


*At this place* —————

a v. t. nayani world



KAWENNIIÓHSTHA

I want to love like the ocean. When the tide comes in, the ocean has to leave the shore. They understand they will always come back to each other.

MALAI

I feel like everything is falling apart. Again... I really don't want to lose you. Especially now.

KAWENNIIÓHSTHA

I've already lost myself.

# logline

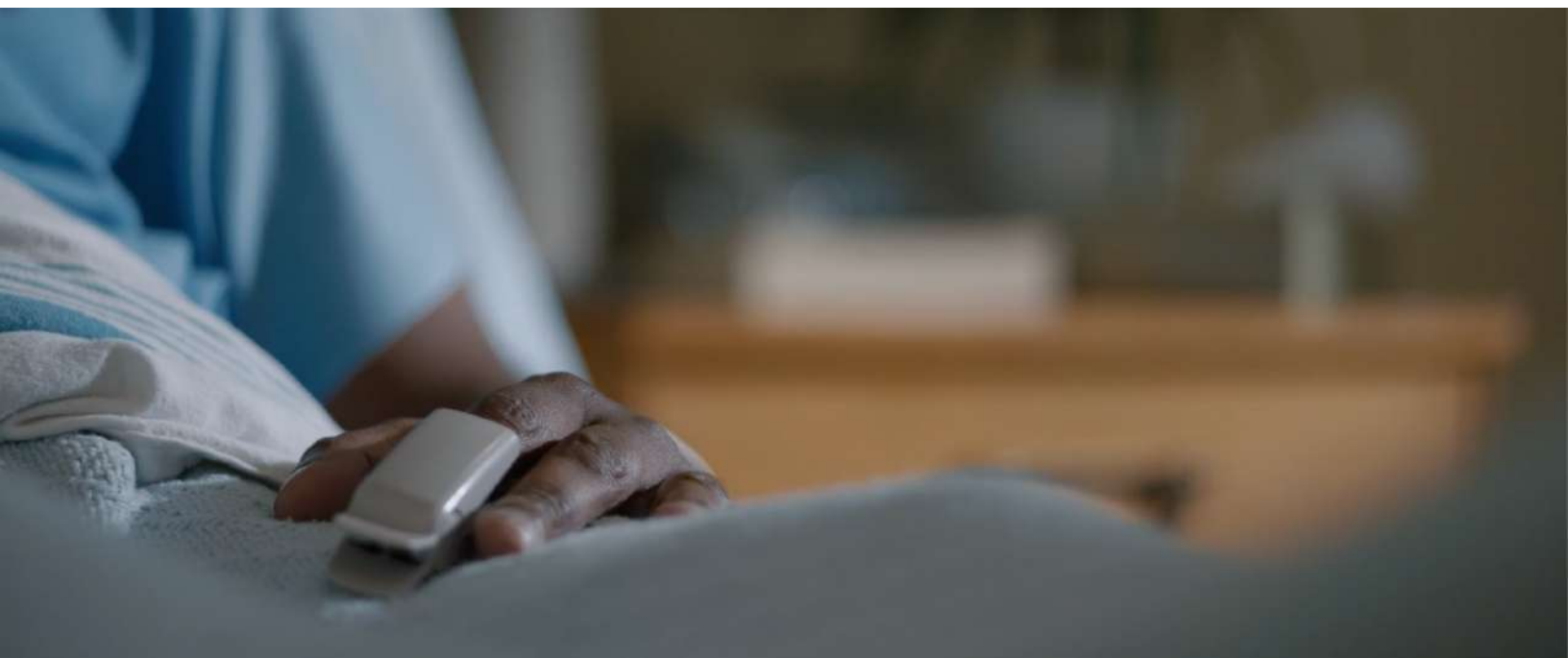
The emerging love between two young women is complicated by their families' histories, which bear the legacies of loss, migration and displacement.



