

# THE ADVENTURES IN THE LAND OF ASHA

## JULES AU PAYS D'ASHA

Original version: French / English subtitles



Director : *Sophie Farkas Bolla*

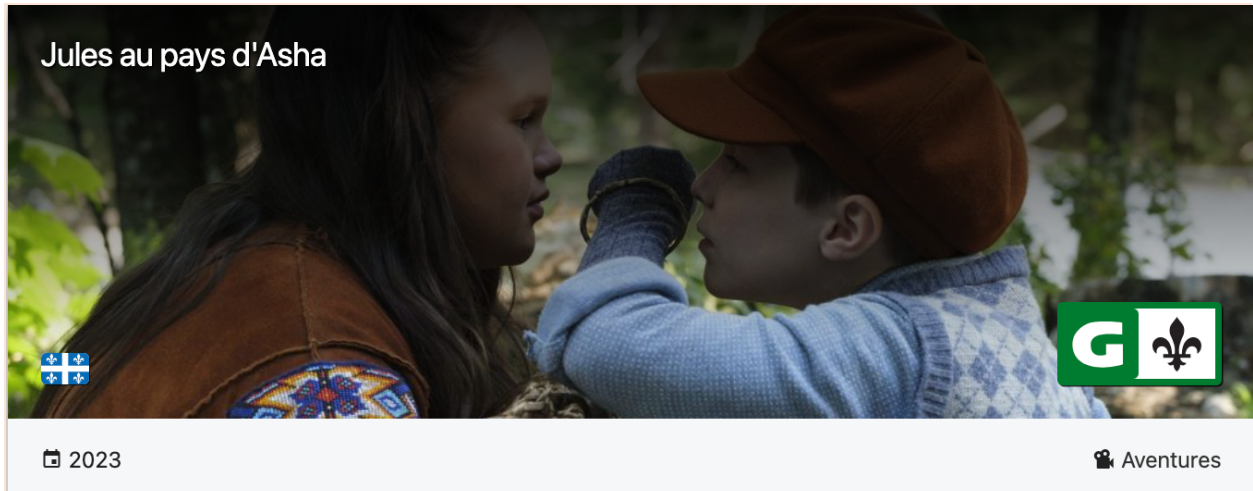
Release date (Québec): *July 7, 2023*

Genre: *Adventure, Family*

Country of origin: *Canada (Quebec)*

Run Time: *89 minutes*

## AGE APPROPRIATENESS



Set at a time when land colonization was in full swing, this film tells the adventures of a lonely boy who awakens to a new culture. While forests are being razed and ancestral places inhabited by Indigenous people are being eroded, they are peacefully resisting the expansion efforts of a handful of minor notables. Welcoming the young hero without judgment, the children of the community promote openness to others and the sharing of experiences. Close to a fairy tale in the presence of an intangible character who will help Jules come to terms with his new life and overcome his loneliness, the story, served by a staging that magnifies the landscapes, **offers a lesson in living together suitable for the whole family.**

*(Translation of the Régie du Québec text)*

### SYNOPSIS

On a cold winter's day in 1940, Jules and his family move in with his uncle, mayor of a settler's village in northern Quebec. When his dog Spark runs into the forest, Jules follows and meets a mysterious young Indigenous girl named Asha. Together, they venture to the other side of the forest, where nature reveals itself full of life and secrets

### REVIEWS

Canadian film director and editor **Sophie Farkas Bolla** crafts a heartwarming (even if settled in familiar territory) tale about difference and acceptance in her feature film debut 'Adventures in the Land of Asha' (Jules au pays d'Asha).

*Vassilis Kroustallis – Film is a Fine Affair*

**But beyond the beauty of nature, it is above all the beauty of childhood that the filmmaker brilliantly succeeds in highlighting.**

First, by telling the story of the birth of a non-judgmental friendship, in which differences are seen as strengths. A friendship nurtured by a reciprocal interest in getting to know each other. In

this sense, the film allows us to learn more about Indigenous history and culture, especially thanks to the character of the benevolent Niimi (Kevin Papatie), without it becoming too educational and boring.

*Translated from Véronique Larocque – La presse*

Inspired by Indigenous legends and the adventure stories of Rock Demers' Tales for All (credited as executive producer), the film offers both a fantastic tale aimed at a very young audience and a more mature story, immersing the viewer in the history of the colonization of northern Quebec.

