

# The Polygon Synopses

## Long

*The Polygon* is the story of a Kazakh village that lies just 18 kilometers from the former Soviet Nuclear Test Site. Over forty years and 600 nuclear explosions left the land, water and people battling the effects of severe long term radiation exposure. Their plight has been ignored by both the Russian and Kazakh Governments and their story has remained untold until now.

We experience this journey through the eyes of the villagers themselves, including Bolat Baltabek, a teacher, father and town leader. Having lost his lost sister, brother, son, and countless neighbors to radiation related diseases, he becomes our guide and through him we being to understand the struggles and strengths of the Sarzhal villagers as they struggle to make their lives work in an irradiated environment.

Shot over a period of three years *The Polygon* documents the fallout of the Soviet tests that began in 1949, and continue to affect over 1.5 million people. Victims who have, to date, not received compensation or care. The filmmakers journey from the poverty of the Kazakh villages on the Steppe to the wealthy urban sprawl of modern Kazakhstan in an attempt to draw international attention to this massive and otherwise forgotten global nuclear disaster.

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## Medium

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## Short

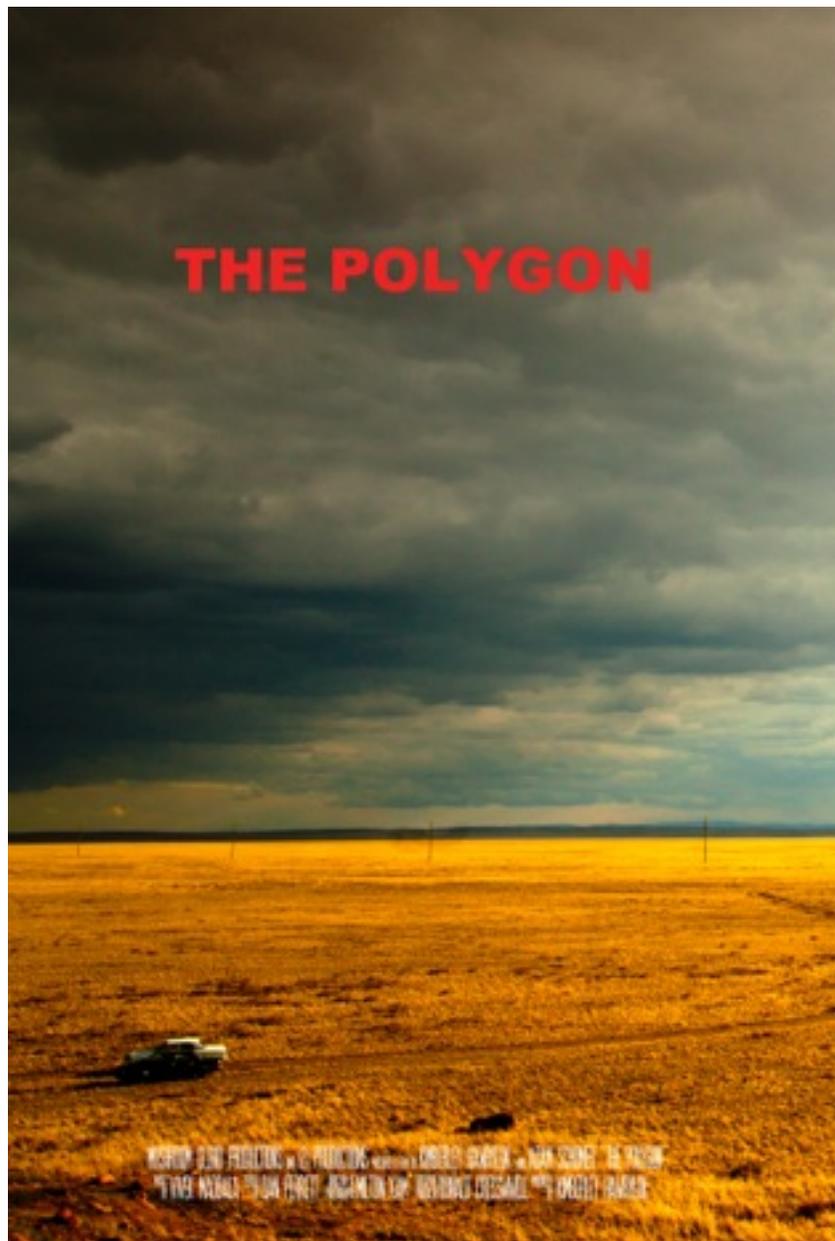
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## Director's statement - Kimberley Hawryluk

In 2003 I had the privilege of sitting next to Struan Stevenson, MEP for Scotland on a flight from London to Sydney. He talked passionately for hours about the plight of the Kazakh villagers who still live near the former Soviet nuclear test site, The Polygon, and continue to suffer the effects of nuclear fallout. By the end of that flight I was so inspired by his passion, that I committed to helping in any way I could. Six months later, I was in East Kazakhstan taking photos and hearing victims' stories of having been witness to mushroom clouds filling the sky, month after month, year after year before the site was finally closed in 1991 after 40 years of detonations.

I couldn't get these victims out of my mind, nor could I understand how their government has neither supported them nor compensated them appropriately after all they've been through. I decided to begin filming them in order to bring their untold story into the spot light. The deeper I got, the more overwhelming this topic seemed, and with that the responsibility I had to tell this story. You start to realize that this invisible evil respects no borders and no matter where you explode a nuclear bomb, the entire planet is affected. We should all be pushing for an entirely nuclear free world.

**“You can't hear it. You can't see it, smell it, taste it or touch it, yet it pervades everything.”**



# Credits

Produced, Written & Directed by  
**Kimberley Hawryluk & Adam Schomer**

Story  
**Trent Atkinson**

Executive Producers  
**Ronald Cresswell**

Cinematographers  
**Scott Chrisman & Milton Kam**

Editors  
**Dan Perrett, Scott Chrisman & Yaffa Lerea**

Composer  
**Vivek Maddala**

Sound Design  
**Dan Blessinger**

Translators  
**Gulzhan Gaurieyva & Iskander Akylbayev & Assel Abdrakmaya**