# synopsis

THIS PLACE is the story of two young women falling in love for the first time. One is half-Iranian, half-Mohawk; the other is Tamil. Kawenniióhstha has just moved to Toronto, to pursue her dream of becoming a poet. The city is also where her estranged father lives. Raised by her single Kanien'kehá:ka mother in Kahnawà:ke Mohawk territory, she never knew her dad. And he does not know she exists. She yearns to meet him, but struggles to make contact. For Malai, after the passing of her mother, her father's alcoholism reaches its peak, pushing her to leave home with her elder brother. Years later, as her father battles terminal cancer, she tries to reconcile with him, while navigating her brother's refusal to do the same. Through two families complicated by love and loss, this film intimately explores the stories of those living in the liminal space between cultures, displaced both at home and abroad. At the centre of it all remains Kawenniióhstha and Malai, whose journeys we follow together and apart.





My name is V. T. Nayani (nine-knee). I am the daughter of two mighty-spirited and tender-hearted Tamil refugees. As members of a persecuted community, my parents escaped a decades-long armed conflict in Sri Lanka. They arrived in Toronto over 35 years ago, the place where I was born, raised, and still reside. My lived experiences, and that of my elders, ground and motivate my work. My passion for storytelling is my greatest inheritance, birthed through a desire for generations of stories lost to us through war and displacement. I have a specific sense of responsibility as the daughter of displaced people, to not only document and preserve, but collectively reimagine a present and future we can have a say in.

For me, life is a continuous series of moments, some with the potential to change everything. My family's arrival here was one of those moments. In my (he)artwork, I am interested in those periods, as well as what precedes and follows. Coming-of-age stories often chart times of change for young people. But as a storyteller, I believe we are all continuously "coming-of-age" - not only within ourselves, but in communion with others. I am invested in exploring these moments with curiosity, respect, and tenderness.

THIS PLACE is a multi-generational, coming-of-adulthood film, featuring faces we certainly don't see enough of and especially not together on screen. With a desire to tell stories from the perspectives of Indigenous and immigrant communities like ours, we focused on producing a wholly authentic narrative that emerges from a city like ours, where countless histories and legacies intersect. It is a deeply personal film, created by and about our communities, both those who are Indigenous to this land and those who have arrived here as refugees. It is a film about the displacement so many of us have endured, and the real-life stories of families affected by the unique grief of migration and separation.

Over the nine years it has taken to make this film, we have have worked hard to weave together a nuanced story that thoughtfully and tenderly explores the complexity, diversity, and beauty that lives in our communities. This story reflects a range of lived realities on this land, depicting the intersections of the journeys of Indigenous and diasporic women of colour in specific. This film, ultimately, is also a love letter - to our parents, our elders, our communities, and our ancestors.

## **director's note**

### **v. t. nayani**



# cast



**K. DEVERY JACOBS**

Kawenniióhstha  
[@kdeveryjacobs](#)

Co-Writer & Executive Producer ▪  
*Hollywood Reporter* Breakout Canadian  
Star ▪ Canadian Film Centre Actors  
Conservatory Alumni ▪ TIFF Rising Star ▪  
Independent Spirit Award Winner ▪ Star of  
Marvel's *ECHO* and FX's *RESERVATION  
DOGS* ▪ 207K+ Followers on Instagram



**PRIYA GUNS**

Malai  
[@priya.guns](#)

First Tamil-Canadian Woman to Star in a  
Canadian Feature Film ▪ Born in Jaffna, Sri  
Lanka & Raised in Scarborough, Canada ▪  
Founder of *Capokolam* ▪ Debut Novel *Your  
Driver Is Waiting* will be released in Spring  
2023 by Atlantic Books (UK), Doubleday &  
Penguin Random House (Canada / USA)

## supporting cast



**ALI MOMEN**

Behrooz  
[@alimomen](#)



**MURALY  
SRINARAYANATHAS**

Jeyapillai  
[@muraly5](#)



**ALEX JOSEPH**

Ahrun



**BRITTANY LEBORGNE**

Wari  
[@brittany\\_leborgne](#)



**JANISA WEEKES**

Dr. Helen Campbell  
[@janisaquoi](#)



**JAHMAL PADMORE**

Dwayne  
[@jahmalpadmore](#)



**ABI JEYARATNAM**

Malathi  
[@elayabi](#)



**GOLSHAN ABDMOULAIE**

Shahin  
[@golshanistan](#)



**MECHA CLARKE**

Chanel  
[@mechaclarke](#)



**DARIANNE BREULT**

Donia  
[@dariannebreault](#)

Combining our perspectives as Tamil, Iranian, and Kanien'kehá:ka storytellers, *THIS PLACE* is a love story to each of our cultures, our communities, and the city of Aterón:to (Toronto). It's a reflection of what's possible when we really want to change not only the way a film looks and who's on screen, but how we actually make the film. I'm so honoured to be playing the role of Kawenniióhstha.