Films du Québec – *Charles-Henri Ramond*

Set in Abitibi in 1940, in the midst of the second wave of colonialism, this tale is a link between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities (...) Ingeniously directed by Sophie Farkas Bolla, magnificently photographed by Simran Dewan (No Trace) and carried by the complicit performance of young actors Alex Dupras and Gaby Jourdain, Jules au pays d'Asha proves to be a beautiful and inspiring film for young and old alike - *Le Devoir*

## DETAILS

### LANGUAGE

The film, set around 1940, presents a vocabulary that is no longer politically correct. For example, we don't say anymore

American Indians or Indians or The Reservation

In fact, the comments about First Nations are derogatory. When Jules asks what a reserve is, his brother replies, "That's where the damned Indians live."

The uncle is hostile to the "Indians" and he tells Jules' mother: "The Indians are outside" as he had said for Spark, Jules' dog.

The book Jules is reading is about the "Fox people", which is disputed by Asha who says that the Mesquaki are the people of the red earth.

When Nimi tells the story of the extinction of the Mesquaki, he uses a vocabulary worthy of a war story: illness, death, incomprehension, disappearance.

The settlers led by Uncle Jovite resented the "Indians" who did not want to give their land to them: "Ils ont refusé de nous céder leur terre" which became in English *We have an official permit, God damnit?* which better conveys anger and resentment.

One of the invaders, towards the end, speaks in English: *Let's get the hell out of here!*

Jules' medical condition provoked hostile remarks with religious overtones. The priest tells Jules that he has "the arms of the devil". He also calls him a leper: "Only Jesus Christ can heal lepers." To which Jules replies that he is not a leper.

The other consequence of this condition is an emotional vocabulary like fear ["Why are people afraid of me here?" asks Jules to his mother] or curiosity. Nimi's niece and nephew want to touch Jules' hands, as so does Asha, who compares their scars to the bark of the tree.

The magnificent landscapes, some of which have been destroyed, give rise to a language linked to nature and spirituality: Asha notices the passage of the tree cutters. With the dead bird, she sees that "Everything is dead here." "Birds need their wings to travel to the world of souls." Asha introduces Jules to listening to the trees speak too. She names the animals of spring like the naughty frog. She announces the presence of the fireflies that light up the corner where Asha and Jules have landed. Asha, like Jules, observes "shooting stars".

Nimi utters a memorable sentence: "The land belongs to no one. We belong to the Earth." When Jules is taken in by Nimi, the family no longer speaks to Jules in French.

## **VIOLENCE**

On two occasions, a fire was started by human acts.

Asha and Jules shoot at the settlers' tent with burning plants, which causes the fire to start. The men have to extinguish it, which allows Jules and Asha to escape in a canoe. They had been pursued by Jovite's men, who had ordered them to do so...

Uncle Jovite arrives on the land of Nimi to seize it armed with torches with his troop of men. They burn the canoes, much to the chagrin of Zibi and Maddy. They set fire to the trees, hence the effort to extinguish the fire.

Jules manages to keep the settlers away, but we know that they will return.

Asha and Jules come up against rough waters that capsize the small boat: Spark jumps to save himself, Jules is brought back to shore all soaked and his face full of dirt.

A body floats in the water with moving arms but it's hard to identify the person... Is it Asha or Jules?

## **NUDITY**

None

## **SEXUAL ACTIVITY**

None – Asha and Jules do embrace each other out of friendship.

## **PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT / MESSAGES**

### **What young children may be worried about**

-Jules' skin disease with its scars

-Uncle Jovite's wickedness: he doesn't want Spark, Jules' dog in his home. He treats Nimi cruelly by throwing him out.

- He forbids his sister to take care of the "Indians"

-Jovite's aggressiveness and his goal to take possession of the land of the "Indians"

-the suspense caused by the capsizing of the canoe: did Asha and Spark survive?

### **Positive messages**

-The friendship between Jules and Asha is stripped of judgment.

-Jules is curious. He wants to learn more, just as Asha wants to share her knowledge with him.

Jules' mother, Catherine, is kind: she cared for Nimi and welcomed him into her brother's

home. She opts to help Nimi and her family.-Nimi doesn't hesitate to take care of Jules when he finds him lifeless, lying on the shore.  
-The beauty of nature and all its potential.

## PHOTOS DU FILM



**It's Spark, Jules' dog, who leads his master into the forest where he meets Asha**

**Jules and Asha go on an adventure to find Asha's Mesquaki mom**



**Catherine, Jules' loving mother**



**Asha takes aim at a settlers' tent and causes a fire with Jules**

**Jovite and his men burn canoes and forests to take over Nimi's land**



**Nimi and his sister with Jules fight the fire**



**The landscapes are of great beauty in this film**