) operate on a patriarchal model of “might is right” – even though they identify as female. Destruction, devastation, and clan domination are justified as necessary for survival. By contrast, the lead characters Sumi, Frozen Girl and Dee demonstrate how individuals can successfully counter this pervasive assertion of power. *Polaris* explores the tensions between the individual and the group, specifically through a female lens, as each character appeases or opposes the social construct she is forcibly encouraged to uphold.

### Casting process

We had originally intended to go to camera in 2020, but were subjected to a start-stop process complicated by Covid. Ultimately, casting was a two-year long process. Almost all auditions were done via Zoom, excluding a pre-covid session in the Yukon, where approximately 300 people turned out for a weekend session. Women were asked to prepare a monologue both in English and either a different language or a form of gibberish. I was looking for actors with physical presence, who were comfortable with improvisation and had strong body awareness. It was a real honour to meet so many cool people and have so many great actors come forward.

The search for Sumi included hundreds of youth. There were many strong contenders, but ultimately Viva Lee was the actor who I intuitively felt I could trust to take on the role and more than that, take ownership of it. Viva is herself extraordinary. She carries ninety percent of the film without relying on dialogue.

The search for Agee (Mama Polar Bear) was a pure blessing. It had always been my intention to film with a real bear (vs. create one using CGI), but I had no idea how that would come to be, *were there professional acting bears... would it be ethical?... would it be affordable?* Easy to imagine this would be a challenge beyond reach. But, it wasn’t. I’d say we were just lucky. Agee was the only professional polar bear working in the film industry. She has been with her trainer Mark since she was a cub (and for over 25 years)... and, amazingly she lives in Canada, which logistically is important because it made filming with her possible. Filming with Agee was a unique experience. Certainly, she is the bougie-est bear I have ever met! I believe *Polaris* was one of Agee’s last film projects. She is now 27 years old or more, and has retired from the industry and now lives with full time care at a zoo in Manitoba, where she is well-looked after.



## DIRECTOR Q/A



### Can you tell us about shooting in extreme temperatures with a polar bear and children?

For better or worse, shooting in extreme temperatures is what I am used to. I have lived in both the subarctic and the desert and when shooting outdoors, particularly in remote areas, you must be prepared and ultimately accept the conditions on the day. No one can negotiate with Nature... and, when you're shooting on a limited budget you also don't have the option for re-shoots or waiting for better weather. My approach is to be flexible (where/when possible) and figure out how the weather can work to improve the storytelling. For example, often weather can intensify the stakes of a scene: e.g., the blowing snow from stronger winds can make a scene more dramatic... *but, also colder for the cast and crew...* so maybe that means fewer takes... or a restructuring of the scene. *Polaris* was shot almost entirely outdoors (in the winter, in the subarctic), and we were often scrambling for time, particularly to maximize our lead actor's availability. *Working with children under 12 affords few actual hours of filming, especially inclusive of hair/makeup/wardrobe time.* As a director, I needed to be able to pivot when things didn't go according to plan, *which was often...* and be ready to shoot lightning fast. On a couple of occasions, we had five minutes to shoot an entire scene, which we did – thanks to quick work by the crew (especially DOP David Schuurman) and of course Viva as well.

By comparison, filming with Agee (Mama Polar Bear) was relatively easy. We were working in a controlled environment – and for the most part, Agee was in a good mood. Due to Covid, Agee – who is a professional actor – had been out of work. She was thrilled to be back on set – particularly in the snow. The very first scene we shot with her is the first scene of the film where she is sliding around in the snow... happy as a kid on the first snow day! For safety, all scenes with Agee were shot with a skeleton crew and no other cast. I chose to film Agee's scenes first because her performance was the most unpredictable. Even though Agee is a professional and her trainer rehearses from storyboards, she is still a wild animal, and there's always a chance she won't perform on the day. Because of this, I thought it would be better to film with her prior to principal production so we could choreograph Viva's performance to Agee's versus the other way around.

### Who and how did you and your team come up with this unique language that the Morad women speak?

During the script stage I identified tonal ranges that sounded – and more accurately felt – like the language of the Morads. I say *felt* because I wanted the language to come from the gut, because to me that sounds earthy and the lower tonal ranges seem more abrupt. The Morads don't have conversations or wax poetically about philosophy. They don't have a lot of downtime. There's always work to do. It was my intention during prep to use rehearsal time with the Morads to co-create their language using improvisation and physical theatre tools in-person. Unfortunately, due to Covid, we had to move it all online. I subsequently approached a couple of our cast to see



## DIRECTOR Q/A

if they would be open to co-developing the language with me and a member of our casting team, via a series of zoom workshops. We did this together and then opened the workshop up to the rest of the Morad cast to get everyone on the same page – and in the same “voice”.