**- Kawennáhere Devery Jacobs | Co-Writer & EP | Lead Cast (*Kawenniióhstha*)**



Embodying Malai in *THIS PLACE* felt like being a part of a love letter that so many people have poured themselves into. Malai's journey is one that will resonate with folks and I'm honoured to have embodied her spirit. She's forced me to think about my own life through her world, navigating trauma and love in its many forms. I'm grateful that through being her on camera, I had the space to express my queer self so publicly for the first time. Malai has given much to my being, it goes beyond words. I can't wait for folks to meet her!

**- PRIYA GUNS | Lead Cast (*Malai*)**



Working on this project has changed my life. Seeing it be made into an actual film was a mega bonus. When you are othered, you end up looking for yourself everywhere. We hope that this film allows Indigenous and immigrant communities to be seen in a new way on screen together, and also see what happens when they collide. Our characters will resonate with the communities we are from, and the ones we grew up in and into. We set out to tell a story about love in its many forms, not just romance, but also the decisions we make out of love for things greater than ourselves.

**- GOLSHAN ABDMOULAIE | Co-Writer & EP | Supporting Cast (*Shahin*)**

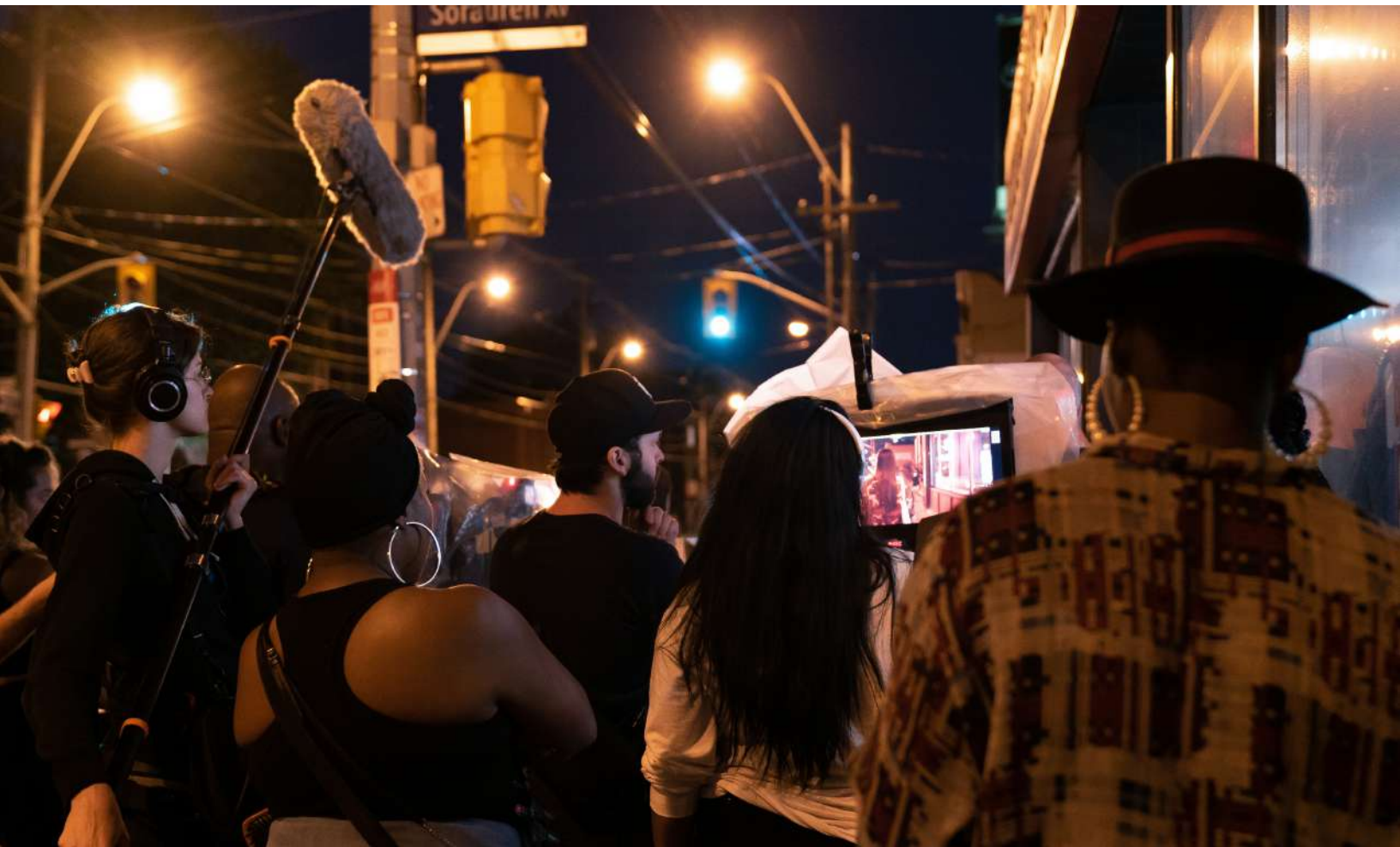
Deciding to lead *THIS PLACE* as the Producer was an obvious choice for me because it is not often, if ever, I get to produce something where I see pieces of myself reflected in the story. Being mixed race and trying to understand your sense of self through parental estrangement are not easy topics to talk about, let alone navigate while falling in love. Nayani, Devery and Golshan did a beautiful job of weaving these and other themes together, to create a universal story about how life doesn't stop even when you've found someone to love. You've got to have stamina to produce an indie feature, and when it is a story as important and personal as this one, you need to fiercely protect it. But you also need to be working from a place of love, which is much easier when you have a team like this one.

**- STEPHANIE SONNY HOOKER | Producer & Executive Producer**



# about our team

Co-written by Kawennáhere Devery Jacobs (*Echo*, *Reservation Dogs*; *The Order*; *American Gods*), V. T. Nayani (*Shadeism: Digging Deeper*; *The Love We Made*; *Disclosure*), and first-time screenwriter Golshan Abdmoulaie, *THIS PLACE* is a multi-generational exploration of coming-to-adulthood, with stories from our communities at the centre, born of our own Indigenous and diasporic experiences. With Devery Jacobs leading our cast, V. T. Nayani directing, and Stephanie Sonny Hooker producing (*Acquainted*; *Edging*; *The Cuban*; *That's My DJ*), the team behind this film, - from the writers, to the crew, to the cast, to the post-production team - is an inclusive group of artists and technicians, who are committed to supporting access to the cinema landscape and centering stories from the margins. We are proud to share that almost every department head and key position, including our entire cast and all of our executive producers, identify as Black, Indigenous, or a person of colour, the majority of whom are women-identified and many of whom are queer. Independently in our work and collectively through this film, we have been intentionally working together to utilize the screen as a space to explore how people from our communities understand and interact with the world, working together to produce stories that are authentic and impactful for all audiences. (*Full crew list available upon request.*)





**KAWENNÁHERE DEVERY JACOBS** (*Co-Writer, Lead Cast, Executive Producer*) was born and raised in Kahnawa:ke Mohawk Territory, and is an award-winning actor and filmmaker. Her breakout leading role in *RHYMES FOR YOUNG GHOULS* (2013) landed her a nomination for a Canadian Screen Award for Best Performance by an Actress in a Leading Role. Since then, Jacobs is mainly known

for her performances in Taika Waititi's FX Series *RESERVATION DOGS* (2021-), Amazon Prime Video/STARZ's *AMERICAN GODS* (2019-20), Netflix's *THE ORDER* (2019-20), CTV's *CARDINAL* (2018) and the Amazon Prime thriller *THE LIE* (2020). Alongside acting, Jacobs is also an award-winning filmmaker. Her short film *RAE* (2017) was an official selection of the 2018 Palm Springs Shortfest, and won Best Youth Work at the 2017 imagineNATIVE Film Festival. Jacobs was named one of Canada's Rising Breakout Stars by the Hollywood Reporter and was honored by Telefilm Canada at the 2017 Birks Diamond Tribute, celebrating women in film. Jacobs was also a TIFF Rising Star at the 2018 Toronto International Film Festival. | **Social Handle: @kdeveryjacobs**