Separately, I spoke with Khamisa (Frozen Girl) and Muriel Dutil (Dee). I wanted their characters to sound different. Even though Dee is a Morad, she has a more layered understanding of the world that I thought needed to be represented in her word choices. Frozen Girl needed to sound completely unique because she is from a different part of the world that is very different from the Morads. Practically speaking, I also wanted the actors to be able to remember their lines and know what they mean. Each cast member was game to dive in. On screen, I think the Morads have what sounds like a coherent, believable language – same for Frozen Girl and for Dee. *It wasn't a perfect way of workshoping the creation of a language, but thanks to everyone's effort and skill, I think it works!*

### **The film was shot in the Yukon. What was it about those locations that appealed to you?**

I grew up and wrote the script in the Northwest Territories where a frozen post-apocalyptic story world is easily imaginable... *if you've been there, you'll know!* For budgetary reasons we moved the film to the Yukon. As a northern filmmaker it was important to me to keep the production in the North, and I was thrilled to be able to shoot the film in the Yukon. For sure, the Yukon looks different from the Northwest Territories, but the two territories have a lot in common – including dramatic landscapes and a vastness and scale that is epic and cinematic. On a personal note... it is challenging to be a filmmaker from the North because it is still such an emergent industry. One of the goals I share with Max Fraser, my Yukon producing partner, is to draw attention to Northern filmmakers and contribute to the expansion of the industry in all three Northern territories (Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut). I consider it a privilege to come from the North and I am proud to share *Polaris* with the rest of Canada and the world so they can glean some of its awesomeness.

### ***Polaris* calls attention to environmental themes. What do you hope people will get from the film?**

*Polaris* is grounded in a story-world born of our collective failure regarding climate change and invites audiences to reflect on accounting for the balance between progress and devastation.

It tells the origin story of a world gone to shame that builds from themes of environmental stewardship and environmental horror. I am a lifelong advocate of promoting strong relationships between individuals and nature and practicing environmental stewardship. *Polaris* aspires to showcase a story world where the teachings of animals and nature are of core value. Sumi's land knowledge is one of her greatest strengths. The land is her literature and she is well versed, having learned from one of its apex predators, the polar bear. My hope is that Sumi's relationship with nature – specifically, her communication with trees and heightened senses will inspire audiences to reflect on, and better connect with their surrounding environs.



# P O L A R I S

## CAST & CREW

Viva Lee (Sumi)  
Khamisa Wilsher Frozen Girl  
Muriel Dutil (Dee)  
Kara Wooten (Stag Morad, Horns)  
Dinah Gaston (Greenie)  
Charlene Francique (Red)

## WRITTEN & DIRECTED

KC Carthew

## PRODUCERS

Max Fraser (Little Dipper Films Inc.), Yukon  
Paul Cadieux, Megafun Productions, Quebec  
Alyson Richards (Alyson Richards Productions), Ontario  
Kirsten Carthew (Little Dipper Films Inc.)

## EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

Patrick Ewald, Kalani Dreimanis, Maryse Rouillard, Emma Phelan

**CINEMATOGRAPHY** — David Schuurman

**FILM EDITING** — Geoff Klein

**MUSIC** — Judith Gruber-Stitzer

**SOUND DESIGN** — Christian Rivest

**PRODUCTION DESIGN** — Mercedes Coyle

**COSTUME DESIGN** — Monika Onoszko

**MAKEUP DESIGN** — Karlee Morse

## PRACTICAL EFFECTS

Blood Brothers (Jean-Mathieu Bérubé & Carlo Harrietha)

## STUNTS

Angela Kostaske, Angelica Lisk-Hann, Joey Racki,  
Kara Wooten, Charlene Francique

YUKON - QUEBEC - ONTARIO | 2022 | FANTASY THRILLER | 90 MINUTES | 4K

P O L A R I S



Filmoption  
International

**PRESS**

**IXION Communications**

Judith Dubeau · 514.495.8176 · [judith.dubeau@ixioncommunications.com](mailto:judith.dubeau@ixioncommunications.com)