**PRIYA GUNS** (*Lead Cast*) is an author and actor. Her debut novel *Your Driver is Waiting* will be published in 2023 by Atlantic Books (UK), Doubleday (USA), and Penguin Random House (Canada). She is currently a creative writing PhD student researching the radical works of A. Sivanandan. | **Social Handle: @priya.guns**



**GOLSHAN ADBMOULAIE** (*Co-Writer, Supporting Cast, Executive Producer*) is an Iranian-born and Tkaronto-raised artist, screenwriter, producer, film programmer, and entrepreneur. As a self-professed cinephile, she takes pride in the thousands of films that she has watched in her life but cannot always remember. | **Social Handle: @golshanistan**



**STEPHANIE SONNY HOOKER** (*Producer, Executive Producer*) Stephanie Sonny Hooker is a first-generation Trinidadian-Canadian filmmaker based in Toronto. She has worked extensively in various screen mediums, producing music videos, commercials, and web series. Stephanie has also produced three feature films: *EDGING* by writer-director Natty Zavitz, which was awarded "People's Pick for Best Flick" at the 2017 Canadian

Film Fest; *ACQUAINTED*, also with Natty Zavitz, premiering at the 2018 Whistler Film Festival; and *THIS PLACE*, with director-writer V. T. Nayani, which is currently in post-production (Telefilm Canada's Talent to Watch Program, CBC Films). She is also in development for several other narrative properties, including her first feature film debut as a writer-director, *WRONG END OF THE RAINBOW* (recipient, 2021 Indigenous Screen Office's Solidarity Fund Development Grant, Canada Council for the Arts' Research & Development Grant). She was most recently selected for the 2021 Netflix-BANFF Diversity of Voices and for 2022 Berlinale's - Producers Without Borders. Stephanie also serves on the Advisory Board for the Prism Prize x RBC Music MVP Music Video Grant. In early 2021 Stephanie and her producing partner Natty Zavitz founded Hometeam Films Inc. The ethos of the company is building community development through mentorship. Stephanie prides herself on her sets being diverse spaces that foster creative development and communication. | **Social Handle: @\_stephaniehooker\_**

**V. T. NAYANI** (*Director, Co-Writer, Executive Producer*) is a Tamil director, producer, and writer for the screen, born and brought up in Toronto. She is dedicated to stories that tenderly and thoughtfully explore how we continuously come of age at every stage of life. Nayani is a recent alumni of the Canadian Film Centre's Directors' Lab ('21), the Canadian Academy of Cinema & Television's Directors Program for Women ('22), and BIPOC TV & Film's Showrunner Bootcamp ('22). She is also an alumni of BlackStar Film Festival's William & Louise Greaves Filmmaker Seminar, Reelworld Film Festival's Emerging 20 Program, Hot Docs' Doc Accelerator, and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's Workshop for Diverse Creators. Over the course of her career, Nayani has been championed by platforms including Telefilm Canada, The Gotham, Netflix, Indigenous Screen Office, Canada Council for the Arts, Royal Bank of Canada (RBC), and L'Oréal Paris. She is also a special recipient of UN Women's Yvonne M. Hebert Award for filmmakers and photographers. Nayani's work has been supported by festivals including: TIFF Next Wave, Reel Asian, Inside Out, Women of the World, Regent Park, Women Deliver, and Lights Camera Africa. Since 2018, Nayani has proudly served on the board of Breakthroughs Film Festival, the only festival in Canada dedicated to short work by women and gender-diverse filmmakers. *THIS PLACE*, her long-awaited feature directorial debut, will have its World Premiere at the 2022 Toronto International Film Festival. | **Social Handle: @\_9knee**



**THANK YOU.**  
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